

## STRENGTHS OF THE CHURCH WHEN RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

- *Knowledge:* the church knows the community and can easily identify who has been left out of aid (the elderly or the sick) or who are the most vulnerable that need help (pregnant women, children or disable people).
- *Trust:* it is trusted by the community and can get first hand information
- *Access:* due to the church's presence in remote areas and also because it is respected and can access conflict areas which might be restricted to other humanitarian actors.
- *Networks:* the local church is always connected to wider national and international church structures. This helps to communicate broadly the situation and ask for support. Likewise, the church might have contacts within key institutions like the military or political authorities.
- *Structures:* the church is also a provider of front-line services such as education, health, rehabilitation among others. This means that it has a support system for the relief work and also material resources such as buildings and open land that can be used as shelter, refuge or to stock supplies. Furthermore, in many places the church has a relief/development desk that runs programmes of disaster risk reduction and/or prevention.
- *Mediator role:* at the outbreak of a conflict the church can have significant influence to mediate between the parties in dispute.
- *Spiritual support:* this is one of the most important added values of the church during emergencies. Its holistic mission helps those suffering to overcome their drama which cannot be entirely alleviated by material support.
- *Resilience:* the ability of people to get back on their feet, learn from a dramatic experience and get better prepare for the future is rocked in the firm Christian value of endurance and courage. The church is there to facilitate and go along with the hit community throughout this process.