

The role of the affected state: A case study on the Peruvian earthquake response

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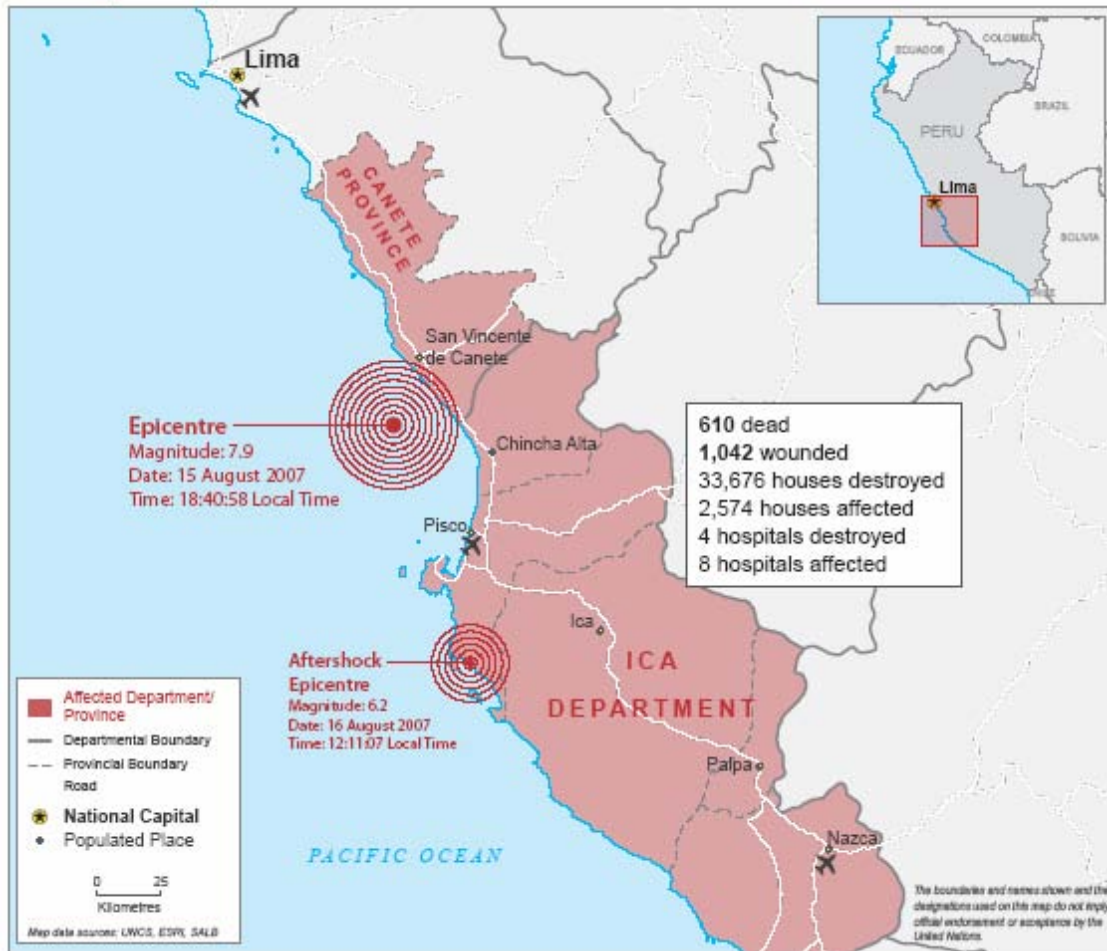
Contents

Acronyms	2
1. Introduction	4
2. The National Civil Defence System (SINADECI)	5
2.1 The Multi-Sectoral Disaster Prevention and Response Commission	5
2.2 The National Institute for Civil Defence (INDECI)	5
2.3 The regional civil defence system	5
3. The response to the August 2007 earthquake	8
3.1 SINADECI	8
3.2 International humanitarian actors	10
3.3 Civil society and the private sector	11
3.3.1 <i>Civil society</i>	11
3.3.2 <i>Private sector</i>	11
4. Reconstruction and the transitional phase	13
Conclusion	16

Acronyms

AMUPAT	Association of Municipalities of the People Affected by the 15 August 2007 Earthquake
CEAS	Centro Episcopal de Acción Social
COE	Centre for Emergency Operations
DFID	Department for International Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FORSUR	Fund for the Reconstruction of the South
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
INDECI	National Institute for Civil Defence
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PCM	Presidential Council of Ministers
SC-UK	Save the Children UK
SINDAECI	National Civil Defence System
SIDECI	Civil Defence System
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Figure 1: Map of the earthquake-affected area



Source: UN OCHA, accessed at www.reliefweb.int

1. Introduction

On 15 August 2007, an earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale hit off the Peruvian coast, with several aftershocks the following day. The earthquake caused severe damage to the department of Ica, particularly to the cities of Pisco, Chincha and Ica. The earthquake also affected the city of Cañete in the department of Lima, and Huancavelica department. Almost 600 people were killed, an estimated 1,000 injured and over 70,000 families affected.¹ There was extensive damage to government buildings, homes, schools, churches, roads and bridges, creating a consequent need for shelter, food, water, healthcare, sanitation and security. The Peruvian government declared a state of emergency and, with the support of the international community, led the response through the National Civil Defence System (*Sistema Nacional de Defensa Civil* – SINADECI).

This study analyses the Peruvian state's response to the earthquake and assesses its relationship with domestic non-governmental actors and the international community. The study, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), is part of wider work by the Humanitarian Policy Group on the role of affected states in disaster response. Although most international statements of principle regarding humanitarian action start with a reaffirmation of the primary responsibility of states for the welfare of victims of humanitarian emergencies within their borders, there is very little comprehensive analysis on the actual role states play in domestic response, including institutional arrangements, levels of public financing and key actors involved. This lack of knowledge can lead to poor coordination and communication, duplication of effort and shortfalls in the delivery of relief.

Some of these concerns were evident in the response to the Peruvian earthquake. Although the state had sufficient resources to respond and an elaborate formal response system, in practice the system at the regional level struggled to cope. Furthermore, rather than support the regional system, the central government bypassed it by creating a parallel response structure. This led to

poor coordination, particularly in the initial phases of the response, which in turn led to an absence of coherent information, duplication of effort and poor needs assessment. Most of the relief was initially concentrated in Pisco, despite extensive damage and large-scale need in Chincha and other remote rural areas.

Despite these deficiencies, most of the injured were evacuated promptly, there was no spread of disease and most of the affected population eventually received some form of support. Yet this was the result of an initial well-coordinated, rapid and generous relief effort by international NGOs and subsequent support by the UN system. Other factors were also important, such as the proximity of an airport and port to the affected area and the relative lack of damage to the main road linking the region to the capital, Lima. In other circumstances such factors may not be present, suggesting a need to reflect on how the state system and its coordination with other stakeholders can be improved.

This study is based on a review of relevant literature and a short field visit to Peru in January 2008. Interviews were carried out with key stakeholders and two workshops organised in Lima and Pisco with individuals from government bodies, donor governments, humanitarian agencies and other civil society organisations. Many of the issues discussed are politically sensitive, and individuals and organisations at times remain anonymous.

The report begins by outlining the structure of the state response system and analysing the mechanisms on which in theory it relies. It then explores how the state system performed in practice during the earthquake response, and its interaction with domestic and international actors, such as the UN system, international and national NGOs, the private sector and the Catholic Church. The final section assesses the transition from the emergency to the reconstruction phase, and explores how reconstruction is being implemented.

¹ UN (2007), *Peru Earthquake Flash Appeal 2007*, <http://ochaonline.un.org/cap2005/webpage.asp?Page=1604>.

2. The National Civil Defence System (SINADECI)

Peru's national disaster prevention and response system was created in 1972 following an earthquake in 1970, one of the largest catastrophes to affect the country in its modern history. An estimated 70,000 people were killed or missing, and in all three million were affected.² In 1987, the National Institute for Civil Defence (INDECI) was set up, and in 1991 the National Civil Defence System (SINADECI) was established to integrate disaster prevention and response into national development planning.³

SINADECI seeks to manage issues related to disaster prevention and response. Its main aim is to reduce risks, provide adequate and relevant relief and ensure rehabilitation in the wake of a disaster, irrespective of its origin.⁴ As Figure 1 shows, SINADECI's structure is both complex and hierarchical. It is led by the head of state and the Presidential Council of Ministers (PCM) through the Multi-Sectoral Disaster Prevention and Response Commission, but it is coordinated by INDECI, which links the commission with the regional civil defence system.⁵

2.1 The Multi-Sectoral Disaster Prevention and Response Commission

The Multi-Sectoral Disaster Prevention and Response Commission is led by the president of the PCM (currently the Prime Minister, Jorge del Castillo). It comprises most of the main line ministries, including finance, housing, education, health and transport. It is charged with coordinating, evaluating, prioritising and supervising measures to mitigate risks, provide assistance and support rehabilitation in areas vulnerable to or affected by large-scale disasters. These tasks are carried out through INDECI, which acts as the commission's technical secretariat and engages with international NGOs and other agencies.

² Huaraz Online (2006).

³ INDECI (2006), *Manual de Conocimientos Básicos para Comités de Defensa Civil y Oficinas de Defensa Civil* (Lima: INDECI).

⁴ SINADECI, emphasis added and translation by the authors.

⁵ SINADECI (2005), *El Manual de Conocimientos Básicos para Comités de Defensa Civil y Oficinas de Defensa Civil* (INDECI, 2006) and www.indeci.org.pe.

2.2 The National Institute for Civil Defence (INDECI)

INDECI is the main coordinating body. Its functions include:

- Developing the rules and policies necessary to coordinate, guide and supervise the planning and implementation of civil defence.
- Designing and proposing disaster risk reduction strategies in development plans.
- Providing immediate emergency assistance to populations affected by disasters.
- Participating in the formulation and dissemination of national security and civil defence doctrine.
- Offering advice on civil defence issues.
- Coordinating SINADECI.
- Promoting education and increasing capacity among the population.
- Evaluating declarations of a state of emergency.
- Channelling and organising national and international emergency relief assistance.

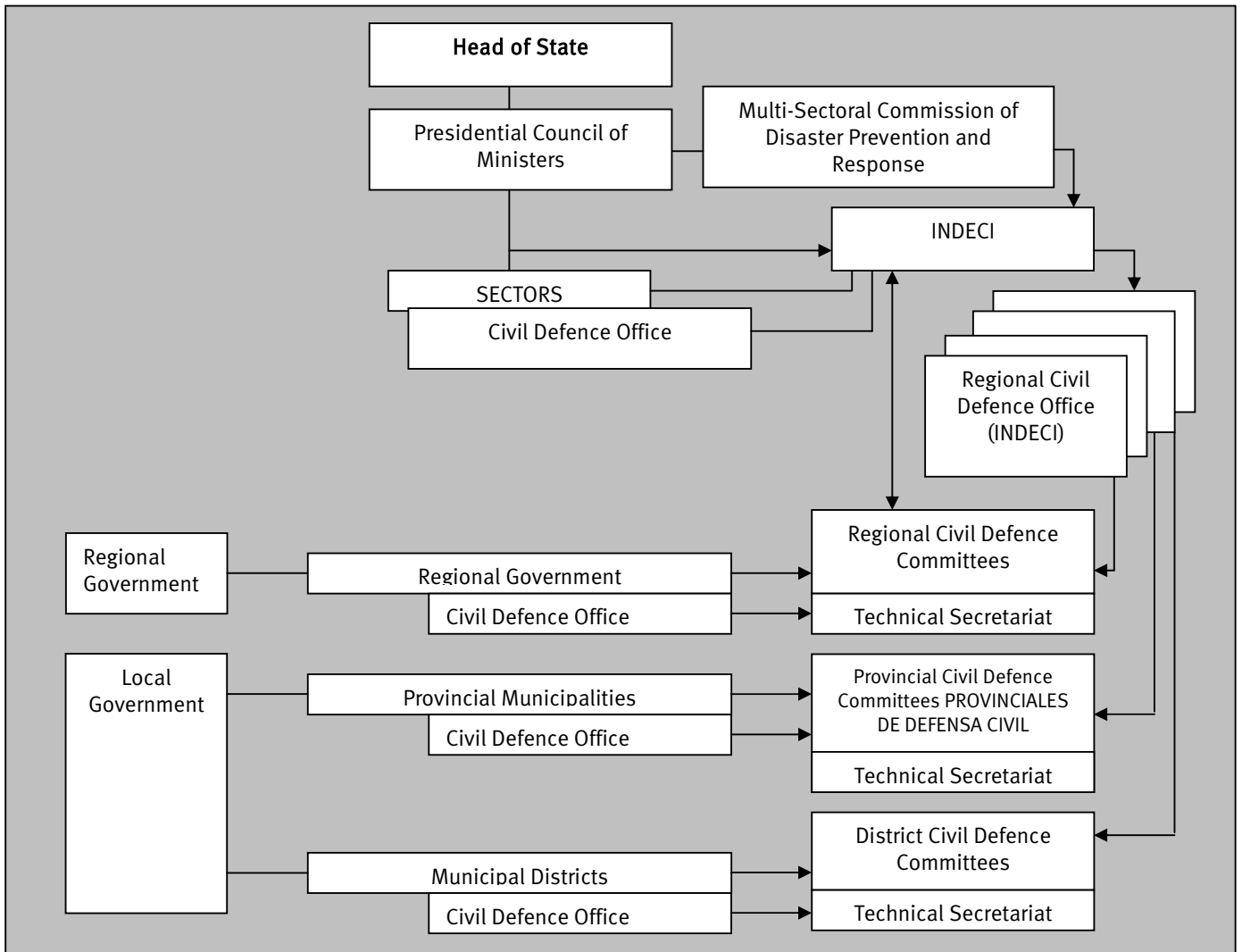
2.3 The regional civil defence system

At the regional level, SINADECI is led by regional and local governments, whose responsibilities in disaster response have increased in recent years as Peru has gone through a process of decentralisation. Civil defence committees at the regional, provincial and district levels are tasked, with the support of INDECI, with managing risks in their regions and, in the case of an emergency, providing assistance and supporting the rehabilitation process.

The level of responsibility at the regional level depends on the scale of the emergency. In first instance it is the defence committee at the district level that will have to respond in case of an emergency, however, if the scale of the incident supersedes its capacity the responsibility falls to the provincial committee and so on until a national state of emergency is declared and then responsibility falls to the multi-sectoral commission through INDECI.

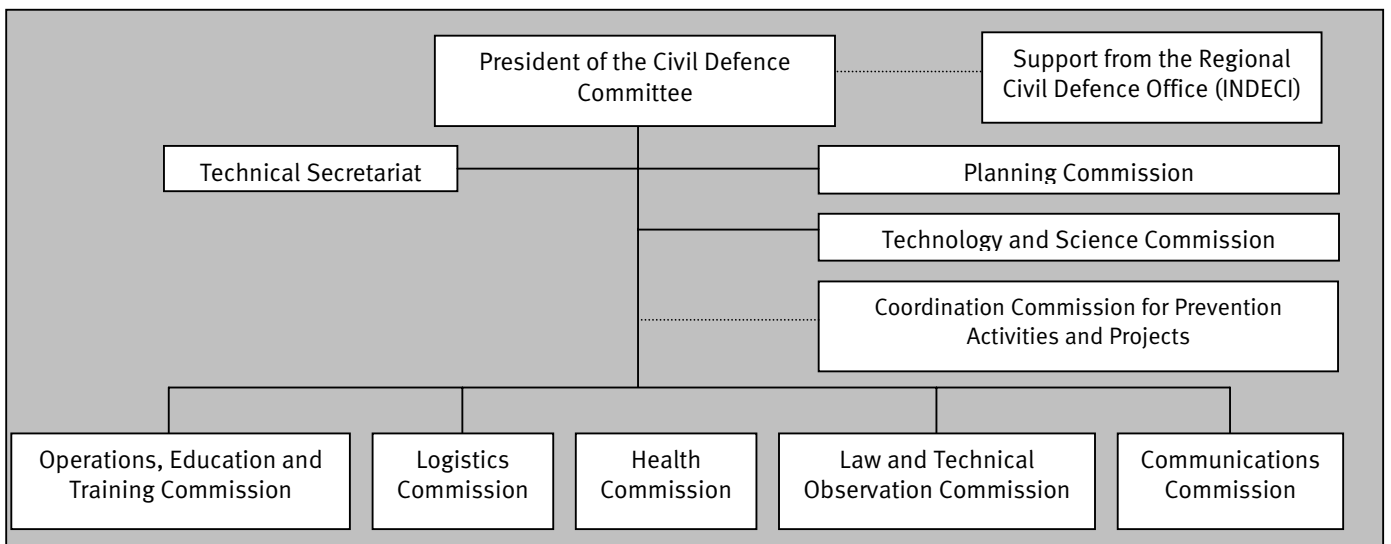
Civil defence committees comprise local authorities and other non-governmental organisations. They are headed by mayors, and

Figure 2: SINADECI's basic structure



Source: INDECI, *Manual de Conocimientos Básicos para Comités de Defensa Civil y Oficinas de Defensa Civil* (Lima: INDECI, 2006)

Figure 3: The structure of civil defence committees



Source: INDECI, *Manual de Conocimientos Básicos para Comités de Defensa Civil y Oficinas de Defensa Civil*, (Lima: INDECI, 2006)

include governors, the police, the armed forces, technical staff and representatives of the Church, universities, companies and NGOs. They include different sectoral commissions leading on education, logistics, health and communications. The mayor is responsible for forming the

committee, building its capacity and ensuring that it carries out its tasks. The committee at the regional level should supervise and coordinate the various committees at the district and provincial levels. Figure 3 shows the structure of the committees.

3. The response to the August 2007 earthquake

The Peruvian government led the response to the earthquake through SINADECI. It was supported by the private sector (local, national and international) and by generous contributions from civil society and the international community, including governments, international NGOs and UN agencies. The initial response entailed searching for survivors, evacuating the injured, removing rubble, ensuring security and meeting the needs of affected people. Shelter was provided for those that had lost their homes, latrines were installed, clean water and medical services were established, food aid was distributed and education and psychosocial support was offered, especially to children. A Consolidated Appeal (CAP) in the wake of the earthquake raised approximately \$37 million, \$9.5m of which was provided by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

Despite the considerable relief effort, the initial response was chaotic, marked by a lack of coordination and inadequate information on needs and hindered by a lack of capacity at the regional level and consequent political wrangling (particularly between the local, regional and national governments). However, as time passed the response became better organised, particularly once an OCHA coordination office was established in Pisco and a UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team arrived to support coordination and provide technical advice. Although 600 people died, most of the critically injured were evacuated to hospitals in Lima. Eventually, all affected populations received some form of shelter and food.⁶ Several factors assisted the response. Logistics were relatively straightforward: there was an airport and port at Pisco, and the main road from Lima escaped serious damage, allowing for relatively easy access. The number of fatalities was probably reduced because the earthquake occurred at 18.40, when most people were not in their homes. There was also a significant degree of solidarity, both from regional governments and the Peruvian people as a whole

⁶ Consultorias Atinchik, 'Sistematización de la Información de las Agencias de Cooperación Internacional sobre las Lecciones Aprendidas y su evaluación de la situación actual al sismo del 15 agosto del 2007 en el Perú', Informe de la Consultoría, November 2007.

3.1 SINADECI

The regional civil defence system collapsed in the wake of the earthquake. The initial response was chaotic: many mayors were personally affected and were grieving for lost relatives and friends, and there was effectively no leadership. This was especially apparent at the district and provincial levels, but was also evident at the regional level, as the regional president was travelling and did not return until several weeks after the earthquake.⁷ Responsibilities were not clearly defined. Local authorities felt that INDECI should have offered greater leadership and established a larger presence, whilst officials from INDECI felt that the initial responsibility lay with the civil defence committees at the regional level.⁸ There are two possible reasons for these problems: the scale of the emergency, which was beyond the capacity of the regional defence committees, and the fact that, in many municipalities, committees had not been formed and investment in capacity-building and response planning had been inadequate.

The mayors of municipalities and districts have primary responsibility for responding to emergencies through their local defence committees. However, many of these committees were poorly equipped in terms of financial and human resources and they lacked the necessary training and preparedness. Many mayors only took office in early 2007, in a process often accompanied by a change in the majority of personnel, with mayors favouring their political supporters and allies. As a result, the institutional memory and capacity-building developed under previous administrations were lost. In districts where mayors had been re-elected there were some signs of better preparedness.⁹

Change of office rarely brings further investment and development in disaster preparedness because the issue is not a primary political concern of constituents and does not generate resources. Some local mayors complained that

⁷ Interview with the Regional Presidency's Office, Ica, Peru, January 2008.

⁸ Interviews with mayors and with INDECI, Pisco and Lima, Peru, January 2008.

⁹ For example, in the town of Tambo de Mora, where the mayor was been re-elected, the population knew where to assemble when the alarm was raised.

effective disaster preparedness would entail using considerable resources from an already restricted budget.¹⁰ In practice, other sectors are given priority, such as employment, education, healthcare, housing and infrastructure. There seems to be a widespread perception among government authorities, including INDECI, that emergency preparedness is a voluntary activity based on solidarity, and there is no real sense of an obligation to build capacity to respond or put in place effective systems to monitor whether the responsible authorities are carrying out activities in prevention and response preparedness.¹¹ There seems to be no oversight body to ensure that local municipalities discharge their responsibilities in terms of disaster preparedness. INDECI would seem the best placed to take on this task, but it does not appear to have the power to do so.

The collapse of the regional system affected the response on several fronts. There was initial confusion, people did not know where to go or what to do, there was no effective evaluation of the extent of the damage or the scale of people's needs and the initial relief efforts were uncoordinated, with a consequent duplication of effort and unmet needs.¹² This was the case, for example, in the town of Castrovirreyna in Huancavelica, where help did not arrive until a month after the earthquake.¹³ Most of the relief effort was initially concentrated in the town of Pisco, although other areas were often just as badly affected, if not more so.¹⁴ The lack of information was so acute that the President initially claimed that the emergency was minor, with very few casualties.¹⁵

The relief effort was also hampered by political wrangling at the local level. Some mayors favoured their political supporters, and others sought to blame opposition parties or political rivals for the lack of coordination and the tardiness of aid

delivery.¹⁶ Information on needs was often distorted to increase the amount of aid received. The mayors, INDECI and other agencies all had different needs assessments, further hampering coordination.¹⁷ Access to adequate information was hindered further because the census carried out in October 2006 had been declared invalid; some agencies reported that information from the media was often more reliable and accessible.¹⁸ However, it should also be noted that the response was not the same across all the municipalities and districts; in some areas, such as the town of Túpac Amaru, defence committees were set up and coordinated the response to a certain extent, largely avoiding the excessive duplication seen elsewhere.¹⁹

When the scale of an emergency exceeds the capacities of the local and regional authorities to respond, ministers are meant to intervene through the multi-sectoral commission and INDECI. After the earthquake, ministers and INDECI decided to do this. However, rather than support the authorities in order to strengthen the existing system a parallel one was created, led personally by President Alan Garcia and key ministers. The decision to create a parallel system needs to be understood in the context of the political environment of the time. In the months before the earthquake, opinion polls showed general discontent with Garcia's administration, with his disapproval rating increasing from 31% in January 2007 to 44% in the weeks before the disaster.²⁰ After the earthquake hit, the initially chaotic response prompted strong criticism in the media, and small protests were held in Pisco.²¹ Such was the hostility that in some instances political messages undermining opponents were carried on food aid; in one case, cans of tuna apparently donated by the Venezuelan government and a left-leaning party carried slogans criticising the government for its inefficient response (the Venezuelan government denied these claims).²²

¹⁰ ODI-CIES workshop on lessons learned from the earthquake response, January 2008, Pisco, Peru.

¹¹ Interviews with local mayors and the regional office of INDECI, Pisco, Peru, January 2007.

¹² Consultorias Atinchik, 'Sistematización de la Información de las Agencias de Cooperación Internacional sobre las Lecciones Aprendidas y su evaluación de la situación actual al sismo del 15 agosto del 2007 en el Perú', Informe de la Consultoría, November 2007.

¹³ Interview with IFRC, Lima, January 2008.

¹⁴ Interview with Oxfam, Pisco, January 2008.

¹⁵ Interview with aid agencies, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

¹⁶ Interview with FAP, Pisco, Peru, January 2008.

¹⁷ Interview with UNDP, Pisco Office, Peru, January 2008.

¹⁸ Interview with IOM and CARE, Lima, January 2008.

¹⁹ Interview with the Governor of Pisco, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

²⁰ Statistics from the Instituto de Opinión Pública, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

²¹ See for example 'Critican desorden en el reparto de ayuda a las víctimas', I, 22 August 2007 and BBC News, 'Quake survivors berate President', 9 August 2007.

²² Rory Carroll, 'Venezuela disowns "provocative" earthquake aid', *The Guardian*, 22 August 2007.

Taking charge of the earthquake response provided Garcia with an opportunity to challenge his critics and increase his popularity. Along with his ministers, he travelled to the affected area and personally set up a response office at the military base in Pisco, from where he took charge of the response. Each minister led their relevant sector as specified in the multi-sectoral commission: logistics, education, food, health, coordination, shelter search and rescue, security, and water. This personal approach often led to poor decision-making, as the ministers involved did not have the technical expertise they needed.²³ Meanwhile, the presence of senior ministers often meant that district and provincial authorities sought to directly liaise with them, rather than working through regional authorities.

3.2 International humanitarian actors

The response from international humanitarian actors has been sustained and substantial, with international NGOs such as Oxfam International, CARE, Action Against Hunger, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières actively involved in providing relief. UN agencies such as UNDP, WFP, UNICEF and OCHA also participated. As noted above, OCHA set up a coordination office in Pisco, and an UNDAC team arrived 72 hours after the earthquake. Despite the large international presence, after discussion with the government the UN Resident Coordinator decided not to activate the cluster approach.

The cluster approach is part of a wider set of reforms designed to address gaps in humanitarian response and to strengthen the humanitarian system. The aim is to create a more structured, predictable and accountable system, better placed to support host governments, local authorities and civil society in humanitarian crises.²⁴ Many of the issues these reforms seek to remedy were pertinent to the earthquake crisis, such as an initial lack of coordination and information, uncertainty over responsibilities and duplication of effort. Arguably therefore initiating the cluster approach would have helped SINADECI. This was the view of many agency staff interviewed,

²³ Interview with RAPID Latin America, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

²⁴ For more information on the cluster approach see www.humanitarianreform.org.

including an official from OCHA.²⁵ Why, then, was the decision taken not to do this? From interviews, there seem to have been two main reasons: government opposition, and apprehension among lead agencies stemming from a lack of knowledge and understanding of what implementing the cluster approach in practice actually entails.

On the political side, initial discussions on the relief effort and the role of the international community took place between the PCM and the UN. The UN told the government of the cluster approach and suggested that it be implemented. This was opposed by del Castillo because it might have implied that the government lacked the capacity to mount an adequate response and was unable to meet its responsibilities as outlined in the constitution. As noted, the government was keen to use the earthquake response as an opportunity to demonstrate its capacity and its solidarity with affected people. A recent evaluation of the cluster approach also highlights a lack of consultation between affected governments and the actors driving humanitarian reform.²⁶ On the second issue, it seems that there is a lack of understanding of the cluster approach at field level, particularly around the provider of last resort function.²⁷ At the time of the earthquake, only the IFRC, the cluster lead for emergency shelter, seems to have understood what this meant, and had staff ready to take on that role. Agency staff admitted to not being clearly briefed, and some called for simulations to illustrate to all the actors involved, including the government, what activation of the cluster approach would entail.²⁸

The government agreed to the arrival of an UNDAC team and the UN Resident Coordinator decided that activating the cluster system was no longer necessary. International agencies aligned themselves with the sectors established by the government and supported them initially by putting together the Flash Appeal. In fact, the Appeal seems to have been an attempt to bring the international response into line with government sectors, rather than a real indication of needs of the ground, which as noted were

²⁵ Interviews with agencies in Lima and telephone interview with OCHA Regional Office (Panama), January 2008.

²⁶ Joint Research Team (2007), *Cluster Approach Evaluation: Final Draft*, HPG Commissioned Paper (London: ODI), p. 21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10.

²⁸ Interview with agencies, Lima and Pisco, Peru, January 2008.

difficult to gauge.²⁹ Although the government system was similar to the cluster approach, in that it is divided by sector, there were areas, particularly in shelter and sanitation, where coordination was weak and decision-making poor. In some instances, for example, camps were set up despite the fact that people were reluctant to move as they lacked titles to their property.³⁰ In some cases international NGOs took on informal leadership roles.³¹ These experiences highlight in particular the need to better align state structures and systems with those of the international community in advance of a crisis.

Whilst negotiations were taking place between the UN and the government, many international NGOs initiated and coordinated their own relief efforts at a very early stage. Most of these international agencies have a long history in the country and have relations with the government; many of their staff are Peruvian nationals and personal relations between them are good. This made it easier for them to coordinate their efforts early on, minimising duplication. A matrix showing who was doing what where was developed within 24 hours. This was later taken over by OCHA once it had set up its coordination office.

3.3 Civil society and the private sector

The earthquake response was characterised by the mass participation of civil society and the private sector. This ranged from organising collections in local communities to personally arranging and delivering relief. This support stemmed from the sense of national solidarity sparked by the crisis, and was a welcome addition to the response.

3.3.1 Civil society

Much of the local response came from organisations and groups affiliated to the Church. This gave them strong relations with affected communities and a high degree of legitimacy among the population. The day after the earthquake, Monsignor Miguel Cabrejos, the president of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, formally asked the Catholic Church to intervene in the response and designated Caritas as the central coordination agency.³²

²⁹ See UN (2007), *Peru Earthquake Flash Appeal 2007*. This concern was raised by several aid agencies (interviews, Lima, Peru, January 2008).

³⁰ Interview with IOM, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

³¹ Interview with CARE, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

³² Interview with Centro Episcopal de Acción Social (CEAS), Lima, Peru, January 2008.

Due to the lack of information on needs, Caritas and the Centro Episcopal de Acción Social (CEAS) sought to evaluate damage and generate information through parishes in the affected region.³³ These actors built on existing solidarity structures, such as the communal kitchens in many local neighbourhoods. Apart from food, these kitchens also provided security by grouping people together. In the first 48 hours security was a major concern: there was no power and looting was reported.³⁴ According to Caritas, an estimated 2,800 communal kitchens were set up.³⁵

As well as food and items such as tents, the Church also provided informal institutional support. With the collapse of many local authorities the Church was often seen as a legitimate body to take decisions regarding the relief effort.

3.3.2 Private sector

The private sector also played an active role in the earthquake response. Companies of different sizes, sectors and geographical location directly contributed to the relief effort. Disaster management software donated to the PCM helped coordinate actors and logistics, Peru LNG donated heavy machinery and logistical support and DHL supported the organisation and classification of relief items at the military base in Pisco.

At the local level, there was a substantial response from the private sector in Chincha, through the local chamber of commerce.³⁶ Initially, firms sought to support the local mayor in his response, but their help was rejected in an attempt to show that the local government had everything under control. There were also suspicions that private sector actors had political aspirations, and the mayor told companies to concentrate on running their businesses.³⁷ As a result, business leaders decided to support the relief effort individually using their own resources and capabilities. Many stakeholders praised the speed and effectiveness of their response. Business leaders drew on their local knowledge, labour and influence to organise the removal of rubble, distribute food and provide shelter, avoiding many of the bureaucratic obstacles confronting the

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Interviews with several agencies, Pisco, Peru, January 2008.

³⁵ Interview with Caritas, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

³⁶ Interview with a member of the Chamber of Commerce, Chincha, Peru, January 2008.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

local authorities.³⁸ In one example, several houses needed to be demolished. Authorisation for this would have been time-consuming for the local authorities, but business leaders simply agreed compensation with the owners and bulldozed them.³⁹

Once relief started to arrive in Chincha, the chamber of commerce sought to coordinate

with the local authorities and the government, particularly on issues such as where to dispose of debris and where to resettle people who had lost their homes. A month after the earthquake the chamber of commerce officially ended its involvement in the relief effort in order to focus on day-to-day business activities in support of economic recovery.⁴⁰

³⁸ Interview with IOM, Lima, Peru, January, 2008.

³⁹ Interview with a member of the Chamber of Commerce, Chincha, Peru, January 2008.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

4. Reconstruction and the transitional phase

The transitional period between the emergency and reconstruction phase within SINADECI involves a range of activities, including removing debris, providing medical and psychological assistance to the population, restoring temporary public services and economic activities and carrying out evaluations in order to assess damage and define the nature of the reconstruction process.⁴¹ These activities prepare the ground for the reconstruction phase, in which people who have suffered losses are compensated, damage is repaired, access to basic services is restored and social and economic activities are re-established.

Responsibility for the reconstruction phase lies with sectoral bodies and ministries, and should be driven by the authorities at the various levels of governance: regional, provincial and district. As in the emergency phase, if the scale of the disaster surpasses the capacity of the regional system then this phase is led by a special commission or committee for reconstruction. This was the case for the August 2007 earthquake, where the government felt regional capacities had been surpassed, and so created the Fund for the Reconstruction of the South (FORSUR).

FORSUR is based on a Colombian model set up to support the reconstruction process after an earthquake hit the Colombian city of Armenia in 1999. Supported by the government, international donors, the private sector and civil society organisations, the fund was hailed as a success. With guidance from his Colombian counterpart, Garcia created a similar structure in Peru. FORSUR initially comprised 19 members, including the presidents of the three affected regions (Ica, Lima province and Huancavelica), the provincial mayors of the affected areas (Ica, Chincha, Pisco and Cañete), the ministers of transport, health, energy and mining and education and five private sector representatives chosen directly by Garcia, one of whom, Luis Favre, was designated executive director.⁴²

Unlike its Colombian counterpart, FORSUR is not a politically autonomous institution, but rather an

executive unit dependent on the PCM. However, its precise objectives have not been clearly delineated and remain vague.⁴³ This ambiguity has also led to a lack of clarity around the institutions responsible for the transitional phase. For example, local authorities claimed that FORSUR should be responsible for removing debris, a task which FORSUR claimed was the responsibility of the local authorities. In the end, the military was eventually tasked with the job. According to a senior official, FORSUR is a coordination system not an implementing institution, although it can support implementing partners with technical assistance.⁴⁴ The focus is on larger projects such as infrastructural work, rather than smaller-scale reconstruction projects.

FORSUR has obtained resources from a variety of institutions, including the World Bank, UNDP and the private sector. Together with an initial donation of approximately \$40m in public funds, its current funding stands at around \$80m.⁴⁵ In order to access these funds, agencies and companies must develop proposals and present them to FORSUR for approval. It is expected that the private sector will play an important role in both preparing and implementing reconstruction projects. However, the criteria for presenting proposals had yet to be developed at the time of writing, and there was no clear reconstruction plan (one was due in March 2008). Although there is no fixed end date for FORSUR, it is expected to last until 2009.

The government has received a great deal of criticism for the way in which the reconstruction phase has been carried out, and specifically the role and achievements of FORSUR. Many of those affected by the earthquake are still living in tents and temporary housing.⁴⁶ Heavy rain in January left many exposed and put further strain on the drainage system, raising the risk of epidemics.⁴⁷

⁴¹ INDECI (2006), *Manual de Conocimientos Básicos para Comités de Defensa Civil y Oficinas de Defensa Civil* (Lima: INDECI).

⁴² Three months after FORSUR was formed Congress passed legislation to reduce the number of members to ten in an effort to make it more efficient and rapid.

⁴³ Congreso de la Republica de Perú (2007), *Ley que crea el fondo para la reconstrucción integral de las zonas afectadas por los sismos del 15 de agosto de 2007*, denominado FORSUR.

⁴⁴ Interview with official from FORSUR, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Interview with OCHA and UNDP, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

⁴⁷ Interviews with various aid agencies, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

From consultations with key informants, four main areas of concern can be identified with regard to FORSUR and the reconstruction process.

1. *Lack of confidence in FORSUR*

The Colombian counterpart to FORSUR was seen as successful because it had strong support from the government, the private sector and donors, and made sure of strong civil society participation and ownership.⁴⁸ This has not been the case with FORSUR, which has faced considerable hostility and criticism due to the strong involvement of the private sector, and resentment at the lack of civil society participation in the reconstruction process.⁴⁹ FORSUR is commonly seen as an entity created in Lima by the central government, which does not take into account the views and perspectives of affected people and their elected local authorities. During the field visit, considerable dissatisfaction and hostility towards FORSUR was voiced by the regional president's office and provincial mayors.⁵⁰

This hostility led Congress to make some changes to the structure of FORSUR, establishing Provincial Reconstruction Committees led by the provincial mayors and integrated with other local actors. However, these changes were insufficient to appease critics, and on 23 November 2007 a large demonstration was held by a group of disaffected citizens. They made three key demands: the installation of an operations centre in Ica under the control of the regional authority, the resignation of the president of FORSUR and the further inclusion of regional and local authorities, as well as local private sector and civil society organisations.⁵¹ In this context, an alternative to FORSUR was formed, called the Association of Municipalities of the People Affected by the 15 August 2007 Earthquake (AMUPAT).⁵² AMUPAT has

⁴⁸ Interview with aid agency, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

⁴⁹ This has been a wider issue within the current administration, which has shown a general hostility towards NGOs and civil society organisations, particularly environmental NGOs, whose campaigns it claims are an obstacle to exploiting natural resources. See García, A. (2007) 'El síndrome del perro del hortelano', *El Comercio*, sección A, 28 October.

⁵⁰ Interview with local authorities, Pisco and Ica, Peru, January 2008.

⁵¹ Poder Ciudadano (2007), 'Ica en paro: Iqueños se hartaron de esperar reconstrucción', <http://www.poderciudadano.org.pe/?p=1589>.

⁵² AMUPAT (2007), *Reconstrucción, fortaleciendo la descentralización y la participación ciudadana*. Comunicado. Pisco.

a different reconstruction agenda based on decentralised participation. It is currently elaborating a reconstruction plan.⁵³

The criticisms directed at FORSUR stem from the general atmosphere of mistrust between the central government and regional and local authorities, exacerbated by the lack of consultation on reconstruction issues.⁵⁴ The resources allocated for reconstruction are seen as insufficient, particularly when set against the considerable national contribution the region has made during its recent economic expansion. There is a perception that the government should be investing more, as the region would be able to generate fresh resources rapidly and see a return on this investment within a few years.⁵⁵ There are some signs of improvement, with FORSUR appointing regional representatives tasked with engaging with local authorities and increasing their participation in the reconstruction process.⁵⁶

2. *Lack of clarity*

Consultations with key stakeholders show that many agree that FORSUR is a good idea. However, the problem is that there has been little clarity over what its exact objectives are, how it functions, what its responsibilities are and how it coordinates with SINADECI. This confusion partly lies in the fact that it is not clear whether FORSUR is a private or a public institution, whether it works at the level of a ministry or a private company and where its responsibilities lie, particularly in the transitional period between the emergency and reconstruction phases.

This lack of clarity has also hampered coordination on reconstruction projects. Some donors and agencies have been carrying out projects without consulting FORSUR; this has been the case with JICA's work on sanitation.⁵⁷ There seems to be an urgent need to develop a general framework that clearly outlines the roles and functions of FORSUR.⁵⁸

3. *Bureaucratic obstacles*

In an interview published in *El Comercio*, the president of FORSUR stated that the main problem

⁵³ Interview with CODEH-ICA, Ica, Peru, January 2008.

⁵⁴ Interview with CARE, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

⁵⁵ Interview with Regional Government, Ica, Peru, January, 2008.

⁵⁶ Interview with FORSUR regional representative, Pisco, Peru, January 2008.

⁵⁷ Interview with FORSUR, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

⁵⁸ Interview with USAID, Lima, Peru, January 2008

hindering the execution of projects concerned the many legal and bureaucratic obstacles they face. Although FORSUR was set up in order to circumvent these obstacles and initiate rapid reconstruction, in practice it is part of the PCM and therefore has to follow established fiscal procedures to ensure transparency, leading to delays in the distribution of funds. Some projects were approved in September, but funds were not released until December.⁵⁹

4. Precarious and informal property rights

Informal land tenure and property rights present a serious challenge to the reconstruction process.

For example, homeless families are meant to receive a voucher worth around \$2,000 to buy housing materials. However, to be eligible families need to prove ownership of their homes through a legal title. Most families do not have formal titles to their property or are tenants. As a result, many of those affected have not been able to start reconstructing their homes. There is clearly a need for alternative solutions that recognise the informal nature of tenure. In the absence of such an alternative, there is a risk that people will simply rebuild their homes using cheaper materials that do not conform to safety standards.

⁵⁹ Interview with FORSUR, Lima, Peru, January 2008.

Conclusion

Peru's elaborate and complex disaster prevention and response system is considered one of the most advanced in the region. As part of the wider decentralisation process, responsibility for prevention and response has fallen to the regional and local authorities, depending on the scale of the disaster, and is coordinated and overseen by INDECI and the PCM.

In practice, after the 2007 earthquake regional and local civil defence committees could not deal with the emergency, partly because many local authorities were directly affected, and partly because many committees had not been formed, and there was no capacity or preparedness to respond. This lack of preparedness and resources was due to the fact that many of the mayors had been elected only recently, and the change of authority involved a complete renewal of staff, mainly for political reasons. Capacity was therefore lost. Furthermore, disaster prevention and response is not given priority as it does not have political weight among constituents and does not generate resources. There is an urgent need to address these deficiencies in order to support regional capacity. However, there is no oversight body or enforcement agency to monitor capacity and ensure compliance.

The central government took a proactive approach. The President and the PCM flew to the region and were actively involved in coordinating the response. However, the decision to create a parallel response mechanism, rather than support the regional system as conceptualised in SINADECI, undermined coordination and information-gathering and made it more difficult to meet initial needs effectively. This also undermined regional and local authorities, which were seen as incompetent and ill-prepared. In fact, many mayors are facing loss of office. Consultations with key informants suggest that this was essentially a political strategy on the part of the government, designed to bolster its

declining popularity and undermine its political opponents in the region.

This politicisation of the response effort had repercussions for the international humanitarian effort, particularly the implementation of the cluster approach. Although the UN system and other agencies initially expected that the cluster approach would be implemented, the government was apprehensive as it felt that this would suggest it lacked the capacity and resources to respond. Another obstacle to implementation of the cluster approach was lack of understanding at the field level of what it would entail in practice, and what responsibilities each lead agency would have. What resulted was an *ad hoc* system, in which the international community sought to align its support with the government's response. It is clear that, in future emergencies, clarification is needed at the field level of what the activation of clusters means for each individual agency, and the implications for the host government. Consultations in advance of emergencies would help to save time and minimise political wrangling, and would ensure that more effective structures are in place to assess needs during a crisis.

Despite the collapse of the regional and local response system, the inadequacies of the central government's response and the obstacles to activating the cluster approach, many lives were saved and most affected people eventually received support. However, the transition from the emergency to the reconstruction phase has not been well-defined or prepared for, and has been marred by political disputes. The objectives, functions, structure and responsibilities of FORSUR are not clear, regional and local participation has been lacking and funds have been delayed. If the reconstruction process is to succeed and support the development of the area in a way that reduces seismic risk, clarity, regional participation (both by the government and civil society) and a sense of urgency need to be injected into the process.



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