

Humanitarian Practice Network

HPN

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Humanitarian Exchange

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About HPN

The Humanitarian Practice Network at the Overseas Development Institute is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience. The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.

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This 50th edition of *Humanitarian Exchange*, co-edited with Rachel Houghton, focuses exclusively on partnerships in humanitarian action. Articles explore a wide range of different arrangements, including clusters, consortia and networks, involving NGOs, the UN, the private sector, academic researchers, 'southern' or local organisations and host governments.

Articles by Dayna Brown and Anne Street suggest that more needs to be done to address unequal power relations in partnerships between international and local institutions, while John Twigg looks at local partnerships for disaster risk reduction. Terry Gibson reflects on how local views have influenced the Global Network for CSOs in Disaster Risk Reduction, and Ruth Allen and Catherine Russ provide insights from partnership working in Haiti and Pakistan. Faizal Perdaus highlights how MERCY Malaysia has used cross-sector partnerships with local organisations, international NGOs and government actors

in Malaysia, Myanmar and Gaza to overcome obstacles to reaching people in need. Roman Pryjomko, a professional partnership broker, also makes the case for more cross-sector partnering, drawing on his experiences in Pakistan.

Christine Knudsen outlines how the protection cluster in Northern Uganda has tried to operationalise the Principles of Partnership, and Maria Kiani reports on the work of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International in Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya. Three NGO consortia – the Emergency Capacity Building Project, the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies and the ASEAN Partnership Group – discuss their experience of partnership working, and James Shaw-Hamilton discusses how more cross-cultural collaboration between 'Western' and 'Islamic' NGOs in the Middle East could improve humanitarian response in the region. Finally, Ellen Martin and James Darcy explore the motives and drivers of collaboration between the commercial and humanitarian sectors, while Jess Camburn identifies key steps to forming effective partnerships between NGOs and research organisations.

Getting better results from partnership working

Rachel Houghton, CDAC Network

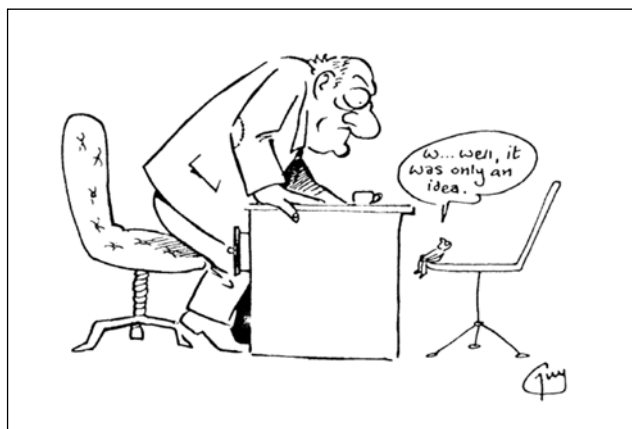
Partnerships are about relationships. The purpose of partnership is ‘to achieve together what we could not achieve alone’, and working in partnership requires those involved to practice a set of principles that create trust, equity and mutual accountability. In this way, partnership becomes a framework for ‘how we do business together’; it is less determined by the structure of the relationship than by the practice of certain behaviours. What is important is that risks and benefits are shared, and that the partnership is co-created.¹ When organisations work successfully together, change can occur at a faster pace and be more effective as trust is generated, expertise and resources are pooled, learning is fostered, common issues are tackled collectively and duplication is more easily avoided. This takes time and commitment.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that working in partnership in emergency contexts is challenging, particularly as values such as speed and independence are prized. Yet as the scale, frequency and complexity of emergencies increase, so too does the need to deploy a much broader range of skills, knowledge and approaches. This is compounded by recent tendencies to ‘stretch’ humanitarianism to include preparedness, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and recovery. All of this implies that multi-stakeholder/multi-sector responses will be increasingly necessary; indeed, efforts to work in these kinds of partnerships are already growing. This has been influenced by the humanitarian reform agenda (see following article by Christine Knudsen) and by associated challenges such as the economic crisis and climate change.

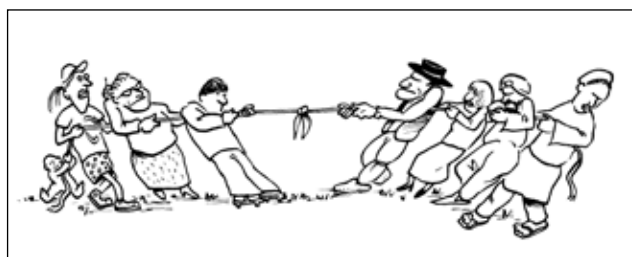
However, progress with humanitarian reform has been slow, including in regard to humanitarian organisations’ ability to work together. Despite the development of the Principles of Partnership, questions are often raised about how to operationalise them. This is complicated by the fact that agencies use the term, and understand and approach partnership, differently. There are even differences within agencies between HQ and field staff. In addition, there is mounting appreciation of the need to engage other stakeholders across the spectrum of humanitarian action in order to tackle the challenges presented by the changing humanitarian landscape, such as the private sector, environmentalists and climate scientists.

While the imperative for greater and better partnership seems clear, the question is how to achieve it. Quite a lot is already happening, but little learning is being generated. As one commentator observed: ‘More learning

¹ This is broadly in line with the approach of the Partnership Brokering Project (www.partnershipbrokers.org). See <http://thepartneringinitiative.org>.



Equity?



Mutual benefit?

about partnerships will help – i.e. detailed and critical discussions about *processes*, not simply the “didn’t-we-do-well” PR stuff typical of aid organisations and donors.²

This article focuses on three essential elements of effective partnering. It presents some practical tips to help organisations structure and manage their partnerships better – not only to deliver better results, but also to generate better relationships (which themselves tend to lead to better results). It draws on three case examples: the collaborative Emergency Capacity Building project (ECB; see later article by Matt Bannerman, Md. Harun Or Rashid and Kaiser Rejve) and two post-tsunami partnerships, one between the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the American Red Cross (ARC), and another between World Vision Canada and Zenon Environmental Inc. (now owned by General Electric).

Key Message 1: Partnerships require ‘brokering’

If partnership is about relationships, then it follows that personnel capacity is critical. Too often, partnerships are seen as a matter of good intentions rather than of necessary

² Personal communication between Amanda George and John Twigg as part of Amanda’s research for her dissertation ‘Bridging the Divide: An Analysis of the Institutional Barriers to the Consideration of the Environment in Humanitarian Disaster Recovery’.

skills.³ For an organisation committed to building its partnering capacity, this means paying attention to the skills and attitudes of the people it recruits, as well as improving the capacity of current staff through training and staff development. World Vision, for example, is putting partnering at its core: in the next 3–5 years it plans to invest in training 1,000 local staff to be ‘partnership brokers’. To do this it has invested in a partnership unit to help develop frameworks and guidelines.



Bring back our broker!

Why? Because multi-stakeholder/multi-sector partnerships are complex. They depend upon the establishment of good working relationships between people from different organisations and cultures, often with different values, interests and expectations. They therefore take time, effort, commitment and resources, not only to establish them, but also to nurture and maintain them.

multi-stakeholder/multi-sector partnerships are complex

The concept of the partnership broker is largely new to the humanitarian sector.⁴ Partnership brokers can be internal (i.e. from one of the partnering organisations) or external (an individual or intermediary organisation appointed by the partnership to build or develop certain aspects of it). Brokers can play different roles. They are often involved in scoping, building and establishing partnerships, and therefore in the critical processes of consultation and consensus-building. They are also often involved with review and learning, including about the process of partnership working. Depending on how partnership activities are managed, they may also be involved in facilitating and supporting the partnership over time.

One of the factors critical to the success of the five-year, post-tsunami Green Recovery Partnership between WWF and the ARC, set up to ensure that tsunami recovery activities maintained and enhanced healthy ecosystems,⁵ was the continual provision of leadership and mentoring by those with responsibility for the partnership. These staff members came from the participating organisations

³ Peter Senge, *The Necessary Revolution: How Individuals and Organizations Are Working Together to Create a Sustainable Future* (Cambridge, MA: Society for Organisational Learning, 2008).

⁴ See <http://www.partnershipbrokers.org/> for more information on partnership brokering.

⁵ See <http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/partners/humanitarian/green-recovery-and-reconstruction-toolkit.html>.

and could therefore be called ‘internal brokers’. They helped to build consensus and maintain enthusiasm for the vision and objectives of the partnership; moderated divergent expectations and understandings; sustained joint decision-making; and alleviated the effects of frontline staff turnover. It took two years of partnership capacity-building by the brokers to support this new way of working.⁶

Cross-sector partnerships such as that between WWF and the ARC require particular efforts to understand diverse drivers and motivations. This was also the case with the partnership between Zenon Environmental Inc., which specialises in water filtration systems, and World Vision Canada. This partnership focused on installing and maintaining 54 water filtration systems in IDP camps, schools and medical facilities in post-tsunami India. The partnership was not always smooth, especially in the early days, when it was *ad hoc* and was only maintained by the perseverance of key individuals. In particular, communications – between partner organisations and externally – necessitated careful attention. Because of the different language and mindset of each sector the potential for misunderstanding and mistrust was high, especially in the high-pressured immediate response phase.⁷

Similarly, one of the lessons from the ECB project, a five-year collaborative capacity-building initiative with the goal of improving humanitarian preparedness and response,⁸ is that country-level consortia require ongoing support. ECB employs full-time ‘Field Facilitators’ to provide this support to its five consortia, which are essentially multi-stakeholder, multi-sector partnerships. The initiative is learning that the skills of this person are critical, and require much more than a capacity for project administration and coordination. This is because brokers operate as process managers; they are leaders, but leaders who downplay traditional leadership roles and facilitate and catalyse instead. This requires self-awareness and a well-developed skill set, including negotiation, active listening, empathy

⁶ Anita Van Breda and Bob Laprade, ‘Reducing Risk and Vulnerability: An Environmental and Humanitarian Reconstruction Partnership’. This can be found on the website listed above.

⁷ Adapted from a World Vision case study on engaging with the private sector: ‘Co-creation of a village-level water filtration system’.

⁸ ECB involves six INGOs (CARE, CRS, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Save the Children and World Vision) working through four country-level consortia in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Indonesia and Niger, and one regional consortium in the Horn of Africa. See www.ecbproject.org.

and conflict resolution.⁹ If humanitarian organisations are to get better at partnership working, they must try to better understand, value and develop the role of the partnership broker.

Key Message 2: Learning supports partnership working

Partnerships also require enabling and supportive organisations. Fundamentally, being ‘partnership-ready’ requires a whole-organisation approach. One of the critical aspects of this is the development of fit-for-purpose learning frameworks. Whilst working in chaotic, stressful environments means that ‘mistakes’ are more rather than less likely, the persistent repetition of flawed approaches is not inevitable if learning frameworks are developed and applied. Moreover, having the courage to be transparent about, and learn from, what went less well is essential, particularly if we are to build evidence for what works and what does not in terms of partnership working.

Establishing a means of credibly measuring, reviewing and documenting the partnership – both in terms of results as well as process – is essential, particularly in contexts where staff may be averse to working in partnership. Some useful questions to ask include:

- How do you know if the partnership has achieved/is achieving its aims?
- How can partners assess whether the partnership has delivered real value for the partners?
- Is it possible to prove that the partnership approach is better than other alternatives?
- What is the evidence that outcomes from partnership activities will have an impact over the longer term?

Two approaches that WWF/ARC used to foster mutual learning and advance the goal of the programme were the co-location of staff and a collaborative review of ARC-funded projects using the Environmental Stewardship Review developed by WWF. These approaches helped staff from both organisations to learn about each other’s culture, language and motivations, and enabled WWF to translate environmental conservation techniques designed for large-scale, longer-term ecosystem management into practices appropriate for disaster reconstruction. This was seen as vital to the overall success of the project. Critically, it helped to maintain the partnership process itself.

Key Message 3: Prepare well – partnership management structures and the partnership agreement

Other partnership-ready investments include performance management systems and key performance indicators to reward partnership endeavours. They can also include partnership management structures such as cross-functional partnering units, as evidenced by the World Vision example cited earlier. These units can take responsibility for various activities, including the development of organisational partnering strategies and

⁹ The Partnership Brokering Project defines four key skill sets for brokers: facilitation, negotiation, coaching and reviewing. See <http://www.partnershipbrokers.org>.

guidelines. This could help to reduce the partnership burden on overwhelmed field staff: as speed so often undermines collaboration, a lesson from all cases is that attention in headquarters or at the regional level makes partnership possible at the country level. ECB agencies came to this conclusion following attempts to respond jointly to the 2009 earthquakes in West Java and West Sumatra. The ECB Indonesian Consortium faced challenges in funding and resource use, including joint decision-making and how to allocate resources for joint operations; managing the relationship between new emergency staff and existing staff; and communications.

In this instance the ECB global project team – a unit that helps to facilitate and coordinate the wider ECB partnership – took responsibility for developing a ‘Readiness Assessment Protocol’ (RAP) in collaboration with the ECB consortia. The RAP is intended to assist ECB consortia to outline expectations around joint preparedness and response. It gives the Field Facilitator a mechanism for assessing current readiness capacity and provides a stepped approach to developing collaborative ways of working. The RAP represents a negotiated process to improve joint working.

Typically, partnership commitments are jointly developed – a process often facilitated by a partnership broker – and recorded in some kind of partnership agreement. When money is involved there will also be an MoU, and some partnerships utilise ToRs. The difference between these documents and a partnership agreement is that partnership agreements go beyond traditional obligations: they imply the importance of process, including the development of a common language, and include not only the aims and objectives of the partnership and the management activities and funding frameworks, but also issues related to governance and accountability, learning, communications protocols (including brand usage agreements) and grievance mechanisms, and strategies for sustaining outcomes. They are tools to help build trust and maintain the vision and the spirit of partnership working.

Conclusion

Partnership working requires time and commitment, including real resources. This makes it a political matter: senior leadership is critical if organisations are to be partnership-ready. This is because partnership involves finding new ways of working effectively together to find solutions to complex humanitarian problems. With the appropriate investment of people, time and money, supplemented by a conscious attempt to capture and apply learning, partnerships have the potential to provide effective approaches to humanitarian crises.

Rachel Houghton recently became the Global Coordinator for the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network. She was formally ECB’s Sector Partnerships Manager. Special thanks to Amanda George (BRC), Anita van Breda (WWF), David Hockaday (ECB), Joanne Burke (HFP) and Mike Wisheart (WVi) for their insightful comments on the first draft of this article. Cartoons by Guy Venables, copyright IBLF and published in *The Partnering Toolbook*, available from www.ThePartneringInitiative.org.

Partnership in principle, partnership in practice

Christine Knudsen, UNICEF

The Principles of Partnership (PoP), endorsed in 2007 by the Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP), were a collective effort to respond to a changing reality as well as create a shared understanding of how effective partnership could contribute to more effective humanitarian assistance.¹ Over the past few decades, a growing proportion of assistance, as measured by financial volume, has been provided by civil society organisations, with many of the larger NGOs consolidating national chapters into international networks with a geographic and financial reach on a similar scale to that of the UN agencies. Within this evolving context there was a sense that the rules of engagement between UN and non-UN agencies needed to be reviewed to reflect greater equality in determining priorities, strategies and responses. The POP were born from this discussion, and the GHP became a standing forum for dialogue on how these principles could be put into practice.

At the same time, the humanitarian reform process was well underway, with its aim to improve the quality and predictability of response through enhanced leadership, coordination and financing mechanisms. Partnership was added as a fourth pillar in the reform process, not only as a strategy to improve results but also as a commitment to change the way in which international humanitarian actors worked together. Stakeholders agreed that the principles of complementarity and equality, along with transparency and responsibility, would be the basis for results-oriented partnerships at global level and in field operations.

Since their endorsement the POP have become a common point of reference, yet implementing them remains a challenge in practice.

the POP have become a common point of reference, yet implementing them remains a challenge

The cluster/partnership confusion

As the timing of the POPs coincided with the establishment of sectoral cluster coordination mechanisms, there has been a tendency to confuse these terms and concepts; clusters must incorporate the principles of partnership, yet partnership exists far beyond the scope of these groups. A further complication is that 'partnership' was never defined within the POP. This has resulted in the Principles being applied to any form of collaboration, including contractual relationships (i.e. project funding documents), agreements without any transfer of resources

¹ The five principles are equality, complementarity, transparency, accountability, results-oriented and responsibility.

or even a general intent to cooperate based on similar values (such as a memorandum of understanding). While such flexibility in applying the POP can strengthen how parties work together – even in contracting a project for delivery it is important to agree on complementarity – it can also lead us further away from understanding what meaningful partnership relationships entail.

Partnership can and does exist outside of formal structures such as clusters, allowing each partner to maintain autonomy and independence and determine the extent of collaboration. This broader interpretation of partnership seems to have fallen by the wayside, however, with an increasing tendency within the international humanitarian community to equate 'cluster' with 'partner'.

Originally established as a group of organisations that voluntarily chose to work collectively to improve preparedness, response capacity and results, clusters have evolved as the preferred forum for collaboration in humanitarian contexts. Yet policy and practice have focused only on the accountabilities of the agency leading and coordinating the cluster. There are no agreed expectations or partnership models for cluster participants to contribute to results, engage in a predictable way or share responsibility for outcomes. In reality, the cluster model seems to be based on directive leadership rather than meaningful partnership.

In this context, the Principles of Partnership have proven a useful guide to reviewing how well clusters function as partnerships. Are members in the group engaging with each other transparently and as equal partners? Is there a sense of accountability and complementarity within the group? While the POP have been a key reference point for clusters as they were being established, developed their tools and undertook training, they have not always led to shared ownership of and accountability for results.

Principles in practice

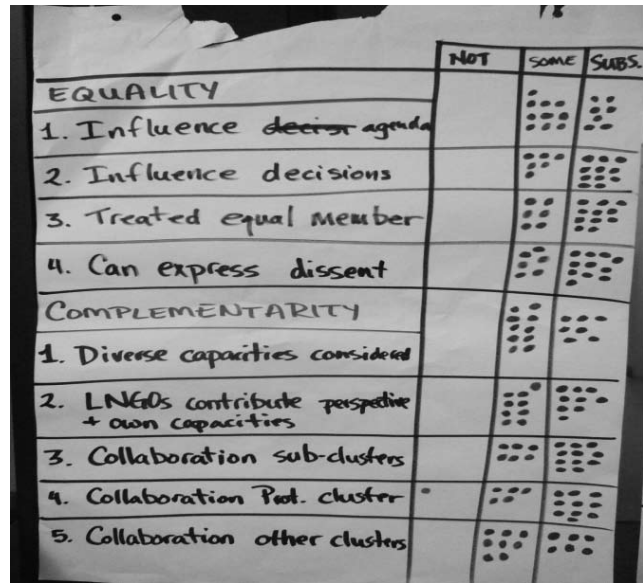
Are the POP being used in the field, and if so do they make a difference? Several reviews have been undertaken, along with efforts to document their application; tools to support implementation have also been developed.² For example, within the Child Protection Working Group – one of the areas of responsibility of the global Protection Cluster – a small team (including this author) developed a pilot methodology to monitor the application of the POPs in Uganda in 2008. The tool was developed to respond to a need to measure how a partnership functioned, rather than simply measuring process outputs, and has since been systematically included in the training of future coordinators and members.³

² See, for instance, ICVA tools and reviews: <http://www.icva.ch/doc00002199.html>.

³ See *Child Protection in Emergencies Coordinators' Handbook, 2010*, <http://onerresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Protection/CP/Documents/handbookFINAL.pdf>.

The first challenge was to decide how to explore the principles themselves. What would indicate ‘equality’ within a diverse group of organisations? How could one elaborate what ‘responsibility’ meant in practice? Several questions were developed to specifically consider the context of cluster coordination under each of the five principles, with a simple scoring for respondents to indicate whether in practice each applied ‘not at all’, ‘somewhat’ or ‘substantially’.⁴

The questionnaire was answered anonymously, with responses being posted to a grid for all to review. This formed the basis for a focus group discussion, further probing specific areas of agreement and good practice in the group, as well as areas of disagreement. The process was facilitated by the mission team, acting as a neutral party external to the operating and coordination context, to avoid unduly influencing the focus group work. First, the exercise took place in a neutral location without the coordinator or associated staff being present, away from the UNICEF office (as the child protection cluster lead agency). Second, the grid was left in place



without comment for several minutes, then open-ended questions (‘What do you find interesting in this mapping?’) were used to spur reflection within the group. Quieter

Table 1: Uganda questionnaire

Principle	Not at all	Somewhat	Substantially
Equality			
Able to influence the items placed on the sub-cluster meetings’ agendas			
Able to influence decisions and direction of the sub-cluster			
Treated as an equal member of the sub-cluster			
Able to comfortably express dissenting opinions within the sub-cluster			
Complementarity			
Diversity of members’ mandates and capacities duly considered in developing strategies, responding to priorities and gaps			
Local NGO members can contribute own perspectives, experience and capacities to sub-cluster work			
Collaboration with other sub-clusters (GBV, Rule of Law, etc.) in strategy and response			
Collaboration with the Protection Cluster in strategy and response			
Collaboration with other clusters (CCCM, WASH, education, etc.) in strategy and response			
Transparency			
Meetings open to all partners (‘open door policy’)			
Sub-cluster regularly shares information with members			
Cost plans and financial reports on sub-cluster funding (funds raised for the cluster/sub-cluster specifically) openly shared with members			
Results-oriented			
Clear strategy and work plan exist, developed jointly with members			
Work plan and strategy regularly reviewed to reflect priority areas and prevailing humanitarian concerns			
Responsibility			
Members able to deliver on commitments to cluster work			
Members able to raise issues of non-delivery of commitments to find alternative response/solutions			
Agency has adopted a code of conduct to prevent abuse			

⁴ Refer to POP survey, p. 29 of Inter-Agency Review and Documentation (May-June 2008) http://www.ugandaclusters.ug/dwnlds/0309Protect/CP/2009CP-Inter-Agency_Review_and_Documentation.pdf.

participants were able to contribute when comments were sought from all, both at the mid-point and in the wrap-up, by going around the room. Although some comments remained quite superficial, probing questions helped illustrate underlying issues related to what happened when partners did not meet their responsibilities, or when there was competition for funding. The findings and recommendations of the focus group discussions were shared with the coordinators afterwards, and agreement on next steps tailored to each outcome was reached when the national child protection working group reconvened for the mission debriefing.

Uganda was one of the first pilot cluster countries identified in 2005. Coordination bodies were well developed and had been built upon pre-existing mechanisms established over the course of the long-standing crisis in northern Uganda. Group coherence was strong, partners knew each other well and there was a shared understanding of the operational context. In three of the four locations we found strong adherence to the POP in relation to programming strategy, coverage, scope, complementarity and shared commitment. Interestingly – but perhaps not surprisingly – most disagreements arose on issues related to funding transparency, both of the cluster itself and between and among partners. In the fourth location, where funding and international presence were being dramatically reduced, the group was notably weaker and there were strong concerns across all areas. In a context of competition, partnership approaches are often constrained; complementarity and shared prioritisation become even more essential in order to achieve results.

Funding relationships within a partnership structure remain challenging, especially since the coordinating agency is also providing programme funding. International NGOs may be able to leverage additional funding from other sources, but national or local NGOs are likely to be fully dependent on the partner agency's funding for their work. While this can undermine equality among partners, if the POP are fully integrated into the group's work it may not. As one of the respondents from a local organisation put it:

Before, only the internationals decided what would be done. Now there is more respect for what we bring to the table. The weight at the table isn't only about money. We earn the weight by bringing our knowledge of communities and approaches and years of experience.

This example clearly shows the potential when partnership is developed in a principled way. In Uganda, this took time as well as targeted effort. In such a chronic humanitarian situation, where response is reviewed and developed over years rather than months, there was an opportunity to develop joint strategies and outcomes, agree on complementary approaches, identify reliable and predictable partners and build trust and transparency to encourage shared ownership of results.

Principles versus practice

As in Uganda, most current partnership models focus on long-term approaches, building more strategic and

effective partnership, exploring the interests and priorities of each party and identifying shared strategic approaches and shared risks. Yet how does this model apply to large-scale rapid-onset crises, such as the massive Haiti earthquake and Pakistan flood responses? If partnership takes time, do our principles still apply when time is of the essence?

cluster accountabilities need to be revised to take into consideration the POP

In a context where hundreds of new organisations arrive in a country, where hundreds of national organisations are already on the front line and where each is under pressure to respond immediately, is 'real' partnership possible? How do organisations engage with each other in a principled way when there is very real pressure to raise individual agency profiles in order to generate resources from the public or from donors? Are the POP still relevant, or are they simply a rhetorical luxury to be implemented only in stable situations or chronic crises?

While traditional models of partnership, building trust over time and identifying common interests and values, can certainly be established in preparedness, contingency planning and agreements at headquarters level, these do not cover the full requirements of large-scale rapid-onset emergencies. Establishing new strategic institutional partnerships in such a situation can be extremely difficult, but it is also impossible to imagine a context in which broader principles such as complementarity and results-oriented collaboration would not be in the interest of any organisation's humanitarian work.

Both Haiti and Pakistan demonstrated that cluster accountabilities need to be revised to take into consideration the POP, so that all actors understand what they will and will not be willing to contribute to a response, how results will be jointly defined and measured, and how equality and transparency can be promoted. This has relevance for all partners, both at a global level and at a country level, during preparedness and contingency planning. Ignoring the POP in the early days of an emergency can result in significant gaps in meeting basic humanitarian needs. When agencies and organisations decide to disengage from existing partnerships, opt out of coordination mechanisms or pursue programming agendas without collaboration, the overall response is weakened since knowledge, resources and assets cannot be leveraged to expand coverage. Regardless of context, these principles should still guide each organisation's engagement if the goal is to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian response.

Conclusion

The range of emergencies in 2010 pushed the international humanitarian community to the brink, forcing us to question how we organise ourselves, and

whether our model of injecting international support (and leadership) into local crises still has currency. What is clear is that new models of partnership and preparedness will be required to respond to the crises of the next decade, with a focus on the front-line capacities of communities, authorities and civil society. International organisations (UN, NGO and others) will need to recommit to predictable collaboration with an

emphasis on equal and complementary contributions to results-based outcomes. It is time to reflect again on whether partnership approaches are fundamental to our work, or just a more efficient way to leverage resources.

Christine Knudsen is Chief of the Inter-Agency and Humanitarian Partnership, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), UNICEF. She writes here in a personal capacity.

Collective efforts to improve humanitarian accountability and quality: the HAP deployment to Dadaab

Maria Kiani, HAP International

Tucked away in the arid North Eastern Province of Kenya is one of the largest and oldest refugee camp complexes in the world. Twenty-one years old, with a population of over 300,000, the Dadaab refugee camps (Ifo, Hagedera and Dagahaley) host refugees mainly from Somalia, but also from Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Sudan. Humanitarian agencies are under pressure not only to provide services to resident refugees, many of whom have lived in the camp complex for over 20 years, but also to address the needs of the approximately 1,000 refugees who continue to arrive from Somalia every month. They face a number of serious operational challenges: an enormous refugee population; a growing influx of new arrivals; camp congestion; overstretched financial and human capacities; and resentment from the host community. In addition, living in a perpetual state of refugee-hood has resulted in a prevailing sense of hopelessness and despondency among camp residents.

The HAP Roving Team

Despite its size and complexity, Dadaab receives little media attention. In 2010, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International¹ deployed its Roving Team under its New Emergency Policy (NEP) to support interested agencies in undertaking collective action to promote accountability to disaster survivors and to highlight the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Dadaab. The underlying principle of an NEP deployment is collective effort, collaboration and reinforcement of the spirit of partnership. The location, duration and terms of reference of a deployment are collectively agreed by HAP Members and interested agencies. In this instance the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and six HAP Members requested the presence of the Roving Team

¹ HAP is a Geneva-based multi-agency initiative working to improve accountability to disaster-affected people. See www.hapinternational.org.



A consultation with refugee leaders in Ifo camp

©Maria Kiani

in Dadaab to provide individual and collective support, with a particular emphasis on information sharing, participation and complaints handling for refugees and the host community.

The HAP Roving Team was jointly hosted by UNHCR and CARE. Lutheran World Federation (LWF) seconded the Gender Equity and Human Rights Officer from its Kakuma refugee operations to the Roving Team. As part of the secondment agreement between LWF and HAP, the secondee developed an action plan on how to strengthen accountability in Kakuma for LWF and other agencies. The secondment proved to be a good opportunity for cross-learning between the two refugee operations. Broad terms of reference (ToRs) were drafted, and inputs sought from senior managers in Dadaab to ensure that they reflected the reality on the ground.² Participating staff were responsible for sharing learning and expertise and developing action plans for their agencies. Agencies with designated staff and sufficient senior management oversight and support made quicker progress and sustained the momentum of the work after the departure of the Roving Team. Agencies

² See <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/tor-hap-deployment-to-dadaab-final-nb.pdf>.

which frequently changed staff did not fully benefit from the support available and made limited progress.

Inter-Agency Mapping and Action Planning Exercise

'We started working as a humanitarian group and not as single entities, we shared gaps and proposed joint solutions, we have a shared commitment for a way forward.' Participant's evaluation of the HAP Inter-Agency Mapping Exercise

HAP deployments are undertaken to highlight key accountability issues and facilitate joint action. To achieve this aim, it was agreed that the first step should be to determine the current state of accountability in the Dadaab operations (Ifo Camp was taken as a sample site), using the HAP Standard (a tool to help agencies strengthen the accountability and quality of their humanitarian responses). An open workshop was held to develop the methodology and plan for an Inter-Agency Mapping and Action Planning Exercise. To increase staff understanding and ownership, participants were asked to identify the stakeholders for consultation, develop the key accountability questions, plan the logistics and draft key messages for stakeholders to explain the purpose of the exercise and get their informed consent. In an effort to increase ownership and create a strong group dynamic, it was stressed that this was a joint inter-agency effort so that current practices could be mapped and action points developed for collective action.

This was the first time that a HAP deployment had undertaken such a large-scale accountability mapping exercise. Box 1 summarises the key steps in the process.

participants found the joint mapping exercise and sharing of experiences and challenges particularly useful

To ensure follow-up, the heads of agencies in Dadaab were briefed on the key findings and recommendations from the mapping exercise. There was wide ownership; as one agency head commented in the deployment's After-Action Review: 'I will look at these recommendations as ours not a HAP thing. HAP opened our eyes and minds to come up with a broader picture and look at what is required and use it as a tool to mobilize host communities and refugees'.³

Dadaab Accountability and Quality Working Group

Participants found the joint mapping exercise and sharing of experiences and challenges particularly useful. 'It

³ The After-Action Review report of the deployment is available at: <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/dadaab-aar-report-2010-final.pdf>.

Box 1: Inter-agency Mapping and Action Planning Exercise

Day 1

- Introduction to Humanitarian Accountability and Quality and HAP 2007 Standard
- 26 staff participated from 12 agencies

Day 2

- Stakeholder Analysis and selecting stakeholder group (according to agency specialisation or area of work)
- Developing methodologies and questions related to accountability
- Outlining expectations from senior management for follow-up and action
- Draft consent form and note to explain the purpose of the exercise
- Planning and logistics

Day 3

- HAP Team collates and reviews questions for consistency and relevance
- Finalise the consent form and explanation about the purpose of the exercise
- Finalise and distribute the questionnaires to participants

Day 4

Teams meet and brief the translators and conduct consultations:

- With 119 people belonging to the various stakeholder groups
- Conducted by 32 staff from 13 agencies

Day 4

- Plenary discussion of findings
- Priority actions and recommendations identified
- Evaluation of the inter-agency exercise

Day 5

Debrief with Heads of Agency on key findings and deciding next steps

helped to establish common ground for all agencies to start seeing our work with an accountability lens', commented one participant. In order to build upon the inter-agency collaboration and enhance staff capacity to undertake joint action in a coordinated manner, 12 agencies⁴ subsequently came together to form the Dadaab Accountability and Quality Working Group (DAQWG). A consultation meeting was held between the participating agencies to jointly determine the terms of reference.⁵ It was agreed that the DAQWG would meet monthly to discuss key accountability and quality

⁴ The 12 agencies are AEDO, Care, DRC, Film Aid International, Handicap International, IOM, LWF, NRC, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, UNHCR and WFP.

⁵ The terms of reference for the DAQWG are at <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/tor-accountability-and-quality-working-group-final-20-9-10.pdf>.

issues in the ongoing response, plan joint activities and report progress to each other. In addition, through a nominated representative it would present action points and recommendations during heads of agencies meetings. The responsibilities of hosting, chairing and acting as rapporteur are rotated and shared by all of the participating agencies. To avoid the working group becoming an information-sharing forum and losing its primary purpose as action- and outcome-oriented, clear roles and responsibilities were outlined in the ToRs. For example, if feedback or progress on recommendations made by the DAQWG is delayed by the heads of agencies, members can raise the issue with the heads of IOM, WFP and UNHCR (who participated in the initial meeting). In addition, it was agreed that the UNHCR head of mission in Dadaab would meet with the group regularly to provide support. To date, the DAQWG has met according to the agreed schedule and members continue to report to and support each other on their agency-specific accountability action plans and are working towards setting up a joint complaints system. The members have also re-examined the inter-agency referral system for identification of needs and complaints, conducted inter-agency visits, shared good practice and made recommendations to agency heads.

Linking collective and individual action

As well as facilitating collective action, a HAP deployment also provides agency-specific support. This is vitally important since accountability is an individual and collective responsibility. Accountability action plans were jointly developed by the HAP Team and designated staff of interested agencies. While staff have to report progress against their action plans to their senior management, they also have to update the DAQWG on their progress. This has proved to be an opportunity to provide peer support and learning, and a catalyst for agencies to keep moving ahead, maintain momentum and even try to outdo each other in their accountability efforts.

Challenges and solutions

A number of challenges emerged during the Dadaab deployment:

Leadership and ensuring senior management commitment and support. Having the HAP members and UNHCR support the deployment was critically important. However, not all the agencies in Dadaab had similar levels of interest and commitment and it requires additional time and effort to bring agencies to a common point of agreement and understanding.

Staff availability and time. It is important to have a flexible and adaptive approach in order to be able to respond to competing priorities, delays and staff absences. Although activities and schedules are set with the agreement of the staff concerned, at times key staff are unable to participate, which breaks the momentum for collective action and learning. Host community issues, influxes of new arrivals, annual floods and work-related responsibilities diverted staff time and focus away from action plans.

Unequal participation and commitment. In a collaborative effort, not all agencies will participate equally, and it is useful to create a small and cogent force of 'drivers', both individuals and agencies, who will lead and help others to follow.

Logistics and resources. Arranging logistics for large inter-agency activities can be challenging, and transport, security arrangements and provisions for refreshments need to be factored into planning.

Apart from agency-specific improvements according to their action plans, the collaboration between agencies has resulted in LWF and UNHCR conducting informal joint reviews on camp management; WFP and Care have set up a joint complaints system, and all members of the DAQWG are moving towards setting up joint complaints systems and improved peer support and learning. HAP continues to remain closely engaged and provide remote guidance and assistance. A follow-up support visit will be undertaken to Dadaab in May 2011.

Maria Kiani is the Roving Representative at HAP International and leads its Roving Team. She led the deployment to Dadaab.

Building effective partnerships: local views

Dayna Brown, The Listening Project

This article highlights the views of local people on how international aid agencies partner with local organisations, and the impact these relationships often have on the quality and effectiveness of aid efforts. Through Listening Exercises, The Listening Project has gathered the perspectives of local people on what has worked well, what has not and what can be done to make international aid efforts more effective and more accountable.

In many places, local people do not make the distinctions between humanitarian, recovery or development assistance

that aid workers do. While the types of assistance and the people who provide it may change over time, local people's understanding of and relationships with international aid agencies are often influenced by their first experiences with aid workers and their local partners. While humanitarian aid workers are often aware of this, the need to react fast and the pressure to spend quickly in most humanitarian contexts mean that many international aid agencies find it difficult to establish and nurture relationships with local partners, to ensure that they are providing quality assistance and that they are accountable to communities.



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The Listening Exercise in Thailand in 2007

many complaints that the increased number of ‘intermediaries’ involved in the delivery of assistance has resulted in the growth of ‘briefcase’ or even ‘wallet’ NGOs that may not represent the local community or do the work they are intended to do, and waste valuable aid resources. As one researcher in Lebanon put it: ‘Some NGOs are doing humanitarian work as a business, like a “super-profit-one-man-show.” There is one local person who knows how to deal with donors, and s/he fixes the projects for the international community according to the donor priorities. These NGOs work on demand, depending on what the current donor agenda is. NGOs are like mushrooms, when the climate changes they shoot out from the ground’.

In many conversations held by the Listening Project, people in aid-recipient societies have described how the systems and structures of international assistance (the ‘business model’) have become too focused on the quick and efficient delivery of goods and services.¹ Donors and international aid agencies are often concerned with delivering aid and spending money quickly, and in this haste they often do not spend enough time identifying good local partners and maintaining effective relationships with them.

Many people in local communities want international aid agencies to support local organisations as they know the context better and can respond more quickly. While working through local partners is intended to increase the speed of emergency response and support local capacity and ownership, the Listening Project has heard

Effective partnerships are built on mutual understanding, trust and respect

Particularly in emergencies, partners may not know each other well and may not spend a lot of time defining their partnership, and this often results in a lack of respect and trust, which is often evident to communities. As the director of a national faith-based aid agency with international partners in Kenya put it: ‘Partnership is important, and “how” is critical. Donors and partners don’t know each other completely. Because of the needs, partners relate to donors emotionally, not rationally. They have inferior feelings, and then the work has problems and is not realistic. They need new knowledge and understanding of each other. In the ways the partners have to work, they may lose trust with communities’.

The Listening Project

The Listening Project is a comprehensive and systematic exploration of the experiences and insights of people in aid-recipient societies on the cumulative effects of international assistance efforts. More than 130 international and local organisations have participated in this collaborative effort, contributing more than 400 staff members to Listening Teams. The views of nearly 6,000 people in over 20 countries were collected. Local people and the staff of local organisations talked about their perceptions of partnering – both as a model and in practice – and made recommendations on how donors and international aid agencies could partner more effectively with local organisations in emergencies.

The *Field Visit* reports from these Listening Exercises and *Issues Papers* on cross-cutting themes are available at www.cdainc.com.

in effective partnerships, local organisations know the context and culture well, and have experience working with local communities

Local organisations often feel that there is a lack of respect and appreciation for their knowledge and contributions, and that their ‘partnerships’ are limited since they are rarely involved in decision-making processes with their partners. They want their international partners to recognise and acknowledge that there are complementarities between them and that they can be more than just a delivery mechanism for aid. In effective partnerships, local organisations know the context and culture well, and have experience working with local communities, while their international partners are expected to provide consistent financial and technical support and new ideas and approaches. When partnerships are effective, partners trust one another,

¹ The Listening Project Issue Paper on *International Assistance as a Delivery System* discusses this in more detail. See www.cdainc.com.

are transparent and are accountable to each other as well as to those they serve.

At times, local organisations feel ‘used’ by international NGOs when they are included in proposals in order to comply with donor requirements that ‘local partners’ be involved. In some cases, local organisations have seen international NGOs effectively take over local initiatives. As a leader of a community-based organisation (CBO) in a refugee camp on the Thai–Burma border said: ‘We feel like INGOs come and order us to do things this way or that because they have a lot of power ... we don’t see a lot of working together in a meaningful way ... We want real partnership. For this we must always have open dialogue and mutual respect. The CBOs should not look like service providers or staff for NGOs. CBOs should have more role and voice for social change’.

Effective partnerships are about more than service delivery

Many leaders of local organisations described the relationships with their international partners – whether bilateral, multilateral, INGOs or foundations – as paternalistic. Many say that their current relationships are more focused on service delivery and are often limited to submitting a proposal, receiving funds and sending periodic written reports. The director of one CBO in Sri Lanka echoed the views of many local partners when he said: ‘When we are ready to present a new project, we can write the proposal really well and present our ideas creatively and receive funding. But during implementation we are not always sure what we are doing, and INGO monitoring processes are weak. We need support, advice and collaboration with our donors. We don’t want them to be just donors, we want colleagues and we want to share ideas and exchange best practices’.

Many local organisations also complain that their international partners have their own agendas and priorities, and that these are often not discussed transparently with their local partners. According to the leader of a local organisation in Mindanao in the Philippines, ‘Donors do a lot of assessments and focus groups, but then when what comes out of these focus groups doesn’t fit their agenda, they simply change it to make it fit. There is no real partnership between international donors and local NGOs’. Another local NGO director there suggested that: ‘Appropriate timing, transparent motives, and a joint strategy are all markers of a good partnership’.

Local organisations feel that their experience and ideas are not always sought by their ‘partners’, who have predetermined the assistance they will provide and often just want to deliver the aid quickly. As a Tamil civil society leader in Sri Lanka said: ‘NGOs are inherently bureaucratic. Top leaders make decisions at the higher level without



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The Listening Exercise in Ethiopia in 2006

asking locals. Pre-tsunami local NGOs were very active in the communities. Some INGOs helped mobilise local people. But some consultants and expatriate staff didn’t understand local capacity and treated locals like their servants. The language and cultural gap was wide. NGOs talk with one another in fancy hotels away from the affected people – “white skin mentality”.

Effective partnering should encourage collaboration

The way funds flow through the aid system can stimulate competition and stifle coordination and innovation. As a Lebanese NGO director said, ‘There is not enough funding for local NGOs, so the international NGOs play the local NGOs against each other – to outbid each other’. A Palestinian NGO director in a refugee camp in Lebanon further explained, ‘I have no freedom to present my own ideas. This is because of the donors who put the local NGOs in competition. Everyone has to get money for the same projects. Some present the same projects to many donors. But the ideas are always the same. It’s what they want and have money for’.

Some local organisations acknowledge their roles in fuelling this competition and suggest that more partnerships among local NGOs are needed. As a leader of a local NGO in Ecuador said, ‘I offer self-criticism of us as NGOs: we must be more creative. We are too isolated – sometimes being only two blocks away from an NGO, we don’t know each other nor cooperate with each other, due to jealousy, fear of competition and our proprietorship style regarding ideas, work areas, etc. The networks of aid providers are an antidote’.

Effective international partners monitor and support local partners

Local partners want regular discussions, visits and ongoing support from their international counterparts. As a local NGO staff member in Cambodia put it: ‘We get monitoring visits every six months. We would like to see our donor here more often. But unfortunately when they believe that

programs are going well, they just don't visit as often ... We want the donors to come and see the real situation, not just read about it in our reports or other sources. For example, in a report they mention that a field visit/training will take one day, but in reality it takes two days because of bad road conditions. Donors don't understand, they have never seen the local roads. They demand to know why more time is spent on activities. They would be less demanding if they came and spent more time here'.

Even in emergencies, people expect those who are funding aid efforts to know who they are partnering with and to trust (and verify) that they are providing assistance effectively, as well as efficiently. The balance between trust and control is important when trying to maintain effective partnerships. When international partners arrive for unannounced visits, their local partners may think that they do not trust them. Conversely, local people point out that things can easily be 'arranged' when an international agency notifies a local partner or community of its visit beforehand. As several people suggested, 'trust does not exclude control', and having effective monitoring systems in place does not have to reflect a lack of confidence or diminish the spirit of partnership.

Regular visits help international aid agencies to better understand the local circumstances and their local partners, and to be more accountable for how their assistance is utilised. Local people say that they usually have no voice in determining which partners international aid agencies work with at the local level, and that they are often confused about which partners are accountable for what. People often asked Listening Teams who controls international and local aid organisations, who supervises them and to whom they are accountable. Partners and partnerships need to be evaluated regularly, and this should be valued as an important element when doing project and performance evaluations.

Effective partners think beyond short-term projects

Even if their partnerships begin during emergencies, partners need to approach their relationships with a longer

horizon and more consistency. For many international aid agencies that provide humanitarian as well as development assistance, the partnerships they establish (or build on) during emergencies will affect their relationships with communities for much longer. Even in the midst of an emergency, it is possible to build the capacity of local partners, but often there is little time – and sometimes little funding – to focus on it effectively. As the coordinator of a Lebanese NGO told us: 'We need strategic, long-term partnerships with donors. The impact doesn't come overnight ... If they want to make a change that lasts, they need to start taking longer breaths'.

Too often in emergencies local partners may be seen as short-term service delivery mechanisms, rather than civil society organisations. A researcher at a think tank in Kosovo pointed out that the emphasis among donors and aid agencies on supporting local partners to implement aid projects there had led to the creation of a 'project society', not a civil society. Local people have been critical of international aid agencies for putting too much focus on completing projects without enough attention on building and supporting the capacity of the local partners implementing them.

The president of a prominent national NGO in Thailand summed up the challenges involved in creating and nurturing effective partnerships in emergencies when he said: 'The role of the "donor" does not have to be a detached funding role. It can be a partnership ... Unfortunately, international NGOs don't build capacity of national NGOs. Even when they work through local partners, the local NGOs simply become a delivery mechanism, not a full partner. Partnership requires building relationships. That takes time. But most international NGOs have donors who demand fast and visible results. There is a disconnect in the way most agencies envision their missions and goals, and the way they implement their projects seeking rapid outcomes.'

Dayna Brown is the Director of The Listening Project at CDA Collaborative Learning Projects in Cambridge, MA, United States.

NGO–government partnerships for disaster preparedness in Bangladesh

Matt Bannerman, Md. Harun Or Rashid and Kaiser Rejve

Bangladesh is exposed to significant flood, cyclone and earthquake hazards. Vulnerability to these and other hazards is exacerbated by socio-economic factors, including one of the highest population densities in the world, rapid and often unplanned urban expansion, poor infrastructure, weak institutions and a lack of diversity in livelihoods, with a high degree of dependence on agriculture. Widespread poverty, with 60% of the population living below the poverty line, further limits the

ability of people and communities to protect themselves and their assets against disaster.

In such a context, effective disaster preparedness is especially important. To achieve this, capacity-building at all levels is needed: from communities, where simple steps can be taken to build awareness and help vulnerable people protect themselves, their families, their homes and their assets; through the tiers of local and regional

government, all of which have important roles in preparing for disasters; to the national level, where robust legal, policy and disaster management frameworks must be established and implemented. This article examines attempts to support capacity-building for preparedness, with a particular focus on collaboration between government actors and civil society.

Roles of government and civil society

The government of Bangladesh has a constitutional responsibility to protect the population from disasters and help those affected. As such it must lead and coordinate both disaster preparedness and response. Civil society – including the media, the academic community and national and international NGOs – has an important role in advocating for improvements, encouraging and supporting positive initiatives and holding the government to account. International agencies – including NGOs, UN agencies and the Red Cross/Red Crescent – can provide resources and expertise, both to improve disaster preparedness and management and through long-term development programmes to address underlying vulnerability. All of these actors share the same goal: reducing vulnerability and protecting and supporting affected people. This does not, however, guarantee that they will work in a coordinated and collaborative way. Lack of effective collaboration can lead to a failure to deliver the protection and support vulnerable people have a right to expect.

Significant progress has been made in disaster management in recent years. Bangladesh has a good operational framework – the Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD) – which defines roles and responsibilities in the event of disaster, as well as a draft Disaster Management Act (DMA). But there is still no framework codified in law, and there are no legal safeguards for affected people.

Codifying government responsibilities in law will be part of the solution, but not the only part. Legal obligations are one thing; the capacity to meet them is quite another. There is currently a significant gap in capacity, particularly at the local government level. Under the new legal framework, local Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) will be key institutions with important responsibilities. However, in many of the most vulnerable areas DMC members still lack the basic skills and knowledge to fulfil their anticipated role.

The CDMP

With support from international donors the government launched the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) in 2004. The first phase of the project was implemented between 2004 and 2009, and the current CDMP II is an expansion and scaling up of this first phase. CDMP II aims to institutionalise the adoption of risk reduction approaches, not just in its host Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, but more broadly across 13 ministries and agencies. CDMP II channels support through government and development partners, civil society and NGOs, promoting cooperation, providing coordination, ranking priority programmes and projects and allocating resources to disaster management, risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Box 1: The Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)

The Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project is a global initiative led by six humanitarian and development NGOs (CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision). Now in a five-year second phase, the ECB Project is supported by a range of public and private donors, and is being implemented in partnership with actors from across the humanitarian community, including other networks and partnerships. The ECB Project supports consortia in five pilot countries/regions, representing a diverse set of geographical, cultural and hazard contexts (the five pilots are Bangladesh, Bolivia, Indonesia, Niger and the Horn of Africa). Working with national NGOs, governments, the UN and other actors, these consortia plan and implement long-term capacity-building programmes focused on disaster risk reduction, staff capacity, accountability and impact measurement.

How ECB consortia work together to build capacity

In Bangladesh, as in the other consortia, a start-up workshop brought together experienced national humanitarian practitioners to analyse their national context, examine existing strengths and weaknesses and develop shared, long-term capacity development plans to address gaps. Participants also reached agreement on ways of working for what was a new and untested collaborative structure.

Subsequent meetings have focused on reviewing and revising these plans, along with capturing and documenting learning on the process of collaboration itself. Structured self-assessments completed by each member of the consortium provided baselines of existing capacity in key areas; the process will be repeated annually over the course of the project to track progress and inform revisions. The data is triangulated with complementary self-assessments by the global humanitarian management teams at each of the participating agencies, as well as evaluations, after-action reviews and other evaluative processes within the target countries. Regular simulation exercises are held, which provide staff with opportunities to test new skills and knowledge in a controlled environment.

In developing joint capacity-building plans, the Bangladesh consortium prioritised activities that exploited the additional leverage and impact possible when a group of agencies act together. For example, one of the first consortium activities was the development of a joint advocacy strategy following the response to Cyclone Aila in 2009.

Collaboration between the ECB Project and the government

Practical, constructive engagement with the government is a key component of the strategy of all the ECB consortia. In Bangladesh, it was clear from the outset that a close collaborative relationship with the CDMP would be

critical, and senior CDMP staff participated in the start-up workshop at which the consortium's priorities were defined. The relationship deepened through participation in joint activities. For example, one of the first of the ECB consortium's initiatives was a programme designed to improve awareness and understanding amongst emergency staff of the importance of accountability to affected communities, based around a translation into Bangla of the popular ECB Project product *The Good Enough Guide to Accountability and Impact Measurement in Emergencies*.¹ CDMP staff joined the editorial panel for the translation and had input into the design of the training and roll-out activities that accompanied it. Plans are now being developed for the ECB Project and CDMP to pilot this training with Disaster Management Committees. This comprehensive accountability programme will complement a training programme conducted by the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (on the CBHA see the article by Sean Lowrie and Marieke Hounjet on pp. 26–28). Together these programmes will continue to enhance the ability of NGOs, partners and the government to serve communities and develop effective two-way communication with disaster-affected communities.

Another priority established by the ECB consortium was to strengthen the capacity of local DMCs, in close partnership with the CDMP. As a starting point, the consortium conducted a study on capacity-building work to date with the DMCs. This report will be incorporated into the CDMP's developing knowledge base and uploaded to its disaster management information centre and website. A mapping study identified different agency approaches to capacity-building and significant duplication of training effort in some districts and sub-districts, whilst other vulnerable areas remain unsupported. It also pointed to failures in the national coordination of capacity-building efforts, and recommended that the ECB consortium advocate with the government to improve the situation.

Experience highlighted in the report suggests that, in addition to training and regular mentoring, engagement with DMCs during project implementation and the promotion of an active role for the committees in vulnerability analysis and community-based disaster risk management projects were key to the sustainable development of capacity. With a few exceptions, existing efforts to build capacity in the DMCs do not include humanitarian standards and principles. Through a series of regular meetings, the ECB consortium and the CDMP will develop a joint action plan to reduce duplication, ensure a focus on standards and accountability in capacity-building and share data.

Benefits and costs

The ECB/CDMP partnership has evolved over time. During its first phase, the CDMP emphasised partnerships with individual humanitarian organisations. In the second phase the emphasis has shifted in recognition of the importance of working with consortia and multi-agency platforms. The partnership began informally but has

¹ See www.ecbproject.org/goodenoughguide.

become increasingly structured over time, with designated communication channels and focal points and regular scheduled meetings. Both parties recognise the benefits of the partnership. The ECB consortium is clear that it cannot work independently of the government and sees the CDMP partnership as a critical way to influence and support government policy and practice. Equally, the CDMP recognises the importance of the energy, expertise and resources the ECB consortium and its members can bring to bear, and sees the advantage in a single dialogue with a group of agencies working together, rather than a series of disconnected, bilateral conversations.

The partnership is not without costs. Maintaining the relationship has taken time and energy. NGO staff and government officials often come from different backgrounds and have different working styles and cultures. In particular, there is often an assumption that the government is a single homogenous entity, when in fact there is often a great diversity of agendas, approaches and alliances even within a single department or bureau. Identifying entry points and 'champions' is critical. Personalities and personal chemistry, particularly between the leaders of the various partners, is very important in overcoming these tensions. Tensions can also arise when NGOs simultaneously engage in public advocacy which criticises the government. Again, the diversity and complexity of government institutions makes matters more complex than they might at first appear: whilst some government actors may resent open criticism from partners, others acknowledge shortcomings and recognise the usefulness of public pressure in overcoming inertia and opposition.

Conclusion

These challenges notwithstanding, the key lesson is that collaboration between governments and NGOs can increase the impact of the work of both partners. The ECB consortium in Bangladesh is already seeing evidence of this through avoiding duplication, better targeting of scarce resources and improved sharing of information. The partnership has opened up the critical tier of local government, where capacity-building has great potential to enhance the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian preparedness and response. Working together has greatly increased the acceptance and promotion of humanitarian standards and principles.

The lessons from this still-evolving partnership have implications beyond Bangladesh, as governments across the world become more active and assertive in taking control of 'their' emergencies and in managing the risks that their populations face. At the recent ALNAP conference on this theme, held in Malaysia in November 2010, delegates from national government disaster management agencies made several very clear requests to this end. First, the international humanitarian system should refocus on national capacities, including those of national and local governments. Second, there is a need, not new but still urgent, for better coordination of capacity-building and institutional strengthening between emergencies, rather than just during the disaster phase itself. Third, the flow of both financial and technical resources needs to be

smoother to avoid overwhelming influxes during the relief phase of high-profile disasters, and to increase longer-term, planned and coordinated risk reduction, capacity-building and preparedness. Long-term partnerships such as that being built by the ECB consortium and the CDMP in Bangladesh, based on relationships of trust between governments and humanitarian organisations, are perhaps the only way that this can be achieved.

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Working with ASEAN on disaster risk reduction and disaster management

Lilian Mercado Carreon

Natural disasters are a frequent occurrence in Southeast Asia, killing an estimated 350,000 people in the last decade and causing tens of billions dollars' worth of damage. With such high loss of life and extensive economic damage, increasing the resilience of its ten member states is a key priority for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).¹ To that end, on 24 December 2010, the anniversary of the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) came into force.

The AADMER

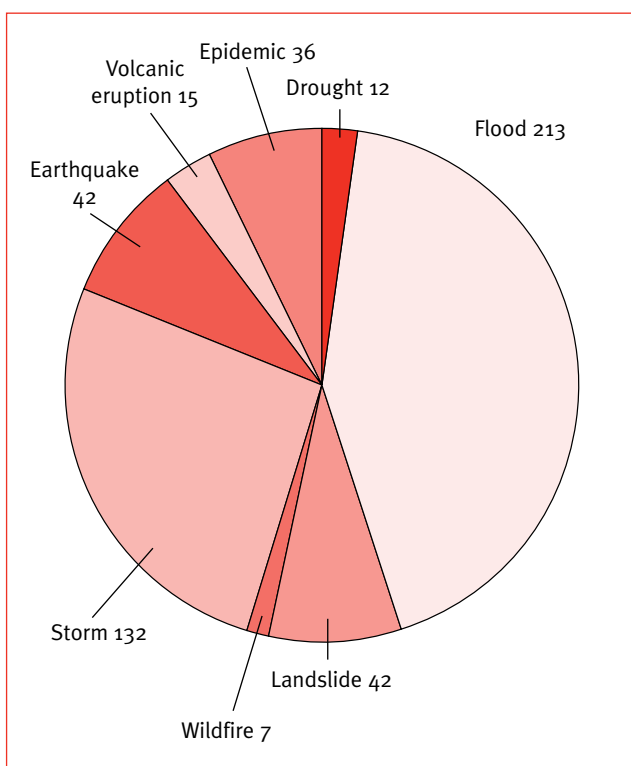
The AADMER is a legally binding agreement. As a regional framework that has been ratified by all member states, it provides mechanisms to reduce loss of life and assets resulting from disasters in Southeast Asia. It also aims to facilitate joint responses to disasters through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation. The Ministers or Secretaries of the government bodies in charge of disaster management and risk reduction comprise the Conference of Parties (COP), which is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the overall implementation of the agreement. The ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), made up of the respective national disaster management offices of each ASEAN member state, executes the agreement.

The AADMER has paved the way for the establishment of the ASEAN Co-ordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management, more commonly referred to as the AHA Centre. Based in the Indonesian capital Jakarta, it is to be launched in July 2011 as the operational engine of the AADMER. It is expected to facilitate cooperation and coordination amongst ASEAN nations, and with relevant UN and international organisations. The ACDM will be its governing board.

The ASEAN Secretariat, and specifically its Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division, supports the COP and ACDM. Part of its function is to ensure coordination with other relevant international

¹ ASEAN's ten members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Figure 1: Number of occurrences by hazard type, 2001–2009



bodies. In addition, the ASEAN Secretariat administers the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief Fund, and monitors and evaluates the AADMER's Work Programme.

The AADMER Work Programme aims to improve ASEAN's capacity for effective and efficient regional early warning and monitoring, preparedness, emergency response and disaster risk reduction by putting in place supportive policies, systems, plans, procedures, mechanisms and institutional and legal frameworks, at both regional and national levels. Alongside this, the Work Programme also aims to enhance the technical and institutional capacities of ASEAN members. To improve the coordination of humanitarian assistance and emergency response the ACDM intends to establish and institutionalise common operational procedures and mechanisms.

Table 1: Deaths from natural disasters in Southeast Asia, 2000–2009

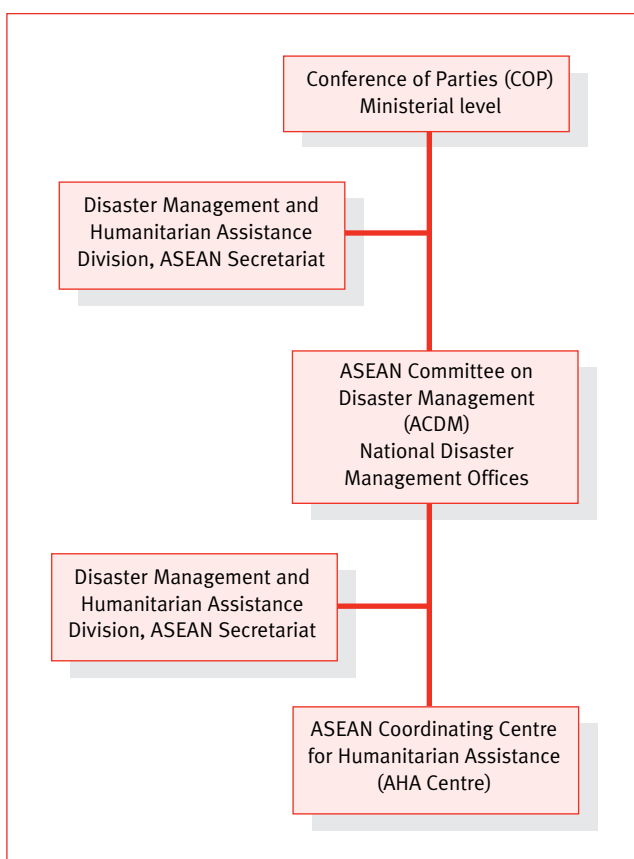
	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam	Total
Earthquake (seismic activity)	0	174,921	0	80	71	15	0	8,345	0	183,432
Epidemic	189	1,190	46	62	30	35	35	112	105	1,804
Flood	455	2,790	33	112	102	489	0	968	2,000	6,949
Mass movement dry	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	11
Mass movement wet	0	1,026	0	10	41	1,727	0	38	109	2,951
Storm	19	4	16	3	138,636	7,141	0	27	1,319	147,165
Volcano	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	663	179,933	95	267	138,880	9,418	35	9,490	3,533	342,314

Source: EM-DAT, www.emdat.be.

Table 2: Economic losses from natural disasters in Southeast Asia, 2000–2009 (US\$000s)

	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam	Total (ooo)
Drought	38,000	1,000	0	0	0	453	0	422,300	242,120	703,873
Earthquake (seismic activity)	0	10,828,600	0	500,000	500,000	1,804	0	1,000,000	0	12,830,404
Flood	176,100	1,614,633	1,000	1,001,000	0	104,085	0	657,067	1,886,800	5,440,685
Mass movement dry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mass movement wet	0	115,004	0	0	0	9,203	0	0	0	124,207
Storm	0	0	100,000	0	4,000,688	2,087,692	0	22,246	2,926,285	9,136,911
Volcano	0	0	0	0	0	4,794	0	0	0	4,794
Wildfire	0	14,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14,000
Total	214,100	12,573,237	101,000	1,501,000	4,500,688	2,208,031	0	2,101,613	5,055,205	28,254,874

Source: EM-DAT, www.emdat.be.



The Work Programme also includes projects meant to assist member states and promote regional collaboration in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into national development policies. This extends to providing support for risk reduction measures that link with climate change adaptation. In recognition that many other actors have been working on the same concerns, the AADMER Work Programme also includes the fostering of partnerships and collaborative initiatives on disaster preparedness and response, disaster risk reduction and recovery. Finally, the Work Programme aims to support community-based approaches in disaster management and risk reduction, thereby instilling a culture of safety at the grassroots level.

A people-centred approach

According to the ASEAN Charter, ‘all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building’. Consequently, AADMER includes amongst its principles the involvement of ‘all stakeholders, including local communities, non-governmental organisations and private enterprises, utilising, among others, community-based disaster preparedness and early response approaches’.

To translate these principles of civil society engagement into practice, a group of international NGOs came together

to form the ASEAN Partnership Group (APG) to support the ASEAN Secretariat on two issues: reducing infant mortality and strengthening ASEAN's humanitarian response and disaster risk reduction strategies.² Chaired by Oxfam and governed by a Regional Governance Board composed of its membership, the APG began by seconding to the ASEAN Secretariat two technical advisors. These advisors and their support team work with the ACDM and the ASEAN Secretariat at the regional level and with national disaster management organisations and civil society stakeholders at the country level. Consultations have led to the AADMER Work Programme strategies on partnership, resource mobilisation, training and knowledge management.

Challenges

Bringing a civil society partnership of NGOs into a functional working relationship with the ASEAN Secretariat was a challenge. Operational differences and governance systems had to be understood by both parties, and agreements reached on how coordination and cooperation would work. This was especially true for the two Oxfam advisors seconded to the Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division of the ASEAN Secretariat.

It was also important to offer something of value from the APG membership's diverse development and disaster risk reduction experience, to establish its credibility and expertise with the ACDM and the ASEAN Secretariat. By working with the ASEAN Secretariat's Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division and with member states, the APG is increasing appreciation for the role that civil society could play in the implementation of the AADMER.

Implementing the APG's programme at the country level in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam brought its own set of challenges. Each country context is unique, and progress on legal frameworks for disaster risk reduction and disaster management and the institutionalisation of risk reduction varies between countries. Although the APG had a common set of activities to achieve the same overall outcomes, implementation was customised to fit each country situation.

Results so far

The APG has succeeded in raising awareness of the AADMER amongst various stakeholders, including civil society organisations (CSOs) and national government agencies in Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam. At the policy level, the APG has helped to ensure that the language of the AADMER Work Programme reflects inclusive approaches and downward accountability. APG members and partners work with civil society actors at the country and community levels, and the APG aims to enable them to use the provisions and flagship projects of the AADMER Work Programme in furthering their participation in disaster risk reduction. The APG has drawn up a long-term strategy that aims to further raise civil society awareness of the AADMER, in particular its commitment to involve all stakeholders 'including local communities, non-governmental organisations and private

² The APG's members are ChildFund, HelpAge, Mercy Malaysia, Oxfam GB, Plan, Save the Children and World Vision.

enterprises, utilising, among others, community-based disaster preparedness and early response approaches'. Enhancing understanding of the links between the AADMER and national policies and programmes is part of this awareness-raising effort.

The APG also sees value in its role as a catalyst for dialogue between disaster management and risk reduction authorities and civil society, and will try to facilitate agreements on specific partnership projects at various levels. Finally, the APG plans to help further increase civil society's capacity to engage in the implementation of AADMER flagship projects, including monitoring and evaluation.

A training needs assessment project has surveyed the capacity needs of government and CSO representatives to inform the design of the AADMER capacity development programme. A knowledge management project aims to establish a resource centre and online knowledge and information portal for disaster management and emergency response in Southeast Asia, as well as building mechanisms that ensure the active use and application of knowledge and information down to the community level.

The APG, working alongside the Geneva-based Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), was also involved in developing ASEAN's Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT) methodology and tools. ERAT is intended to assist decision-makers in directing immediate assistance in response to disasters. The methodology highlights the importance of coordinating with local CSOs, because of their deep roots in communities and because they provide immediate assistance to those affected by a disaster, often ahead of international actors.

A shifting landscape for NGOs?

The partnership strategy has been taken further by the ASEAN Secretariat itself, which has proposed to the ACDM that a formal partnership agreement be drawn up with CSOs. The idea constitutes a significant step forward for ASEAN, and has triggered vigorous discussion amongst the ACDM members. The proposal should also be discussed amongst CSOs with equal vigour and reflection.

Southeast Asia's governments are intent on improving their disaster risk reduction capabilities and asserting their mandate and authority in coordinating international humanitarian responses. The actual and potential improvements that the AADMER might trigger and sustain are undoubtedly welcome. After all, the formal mandate and duty to uphold and ensure people's right to life and safety belongs to governments. These changes will alter the operational landscape for many civil society organisations, including the international NGOs that have tended to dominate emergency responses. Given ASEAN's ambition and the determination of its member states to set up their own disaster management mechanisms and ensure that they have the capabilities to sustain them, what role is there for civil society? In a changing world, what can CSOs offer the people and governments of Southeast Asia? What form would a partnership between ASEAN and NGOs take? Is a formal partnership even an option?

There are no immediate or easy answers to these questions, which is why it is all the more important for civil society to recognise that positive change is happening, and that new roles and relationships are emerging. The APG plans to initiate a series of dialogues among civil society groups to discuss the possibility of a formal partnership with ASEAN, followed by a dialogue with ACDM leaders on multi-stakeholder partnerships. There will be a lot to consider, both for ASEAN and for CSOs. The good news is that the Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division of the ASEAN Secretariat has become

a champion of the idea of partnership, and the ACDM, though unsurprisingly cautious, is also open to the idea. The relationship between ASEAN and civil society is evolving, and humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction are serving as platforms for the emergence of a new and better relationship.

Lilian Mercado Carreon is seconded from Oxfam to ASEAN as an Advisor on Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation for the AADMER. She wrote this article in a personal capacity.

MERCY Malaysia's experiences of partnership

Faizal Perdaus, MERCY Malaysia

Over the last few years there has been a growing recognition that working in partnership can improve humanitarian outcomes. A range of partnership models have been deployed, including North-South cooperation, and partnerships among international NGOs, between them and national and local NGOs and with host and local governments, as well as directly with local communities. This article outlines MERCY Malaysia's experience of working in partnership in Malaysia, Myanmar and Gaza.

Malaysia

While Malaysia has not been hit by a major natural disaster, annual seasonal floods affect different parts of the country at slightly different times of the year. MERCY Malaysia embarked on a disaster preparedness programme in 2007, beginning in a school in a district in the southern peninsula state of Johor. Many schools in the state had been badly affected by floods in late 2006, and some had to delay reopening for the new term until flood waters had receded. The initial programme was a 'school watching' workshop, which consisted of detailed hazard mapping combined with awareness of disaster preparedness principles and the application of these principles to the hazards identified during the mapping exercise. Both teachers and students were involved.

The idea quickly caught on, and there was a positive response from the district and state education authorities. MERCY Malaysia then began direct discussions with the Ministry of Education (MOE) at the central level. It emerged that the ministry and UNICEF had developed a pilot project called the Safe School programme, including a UNICEF handbook with general guidelines. However, since the MOE did not have trained and equipped personnel to carry out the programme it had not been implemented. The MOE requested MERCY Malaysia's support, and a Memorandum



Local staff aboard a boat on the Delta, Myanmar

of Understanding was signed and the programme was officially launched. It has since evolved, with two distinct elements, the School Watching Workshop (SWW) and the School Preparedness Program (SPP). It has become a model for institutional preparedness programmes in Malaysia and throughout the region, and has been replicated in MERCY Malaysia programmes with local and international partners in Indonesia, Cambodia and China. To date MERCY has directly trained 2,995 students and 491 teachers. Many more students and teachers have been involved in training of trainers programmes. About 150 schools throughout the country have participated in the programme.

Some of the challenges faced by MERCY Malaysia in implementing the partnership were at the central level with the MOE, while others involved teachers and students at the local level. At the central level, it was difficult to align the programme with the ministry's overall strategy, and convincing some key members of the ministry that the benefits of the programme outweighed its costs was a challenge. As for the teachers and students, there were

two main challenges initially: first, getting both teachers and students to appreciate and understand the concept of disaster preparedness and its importance for schools and their inhabitants; and second, getting them involved in training of trainers workshops. The positive impact of the first workshops meant that we had enough momentum to overcome both problems. Our teams have also worked to make the workshops and training programmes more creative, participative and interesting.

Myanmar

Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 was by far the biggest natural disaster to hit Myanmar in many years. The early stages of the humanitarian response were dogged with problems, not least access issues for incoming aid personnel and materials. Other challenges in the initial stages included finding reliable local partners and coordinating the response in an environment where the regime generally views civil society, especially foreign civil society organisations, with suspicion.

**as we were new to the country,
it was necessary to find reliable
and like-minded partners**

MERCY Malaysia deployed early in the emergency phase of the disaster response. As we were new to the country, it was necessary to find reliable and like-minded partners. The break came when an independent private company operating a river cruise service in the Delta offered NGOs the use of two of its boats to facilitate the delivery of aid to cyclone-affected areas. Several major international NGOs took up the offer, including Save the Children (SC) UK, which had had an operation in Myanmar for several years. SC in Myanmar realised that, in the acute stage of the emergency, health and medical aid was the priority. Having developed a cordial relationship with SC UK prior to Nargis, MERCY Malaysia, despite being a relatively small Southern NGO, was able to partner with SC on a hospital boat serving affected people in the Delta. Riverbank towns such as Myawlaungmein and Myawmyawmeingjun became centres from where MERCY Malaysia teams of Malaysian and Burmese medical and relief workers delivered aid, with the river cruiser being the main mode of transport. In smaller, more remote centres and villages teams set up and ran mobile clinics. Later, during the early recovery phase, this operation was expanded to include static clinics and land-based mobile clinics. SC further facilitated operations by augmenting MERCY's supply of medication and disposable medical items through its logistics team and facilities based in Bangkok. The Ministry of Health



©MERCY Malaysia

A speech therapy session at a clinic in Gaza

(MOH) in Myanmar also played a positive role in allowing the operations run by SC and MERCY Malaysia to continue, alongside a few other similar operations run by other international NGOs. MERCY Malaysia's health and medical programmes run jointly with SC in Myanmar lasted for about six months.

One of the main challenges MERCY Malaysia faced as an organisation in this operation was adhering to standards for medication and supplies as determined by Save the Children in Bangkok. This was a good learning experience for us as we had to ensure that whatever supplies and medication or kits we used, including material not supplied by SC, were acceptable to our partner and met international standards. We have since implemented a set of guidelines and standards for all our medication and medical supplies.

Gaza

MERCY Malaysia began health programming in Gaza after the Israeli offensive in December 2008. One of the areas of work is a psychosocial programme in Khan Younis. The programme is conducted in partnership with the Emaar Society, a local NGO. Difficulties concerning access and permits influenced MERCY's decision to work through a local partner. MERCY provided financial and technical support to Emaar, while insisting that the NGO adhered as closely as possible to internationally accepted delivery and accountability standards. We have implemented a technical and operational support system which includes content experts as well as programme staff at HQ, who monitor and assist our partners in their work and ensure that proper reporting is in place.

To date, this programme has successfully attended to over 1,150 families and provided specific psychotherapy to over 530 individuals. Most of these patients suffered psychological trauma as a result of the war in 2008–2009, although a few had psychological symptoms even before that. The Ministry of Health in Gaza has allowed and encouraged the programme, as it complements its efforts significantly.

The main challenge we faced in this programme was communications. We had to rely on regular and updated communication from our partner Emaar through our field coordinator in Gaza, or sometimes directly to HQ, and for technical issues on our content expert in Malaysia. The experience has helped to improve MERCY Malaysia's overall communications with field operations.

Conclusion

In all three examples given here the value of partnership has been clear, and it has brought great benefits to affected communities. Without partnerships in the programmes in Gaza and Myanmar both MERCY Malaysia and its partners, Save the Children and Emaar, would not have been able to deliver medical and psychosocial aid to beneficiaries in such a timely manner. The positive role of governments

either in a direct partnership or as a facilitator has also been crucial. When engaging with governments in difficult areas, the challenge for humanitarian actors like MERCY Malaysia is to maintain our humanitarian focus and encourage governments to continue supporting programmes in the long term. The school preparedness programme is an example of the importance of humanitarian NGOs engaging with local governments in long-term community-based programmes.

MERCY Malaysia's experience of partnership has not been without problems, but we hope that, by sharing these experiences, we can demonstrate the positive impact that a genuine partnership can bring to humanitarian efforts, and show the added value that partnership makes possible.

Faizal Perdaus is President of MERCY Malaysia.

Making local partnerships work for disaster risk reduction

John Twigg and Helen Bottomley

Partnerships are said to be essential for successful disaster risk reduction (DRR), but basic questions about what makes them work are rarely asked. The rationale for multi-stakeholder partnerships in DRR is clear and compelling: DRR is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster. It aims to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities to disasters as well as dealing with the environmental and other hazards that trigger them. DRR thinking sees disasters as complex problems demanding a *collective* response from different disciplinary and institutional groups – in other words, partnerships.

No single group or organisation can address every aspect of such a wide-ranging and complex way of dealing with disasters. The level of a community's resilience to disasters is influenced by external capacities, in particular by emergency management services but also by other social and administrative services, public infrastructure and a host of socio-economic and political linkages with the wider world. Partnership approaches are also important in integrating DRR with other issues and sectors, particularly with national and local government, sustainable development, climate change adaptation and humanitarian response.

Whilst the need for multi-stakeholder cooperation in DRR is generally acknowledged, it is not discussed much in the literature on DRR practice, which rarely undertakes a critical examination of the nature and effectiveness of partnerships or the issues involved in partnership building. There is little guidance available on how to create effective DRR partnerships, or the challenges involved in attempting to do so. Much of the guidance assumes that partnership-building is a straightforward technical business, or even overlooks it altogether. Writing on local- and community-level initiatives tends to focus on internal community factors or external social, economic and institutional threats, suggesting that the relationship

between the community and outside actors is at worst adversarial, at best focused on advocacy for assistance or policy reform.¹

Inter-Agency Group learning review

This article presents lessons about partnerships from a recently completed project for the DRR NGO Inter-Agency Group (comprising ActionAid, Christian Aid, Plan, Practical Action and Tearfund), based on DRR work funded by DFID. This was a 'learning review': a peer review exercise to identify common lessons in practice and policy, particularly to do with the implementation of DRR initiatives or moving towards resilience at local and community levels.²

One of the main underlying themes of the programmes undertaken by the Inter-Agency Group – arguably *the* main underlying theme – is that appropriate processes and relationships are fundamental to DRR. Essentially, this involves a shift in the location of capacities and influence, in which vulnerable communities assess and understand their circumstances more completely, engage in project design and implementation with other local stakeholders on a more equal footing, and gain a much stronger voice in dialogues with higher levels of authority and power.

Inclusive partnerships

In DRR the emphasis is on working with those who are most vulnerable to shocks and stresses. Identifying and including the most vulnerable might seem relatively straightforward, but even vulnerable communities may contain their own marginalised groups. Identifying

1 J. Twigg, *Identifying Partnership Needs and Opportunities*, Disaster Studies Working Paper 18 (London: Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre, 2009), www.abuhrc.org/rp/publications/Pages/wpdsm.aspx.

2 J. Twigg and H. Bottomley, *Disaster Risk Reduction NGO Inter-Agency Group Learning Review* (London: Inter-Agency Group, 2010), available on the Eldis 'Disaster Risk Reduction and Building Resilience' community pages (www.eldis.org) or from j.twigg@ucl.ac.uk.

such groups and ensuring their engagement in local partnerships are not simple one-off actions: they have to be applied systematically throughout a project. This also requires operational agencies to investigate community structures and local power relationships so that they can build in safeguards against marginalisation.

Entry points and mobilising communities

Finding an appropriate programmatic entry point is crucial in creating viable partnerships. Sustainable livelihoods approaches, for instance, are valuable in creating or strengthening the social organisations and capital on which partnerships can be built, because they are based on everyday needs and activities. Focusing on a specific group or institution in society can also have a multiplier, partnership-building effect. For example, working with young people opens up the possibility of broader community outreach in communicating DRR information, through a range of pathways, both formal (e.g. local leaders and committees) and informal (e.g. family, friends, neighbours). Similarly, schools are important hubs of contacts and linkages with other official institutions, as well as delivering education. They are public institutions found nearly everywhere, located at the core of the community, respected and valued.

finding an appropriate programmatic entry point is crucial

All the agencies involved in the learning review found that benefits of a less tangible nature (e.g. rights awareness, active citizenship) are valuable building-blocks for partnerships because they help to make communities more resilient and powerful. Benefits acknowledged by communities or the organisations working with them included new ways of thinking (better ways to assess their situation and future options); more community cohesion, new linkages and alliances (capacity to link within and between communities for common action); fuller citizenship (awareness of rights, laws and local governance mechanisms); and greater voice and access (capacity to express and advance issues and to lobby institutions).

Working together to understand vulnerability and risk

One of the main conclusions of the 2009 *Views from the Frontline* study, which was based on research in 48 countries, was that participatory risk/vulnerability assessments at the local level constituted 'a strategic entry point to building resilience'.³ This is because such assessments not only improve knowledge and hence inform disaster preparedness, but also increase collective awareness, raise social demand and open up space for dialogue and relationship-building between different actors in DRR.

Vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) has become standard practice in many DRR programmes, particularly

³ For more on the Views from the Frontline study see following article.

those run by NGOs. Participatory VCA is commonly seen as an entry point for DRR interventions, usually at an early stage in the project cycle. However, it now appears that participatory VCA may be the key entry point, perhaps even the catalyst for successful community-based DRR. It delivers an understanding of the situation that is shared by the participants – one project review referred to 'the positive energy unleashed from participants' – and provides a setting in which to build a culture of prevention owned by everyone.

Exciting though all of this is, an important caveat is needed: the process, outcomes and impact of VCA are easily affected by existing power relationships in a community. NGOs often assume a degree of independence from local power structures, whereas local elites are well aware of how they can gain from association with NGOs. To regulate participation and ensure complete and accurate information during a VCA, NGOs have to make selective decisions about which local stakeholders to work with and engage. However, conventional VCA methodology may not equip them to analyse the implications of their decisions on local power relations.

Leadership and facilitation

In his influential work on community-based DRR, published over 20 years ago, Andrew Maskrey argued that 'the central resource available for mitigation on any scale is people themselves and only through community based mitigation can that resource be fully utilised'.⁴ This is echoed by the experiences of the Inter-Agency Group.

NGOs that work with communities have to tread a delicate path, providing financial, material, technical and organisational support where required, while also ensuring that they act as guides, facilitators and partnership brokers, supporting community empowerment and mobilisation but not directing these processes. Yet partnership creation requires leadership too. At local level this often has to be provided by the NGO, a position many find uncomfortable because it appears incompatible with the role of facilitator and guide.

The role of key individuals as leaders within organisations, communities, projects and partnerships remains unclear in the context of DRR. Informally, they are acknowledged as playing a significant part, but this issue is not normally explored in project evaluations. The influence of well-placed individuals has been identified in earlier work on NGOs and natural disaster mitigation and preparedness.⁵ There may also be value in applying the concept of 'policy entrepreneurs' (key individuals who drive change in their organisations and the public arena) to DRR. However, in general the interplay between personal and institutional influences in this sector is not well understood and deserves further research. Linked to this is the widely recognised but unresolved problem of relatively high

⁴ A. Maskrey, *Disaster Mitigation: A Community Based Approach* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1989), p. 90.

⁵ J. Twigg and D. Steiner, 'Mainstreaming Disaster Mitigation: Challenges to Organisational Learning in NGOs', *Development in Practice*, 12(3&4), 2002.

levels of staff turnover in the NGO sector, partly due to the dependence on fixed-term project or programme funding, which results in weaknesses in institutional memory and learning.

Entering the advocacy arena

The governance context, sometimes referred to as the enabling environment, exerts great influence on the ability of communities, their organisations and supporting NGOs to deliver effective risk reduction programmes. Understanding this context – and the opportunities and constraints it creates – is critical for creating and sustaining effective partnerships.

In addressing governance issues, NGO DRR programmes typically involve advocating for decentralised and participatory decision-making; strengthening links between local, district and national levels; promoting integrated approaches to livelihoods, disasters and climate change; and lobbying for underlying systemic issues to be addressed. All of this is fundamental to scaling up the impact of local interventions and reducing risk long term, but it requires NGOs to enter a more political environment. The impact of advocacy efforts on decision-making and resource allocation is highly dependent on political context, and the strengths of advocacy partners.

Opportunities for opening up the ‘political’ space for negotiation, accountability and empowerment vary widely according to particular institutional systems, structures and attitudes. Nevertheless, local agencies and their supporters often have potential power and can have a strong positive influence on government and national institutions. Building on existing advocacy capacities is vital, but it is important that international agencies with

lobbying experience do not overestimate the capacities of their national and local partners, who may not have dedicated policy staff and may find it difficult to gain senior management support.

However, it was clear from the learning review that, even where such expertise is lacking, there may be considerable latent capacities that can be developed. The very fact of organising in groups and mobilising communities for action – the ‘software’ dimension of DRR projects – gives people voice and strength, which makes enhancing community organisation an essential element of DRR. Civil society organisations can support this and help to form collaborative platforms or networks of stakeholders, facilitating the flow of ideas, information, skills and technologies.

Conclusions

Partnerships, which can take a very wide variety of forms, organisational and individual, are fundamental to DRR and were central to the successes of the Inter-Agency Group’s DRR programmes, although they can be difficult to develop and manage in practice. There is the potential to create extensive and complex webs of relationships between all kinds of local stakeholders, and the influence that results can be very powerful as an agent of change. It is essential that operational agencies, as well as those who fund them, support the creation and maintenance of effective partnerships of this kind to ensure that DRR can be genuinely ‘mainstreamed’ into development and humanitarian work.

John Twigg is a Senior Research Associate at University College London. **Helen Bottomley** is an independent researcher.

Action and learning in an emerging network

Terry Gibson

Networks, by definition, are shaped by their members. They are often started by individuals or a founding group who have some vision and purpose in doing so. However, it is in the nature of a network that its development is unpredictable – unless it is so tightly controlled by its founders that it is effectively not a network at all.

At a workshop in Delhi in March 2008, the newly formed ‘Global Network for Disaster Reduction’¹ defined its vision and purpose. In the short period since that meeting the network has grown rapidly. It has also undertaken a major collaborative project – ‘Views from the Frontline’ – and has also conducted a ‘learning review’ of its initial activities. In January 2010 some 80 members of the network met in London to discuss this review and to make plans for the future. Had the network’s structure and goals evolved and changed? Had

¹ The full name is the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction.

its activities led to a changed understanding of how it could work effectively?

This article outlines how shared action among network members has led to substantial commitment and rapid growth, suggesting that applying the ‘praxis’ model – shared action and reflection – can be a powerful engine for network building, action and learning.

Why the Global Network for Disaster Reduction?

The Global Network’s area of concern is Disaster Risk Reduction. Many of those who would become its founding members were present at the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, in 2005, which established the present ten-year plan of action on Disaster Risk Reduction (the Hyogo Framework). They were there as representatives of civil society organisations, to observe and lobby on behalf of at-risk communities around

the world. An underlying concern of these civil society representatives was that high-level policy statements would not translate into effective implementation and change on the frontline of DRR, where communities vulnerable to disasters live and work. In expressing this concern they had history on their side, as the review of the preceding ten-year programme, the Yokohama Strategy for Natural Disasters, had concluded that intentions still needed to be turned into action. It became clear that, by working together, they could increase their effectiveness in advocacy and campaigning. As a result, discussions and meetings over the following two years led to agreement to form the Global Network for Disaster Reduction.



Conducting a 'View from the Frontline' survey in Bangladesh, February 2011

© R. Gibson

At the Delhi workshop in 2008 the steering committee made use of the 'network functions approach', a method for auditing a network and refining its activities to match its functions.² While these functions helped to focus the thinking of the group as they deliberated on the direction and purpose of the new network, the objectives ultimately agreed did not fit neatly under any particular function.

Box 1: Initial objectives of the Global Network for Disaster Reduction

- Objective 1:* Increase the effectiveness of civil society in influencing the formulation of DRR policy.
- Objective 2:* Strengthen public accountability for policy implementation.
- Objective 3:* Increase access to resources at the local level (knowledge, technical expertise, finance, capacity-building, partnerships) for building resilient communities.
- Objective 4:* Build global network capabilities and strategic partnerships as an effective means to bring the concerns and interests of disaster-affected people into the heart of DRR policy discourse.

² The typology of functions includes 'Community-building', 'Filtering', 'Amplifying', 'Learning and Facilitating', 'Investing and Providing' and 'Convening'. See Ben Ramalingam, Enrique Mendizabal and Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop, *Strengthening Humanitarian Networks*, ODI Background Note, 2008.

The objectives seemed to have a strong action focus to them, with the implication of shared action, rather than support for the actions of individual members. This contrasts with many other networks, which primarily offer shared resources and expertise which their members use in their own individual work programmes.

Views from the Frontline: a participative network action

The Views from the Frontline project represents a major collaborative effort between network members. The idea was already on the table at the Delhi workshop. It reflected the stated concern of the network to press for effective implementation, married to the observation that the monitoring processes built into the newly established Hyogo Framework were

weak. In line with the experiences of another group involved in a similar monitoring process, the Civil Society Index, Views from the Frontline was to be a survey of perceptions and human impact, rather than of technical measures of progress.

The idea was simple in principle, but challenging in practice. It demanded mobilising participating organisations in a broad sweep of countries and regions vulnerable to disaster, training them in a survey methodology and securing thousands of responses to surveys from people in vulnerable communities. This had to be achieved within a timeframe of just over one year, as the biennial UN Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, at which the progress of the framework would be discussed, was scheduled to take place in June 2009.

the Views from the Frontline project represents a major collaborative effort

The focus here is on how this major action related to the Global Network's founding objectives, and what it showed about the development of networks. I took on the role of project manager for the programme with some experience of Wenger's 'communities of practice'

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Box 2: Views from the Frontline

Views from the Frontline is a participatory monitoring project designed to establish whether communities directly exposed to the impacts of disasters believe that progress has been made in disaster reduction. These perceptions are directly related to the Hyogo Framework: the framework has detailed targets and specified 'indicators' to assess whether these targets are being achieved, and the Views from the Frontline project was able to use a questionnaire based on these indicators. Over 400 participating organisations in 48 countries used the questionnaire to solicit the views of community members, civil society organisations and local government officials, garnering over 7,000 responses. The overall perception was that, in many countries, DRR policies were not resulting in significant progress.

The details of the methodology, implementation and outcomes of the project are available in its published report, '*Clouds But Little Rain: Report of Views from the Frontline*, 2009, www.globalnetwork-dr.org.

model in corporate and NGO settings.³ The principles of community-building, establishing communication and shared learning and building a repository of knowledge seemed particularly relevant to the Global Network's third and fourth objectives around knowledge and capacity-building. Therefore, alongside the intense work on the survey process, I emphasised communications and developed a website with collaborative tools such as blogs, discussion groups and resource libraries. However, repeated attempts to engage members in these mechanisms, to create dialogue between them and to establish shared learning were generally unsuccessful. When I reported on progress at the January 2010 review meeting, members agreed that the network was 'hub and spoke' – with most of its communication radiating from the secretariat to members and back – rather than a 'cat's cradle' – the kind of rich communication between network members which is typical of a community of practice. It was becoming clear that the Global Network did not conform to the 'communities of practice' model.

At the same time, progress on the first two objectives – concerning influence on policy formulation and implementation – seemed striking. Compared with communities of practice I had been involved with previously, the growth rate of the network and the commitment of its members was dramatic. The practical goal of Views from the Frontline was achieved and exceeded. Data from the surveys was presented at the UN Global Platform in 2009, and the work had a clear impact at the institutional level. According to Margareta Wahlstrom, Assistant Secretary for Disaster Reduction at the UN: 'Views from the Frontline shifted the agenda at GP-DRR 2009 towards a focus on execution of the Hyogo Framework at the local level'.

³ Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

This was exactly in line with the goals of the network. More recent discussions within the UN system show that there has been a marked shift in emphasis towards engagement and implementation at the local level. The role of Views from the Frontline in achieving this shift has been acknowledged in ISDR's Mid-Term Review of the Hyogo Framework.⁴

Action and reflection

The institutional impact of Views from the Frontline can be seen as an output impact. However, network members also identified important process impacts which resulted from the activity itself and related to the goal of learning implied by the network's third and fourth objectives. These process impacts occurred on two levels: locally, with individual network members, and globally, in relation to the network as a whole. In both cases they involved cycles of action and reflection.

Locally, members reported that the survey and consultation process had led to new opportunities, new dialogue and new partnerships. One network member in Peru said that 'Views from the Frontline has let us meet with and get to know different actors in our area, even with people that it was difficult to get access to before'. This process impact extends further. Dialogue leads to partnership and this creates political heft at the local level which can influence the national level. Another network member ascribed the formation of a national platform for disaster reduction in Afghanistan in February 2010 in part to the dialogue resulting from the Views from the Frontline process. In this way, entities that had not previously interacted and which were often suspicious of each other formed partnerships and collaborations which in turn gave them more influence with regional and national governments.

At the level of the network itself, members recognised that reflecting on the Views from the Frontline project changed their understanding of the network. It had become clear that it was not a learning network in the sense of a community of practice, but an action network which gained its energy and learning from action and from reflecting on that action – a community of praxis, in other words.⁵

What have the last two years taught us?

Shared action has led to substantial commitment and rapid growth (the current iteration of Views from the Frontline is likely to involve twice as many countries as the first one), suggesting that applying the praxis model – shared action and reflection – can be a powerful engine for network building, action and learning. The contrasts between communities of practice and communities of praxis are summed up in Table 1 (overleaf).

⁴ 'Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015 Mid-Term Review', http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/publications/v.php?id=18197_29/03/11.

⁵ The principle of 'praxis' is the idea that learning that is useful in securing change is based on communities going through cycles of action and reflection. It was at the heart of the thinking of Paulo Freire, who provided the foundation for participative learning in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). The term 'community of praxis' as used here is the author's.

Table 1: Comparison of some characteristics of ‘communities of practice’ and ‘communities of praxis’

Characteristic	Community of practice	Community of praxis
Focus of action	Individual action by practitioners	Collaborative action
Knowledge-creation process	Existing knowledge shared between members	Knowledge ‘created’ by collaboration between members (action and reflection)
Community-building (of network)	Slow, depending on building ‘critical mass’	Fast, if shared action is relevant to members
Outcome	Support for practitioners in their own actions	Shared action and reflection to secure change

The initial difficulties the Global Network experienced in promoting and sharing learning seem to reflect the fact that the network has a different structure to that of a ‘community of practice’, and has objectives focused on joint, rather than individual, action. Through a process of collaborative action and reflection on the learning from

that action, the network has become an action-oriented learning community, a ‘community of praxis’.

Terry Gibson is Project Manager for the Global Network for Disaster Reduction.

The Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies: a new initiative for NGO collaboration

Sean Lowrie and Marieke Hounjet

The Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) was founded in 2010 in response to a proposal by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) to form a consortium to address some of the challenges facing the humanitarian system, especially around speed, coordination and efficiency. Comprising 15 of the leading UK-based humanitarian agencies, the CBHA’s mandate is to ‘pioneer new approaches to funding and resourcing humanitarian responses which strengthen the coordination and capacity of the “third pillar” – the NGO sector – to deliver appropriate, higher quality, more effective and quicker humanitarian responses over the current decade 2010–2020’.¹

Formation and first year

The CBHA was a result of the right people coming together at the right time. Initial discussions around programmatic strands and governance structure were long and detailed. Members emphasised that they did not want to create a large or complex organisation, and the Programme Management Unit of the consortium is therefore quite small, consisting of three members: the CBHA Director, CBHA Coordinator and Finance and Grants Manager. It was also agreed that, at least at first, the CBHA would be limited to the UK.

One of the main principles from the beginning has been equality: all CBHA members are equal in the statutes and every member has one vote. The CBHA board, which comprises senior representatives (mostly humanitarian or emergency directors) of each of the 15 agencies, elected one member as the chair (currently CAFOD) and another as the vice-chair (currently Concern Worldwide UK). Several

¹ The 15 members of the CBHA are ActionAid, Action Against Hunger UK, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide UK, HelpAge, the International Rescue Committee, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Merlin, Oxfam GB, Plan, Save the Children, Tearfund and World Vision.

sub-committees handle the day-to-day management of programme activities, and agencies are jointly responsible for programme implementation. The relationship with DFID is much more reciprocal than is typically the case between donor and recipient, and the consortium only has to report annually, meaning that time is not spent meeting frequent reporting deadlines. The agencies themselves, not DFID, decide when and how to spend their funds.

one of the main principles from the beginning has been equality

In its first year the CBHA has focused on five areas: financing systems, human resource systems, logistics and supply chain systems, surge capacity (the ability to quickly scale up operations) and interagency collaboration. The largest component is the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) of £4 million, upon which members can draw whenever an emergency occurs. The CBHA board collectively decide when to release grants, which cover a period of 30 days; recipient agencies must be up and running within seven days, and are not allowed to use the grants to cover set-up costs. Access to the fund is not restricted to the 15 UK members of the CBHA, reflecting the consortium’s ambition that it should function on behalf of the sector at large. All of the CBH agencies are part of global families, and many work with partner agencies, all of which are eligible to apply to the fund via their UK counterpart.

The objective of the ERF component is to demonstrate that the rapid and reliable release of funds increases the speed with which humanitarian aid is delivered on the ground. In



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the first year, the ERF was established, tested and deployed in six humanitarian crises, disbursing over £2m to 27 separate agency projects with over 360,000 direct beneficiaries. In all these cases funds were transferred within 72 hours, and in all cases agencies reported that this funding had made a difference. For example, it helped agencies to quickly start up operations and respond to under-funded emergencies, or helped them source further funding by virtue of being operational and present on the ground. Proposals are selected through peer review, which ensures impartiality and appropriateness and drives up the performance of all members. Allocation processes are transparent, and allow grass-roots contextual understanding to be applied at an early stage. Another positive side-effect of this model may be that it reduces competition for funds by creating a more level playing field, where those that are best placed to respond are able to do so.

A second priority of the CBHA lies in the field of capacity-building within agencies. Here the CBHA is testing two complementary approaches to staff development. One approach, led by Save the Children, aims to bring new talent and potential leaders into the sector. The other approach, led by Oxfam, attempts to develop the core humanitarian and leadership competencies of national staff in four pilot countries. ActionAid has led the development of a core competency framework based partly on existing agency and sector material, and partly informed by further research and consultation. The humanitarian competencies were agreed in the summer of 2010, and since then ActionAid has been promoting adoption of the framework through the human resource systems of the CBHA member agencies.²

² The CBHA humanitarian competencies report is available at http://www.thecbha.org/media/website/file/CBHA_Objective_1_Final_Report.pdf.

In addition to these training programmes, the CBHA also provides individual agency surge grants to strengthen humanitarian response capacity. Some agencies find it very hard to support and sustain an improved level of rapid response, especially because such response systems are supported by precious unrestricted funds, which agencies often use to cover core running costs. Evidence suggests that the surge funding has had significant impact; CBHA members use their surge funding in ways that support their operational philosophy, for example through additional technical expertise or national partner capacity-building. The CBHA is also involved in an interagency effort to pilot supply-chain logistics software developed by the Helios Foundation, and joint learning and evaluation, led by Action Against Hunger.

The Pakistan floods

Following the Pakistan floods the CBHA released £750,000 in August 2010. Subsequently DFID approached the CBHA to distribute an additional £1m for flood-affected people in Sindh and Punjab provinces. At the end of October, DFID approached the CBHA to see whether it was interested in forming a consortium for early recovery work, with a grant of £20m for agricultural recovery in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. However, a smaller alliance of four CBH agencies was already discussing this opportunity with DFID. Their proposal followed a looser alliance model, as opposed to the consortium model, under which projects are aligned and some services shared, but responsibilities remain separate. Although the alliance model was initially preferred, after some discussion the CBHA members agreed to discuss the grant with DFID and a further two agencies were added to the four-party alliance, forming the 'CBHA ad hoc consortium for early recovery'. In doing so the agencies went significantly beyond the initial agreements underpinning the CBHA. As

the midterm review of the CBHA notes: ‘while the Pakistan recovery programme has the potential to sign-post an expanded role for the CBHA in the future, the experience also revealed a dissonance between those who view the CBHA as adding value in the UK and those who consider that it may have a wider, global remit’.³

Replicable design characteristics

As mentioned, there are several characteristics of the CBHA which could potentially be replicated by other networks. First, equality of membership within the consortium transcends traditional operational and knowledge-sharing barriers, enabling smaller CBHA members with a niche specialty to leverage their knowledge so that it can be used by other larger agencies. Second, peer reviewing project proposals and the allocation of emergency response funds is driving up the quality of project proposals, and collective stewardship of the ERF is generating strategic dialogue between the CBHA members around identifying, evaluating and responding to humanitarian need. Third, the principle of subsidiarity applied in the Pakistan early recovery grant has enabled the CBHA to form a temporary consortium in Pakistan. No decision-making power was drawn away from practitioners. Fourth, peer expertise is a feature of the Pakistan early recovery consortium, whereby members provide expertise and knowledge to the other members. This is expected to enhance the quality of the programme. Finally, the diversity of the CBHA membership has the potential to stimulate innovation within the consortium, for example in logistics software and capacity-building training tailored to the needs of the different agencies.

Emergent strategy versus predictable strategy

Some of the challenges the CBHA has faced in its first year are generic to partnership working, while others are more specific. Member agencies differ in their reasons for collaboration, and there is a tension between those agencies that prefer an evolving strategy and those that prefer a certain level of predictability. This tension is closely related to trust, because trust is more likely to emerge in contexts where expectations about collaboration and partners’ behaviour are met.⁴ The CBHA has been grappling with this issue. As our annual report explains:

³ Andy Featherstone, *CBHA Midterm Review*, 2011, p. 11, available at <http://www.theqbha.org/resources>.

⁴ Galuti, 1995, quoted in Chris Huxham and Siv Vangen, *Managing To Collaborate: The Theory and Practice of Collaborative Advantage* (London: Routledge, 2005).

*The practice of leading commercial and multilateral organisations suggests that opportunism and agility are appropriate strategic approaches to uncertainty. Yet at the same time, the CBHA is a relatively large consortium of 15 members, of which some are large organisations that require predictability in their partnerships.*⁵

The humanitarian sector is highly fluid, and predictability is difficult to come by. Nevertheless, we believe that trust can be built through making good decisions. This became evident in the CBHA’s experience in Pakistan, as discussed above. Here, in the context of a large-scale emergency, the consortium had to take considerable risks. This goes against the conventional wisdom that young consortia should build trust through low-risk initiatives, in order to increase the chances that everyone’s expectations will be met. A further complication in the Pakistan response was that trust had been built through the CBHA experience in London, which by implication was then extended to different people and parties in Pakistan. This brings us back to the question of the CBHA’s role outside of the UK.

The experience of the first year presents the CBHA with important questions. Should the CBHA’s remit extend beyond the UK, and what would the CBHA do if it was asked to form another ad hoc consortium in a different context? Over the past year we have learned that our sector is not likely to provide the kind of small-scale and low-risk environment conducive to a young consortium. As a result, CBHA members have come to the conclusion that the consortium needs to develop a strategy. Furthermore, whilst the CBHA’s activities are innovative (for example the Emergency Response Fund, the capacity-building training programmes and the Helios software), they constitute incremental improvements to existing organisational routines. Much more could be done to build capacity to respond to humanitarian crises in the future. A strategy could provide the consortium with a predictable framework in a turbulent world, enabling it to fulfil its potential. This process should commence in April 2011, and external expertise will help us with this strategy formulation.

Sean Lowrie is the CBHA Director. **Marieke Hounjet** is the Coordinator for the CBHA.

⁵ CBHA, Annual Report to DFID, March 2011, available at <http://www.theqbha.org/resources>.

Correction

In Silke Pietzsch’s article ‘Unconditional Cash Transfers: Giving Choice to People in Need’, published in *Humanitarian Exchange* no. 49, January 2011, we inadvertently omitted to mention that financial support for the LEARN 1 and LEARN 2 projects that Silke discusses was provided by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kampala, Uganda.

Research partnerships in humanitarian contexts

Jess Camburn, ELRHA

The challenges the humanitarian community encountered last year in Haiti and Pakistan clearly demonstrate that it urgently needs new knowledge, new expertise and new approaches. At the same time there is a growing expectation that decision-making and programme design by humanitarian agencies should be evidence-based. However, the pressures on today's humanitarian practitioners to deliver assistance at great speed and often according to predefined goals, methods and targets provide little space for analysis, reflection and investigation. As a result there is a division within our community between those who are employed to 'think' and those who are employed to 'do'. This limits our potential to be truly responsive to humanitarian crises.

Why work with academia?

A 2009 study by ALNAP identified three processes of learning within the humanitarian system.¹ The dominant model, single loop learning, focuses on increasing compliance with existing ways of working by achieving incremental improvements to established practices; as such, it does not seek to generate new or different ways of operating. Double and triple-loop learning, in comparison, involve greater reflection on the appropriateness of existing practices, policies and norms, with the objective of generating new ways of doing things.

there is a division between those who are employed to 'think' and those who are employed to 'do'

The role that evidence plays in each of these processes is also very different. In single-loop learning, the collation and utilisation of evidence is essentially a highly controlled affirmative process towards the continuing improvement and extension of existing practices and cultures. The relationship of evidence to practice in double and triple-loop learning, however, is more dynamic and externally oriented, enabling new ideas and approaches to be rigorously investigated and tested. It is in this process of reflective learning that partnerships with an independent and objective research community are highly valuable.

There are eight core questions that humanitarians should ask themselves when considering partnerships with academic researchers.

Question 1: What can I expect from an 'academic'?

The Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELHRA) initiative aims to provide a supportive

1 Ben Ramalingam, Kim Scriven and Conor Foley, 'Innovations in International Humanitarian Action', in *ALNAP 8th Review of Humanitarian Action*, July 2009, <http://www.alnap.org/initiatives/rha/8.aspx>.

Figure 1: What humanitarians think of academics

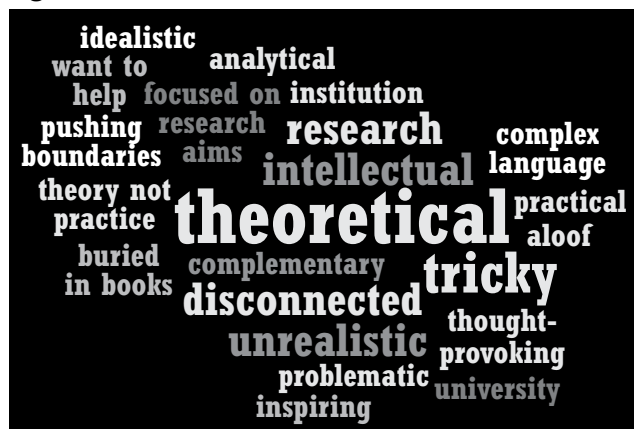


Figure 2: What academics think of humanitarians



environment in which humanitarian and academic communities can meet and develop partnerships that have a measurable impact on improving humanitarian outcomes.² However, this belief in the value of such partnership is not always shared by individuals within the two communities, as illustrated by the above word clouds generated at a recent stakeholder symposium on effective partnership in humanitarian action.

The 'altruistic, kind-hearted' humanitarian who acts first and thinks later, and the aloof, theoretical academic who is disconnected from reality and 'buried in books', are both caricatures and do not reflect reality. There is a long history of effective partnership with academia in the development of humanitarian practice. From the creation of new water and sanitation technologies to the development of livelihoods approaches and disaster risk reduction programming, academics have been central partners in the transformation of humanitarian policy and practice.

Question 2: Do I have a valid research question?

It is important to check whether a particular issue or challenge is recognised by others within the professional peer group. When thinking about a potential research project it is useful to host discussions on the proposed topic with peers, for

2 For more on ELRHA visit www.elrha.org.

instance through local and professional networks and online forums, and to conduct an initial literature search to see what has already been written on the subject. It is valuable, although not always necessary, to build a community of practice at this early stage to increase the impact and share the benefits of the research. This also provides an ideal reference group to help maintain objectivity and identify any flaws in the methodology and findings.

Question 3: Do I need a research partner or a consultant?

A common complaint from NGOs is that researchers are too theoretical, do not provide practical outputs and take too long to come up with useful findings. In part, this seems to be because many NGOs mistake academic research for consultancy. Table 1 (below) sets out some of the principal differences between consultants and academic researchers.

There are times when a consultant might act more like an independent researcher and vice-versa. However, it is important to consider the distinction carefully before entering into a partnership with an academic researcher. If what an NGO really needs is targeted technical advice or a solution to a problem within a relatively short period of time (single loop learning), it may be best served by a consultant. If, however, it is seeking to explore a particular challenge or issue for the wider benefit of the professional community, and to extend the established knowledge base of the sector, then a research partnership may be more appropriate.

Question 4: How do I find a partner?

Identifying the right research partners is crucial to the effectiveness of any research process. This sounds straightforward, but in practice can be difficult. Often

practitioners believe that they do not have the skills to frame a research question in language that would spark the interest of an academic audience, or they are unsure how to relate their particular research question to established academic disciplines, thus making it hard to know where to look for an appropriate partner.

When trying to find an appropriate partner, it is best to begin with an exploration of local expertise and research institutions, especially if the question is connected to a particular place or region or with a particular community. However, if the issue requires specific expertise that is unavailable locally, online forums and networks may help in making contact with academic institutions.³

Question 5: What is my role?

It is common in an applied research programme for the practitioner to be cast as the ‘subject’ of the research, the ‘conduit’ between the researcher and the research subjects or the ‘end-user’ of research outputs. While all of these roles are valid, and may indeed be a practical choice given pressures of existing workloads, they are essentially passive and therefore limit the potential of the practitioner to stimulate and drive the investigative process. Evidence shows that, when practitioners seek to facilitate change in practice or generate and test a new theory, a collaborative approach to research, in which both practitioner and researcher are actively engaged, is particularly effective.

Question 6: What are my expectations?

Sadly, many partnerships between practitioners and researchers begin with great expectations, but then break

³ Examples include ELRHA and the Development Studies Association (www.devstud.org.uk).

Table 1: Consultants versus researchers

Consultant	Researcher
Contracted employee	Independent partner
Generally short-term relationship	Generally long-term relationship
Outputs defined by the ‘client’	Outputs defined by the co-investigators and the research process itself
Research owned by the client	Research either co-owned between client and researcher or owned principally by the researcher
Narrow focus (on the client/client- identified problem)	Wide focus – using case examples for the development of an evidence base and general lessons
Specialised	Specialised but with ability to tap into interdisciplinary knowledge networks
Informs practice through agreed activities and outputs in the Terms of Reference	No set format for informing practice, often impact is assumed through the publication of research. However there is increasing attention on planning around research impact and pathways to impact in the early stages of a research proposal.
Can be rapidly deployed	Rapid deployment unlikely
Can be subjective	Should be objective
Paid for by the client	Can often draw on independent research funding
Quality approved by relevant professional standards, word of mouth and professional networks	Quality approved by academic peer review and research approval processes

down during the research process. Partnerships tend to fail when one side feels that it is not seeing any tangible benefits for its participation in the project, or where it believes the project has been diverted from the original goal or terms agreed. This is often a result of a lack of investment in planning and relationship-building at the start of the partnership. Because humanitarian practitioners and academic researchers come from such different working cultures, it is critical to set aside time at the very early stages of a project to thoroughly explore each other's expectations and motivations, to clarify roles and responsibilities and agree project milestones and core outputs. These should be regularly and frankly reviewed by all involved in the project in order to address any misunderstandings before they become insurmountable.

Question 7: How durable is the partnership?

Because humanitarian workers are highly mobile, rarely staying in one place or one role for longer than a year or two, it is crucial to consider how durable a research partnership should be. This will mean working out whether the principal relationship will exist between an individual practitioner and co-investigator (meaning that the research would travel with that individual to new postings), or to a specific location or programme of work (meaning that relationships will need to be established with key staff and stakeholders from the outset). Of course it is often possible and may be beneficial to aim for both. It is wise to aim to build a broad base of ownership, engagement and investment with diverse stakeholders at different levels within the organisation, and with external communities. This makes it more likely that the programme of work will last beyond the commitment of specific individuals.

Conclusion

ELRHA believes that, from the small seeds of a well-managed collaborative venture, great programmes of work and long-term durable partnerships can grow. Last year ELRHA provided seed funding to five collaborative ventures between academic and humanitarian communities, all of which have gone on to develop ideas and plans

Box 1: Case study of an academic–practitioner partnership

In 2009–2010 ELRHA funded a collaborative project between earthquake scientists and a group of international and community-based NGOs working in the Padang region of Sumatra. The researchers quickly concluded that the NGOs faced two major problems: first, they had very little knowledge of where and how to access reliable sources of earthquake science and data; and second, the data that was available was either unintelligible due to the highly scientific language that was used or unsubstantiated and therefore unreliable. The scientists worked with the NGOs to identify reliable sources of data and develop means to access it. As the partnership and trust between the two groups grew they developed a ‘code of practice’ under which scientists would participate in formal meetings with NGOs and local communities, as well as providing data to local media. The relationship gave the NGOs greater authority in their work to inform people of earthquake risk and enabled them to counteract unreliable and dangerous rumours about earthquakes and tsunamis.

for substantial projects that will have greater impact and include broader partnerships than those enabled by ELRHA’s initial investment. It is clear that, as practitioners and academics grow to understand and value each other, so the potential for effective partnership increases.

The key to unlocking the riches of the research community is to enter into any new partnership with a common goal and plan of action, as well as an open and inquisitive mind. Those humanitarian actors that develop trusted relationships and networks with appropriate actors in the academic world should find themselves best-placed to adapt, develop and transform humanitarian practice to meet the challenges of the future.

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Uneasy bedfellows: the motives and drivers of collaboration between the commercial and humanitarian sectors

Ellen Martin and James Darcy

Recent crises have highlighted the role of private sector actors in humanitarian action, as donors and partners to humanitarian agencies, and as for-profit operators in their own right. The growing number, scale and complexity of humanitarian crises is placing increasing strain on the established international system for crisis response, prompting questions about the adequacy of donor funding, the capacities of humanitarian agencies and the continued relevance of the current humanitarian ‘business model’. Together with growing recognition of

the opportunities presented by new technologies and new ways of working, this is causing many to reappraise the potential role of the commercial sector in crisis response, as well as in the relatively neglected areas of risk reduction and post-crisis recovery. Harnessed effectively, corporate resources and competencies may potentially fill some of the gaps and deficiencies in the traditional humanitarian system. Yet commercial engagement to date has been limited. Recent research by ODI and the Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP) at

King's College London explores the likely scope and limits of commercial sector engagement in crisis contexts, and the motives and interests driving it.¹

Current patterns of engagement

So far collaboration has been *ad hoc*, typically involving one company and a single humanitarian partner, and most often in a natural disaster rather than a conflict-related crisis. Substantive partnerships have been largely in technical sectors such as logistics, transport, telecommunications and IT. The private sector's financial contribution has been minimal.

There are efforts to promote the role of the private sector in humanitarian response and facilitate collaboration with humanitarian actors. These include the US-based Disaster Response Network (DRN) of the Business Roundtable, launched in 2005; the Partnering Initiative (TPI) of the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), launched in 2003; and the Humanitarian Relief Initiative (HRI) of the World Economic Forum (WEF), established in 2006. The UN system has also made clear its desire to engage with the corporate sector (see for example www.business.un.org), and donors including the UK government are placing increasing emphasis on commercial partnerships. Initiatives such as the HRI have sought to work with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to more effectively match humanitarian priorities with industry competencies under the cluster approach.²

we lack a robust understanding of what is driving commercial sector involvement in crises

What is still lacking is a robust understanding of the factors that drive commercial sector involvement in crisis contexts, and the gaps and weaknesses in the humanitarian system that the commercial sector might be able to address.

Forms and drivers of commercial sector involvement in humanitarian action

Commercial actors engage in crisis contexts in various ways, including financial support or in-kind donations to humanitarian agencies, substantive partnership and collaboration, as in the provision of technical support, and direct commercial engagement, for instance as contractors or as for-profit business ventures in crisis-affected or politically unstable contexts.

What drives commercial sector involvement in disaster-affected contexts? Clearly, corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies have an important role, though ultimately

¹ See HFP and ODI, *Commercial and Humanitarian Engagement in Crisis Contexts: Current Trends, Future Drivers*, Discussion Paper, 2011. Around 30 interviews were carried out in 2009/10 with humanitarian and commercial actors, together with an extensive review of relevant literature.

² Humanitarian Relief Initiative, Report from the Humanitarian Relief Initiative Meeting, April 2009, Geneva.

judgements about business interests and profitability are the primary drivers. Companies may also see involvement in humanitarian action as a practical demonstration of their corporate values and a way of enhancing staff morale, contributing to a better working environment, generating enthusiasm for the company and helping the company to retain talent. Personal conviction – both among a company's leaders and its staff – can also be a motivating factor. Engagement in humanitarian action may also have a positive impact on a company's image and reputation, both broadly and in a particular context or country. In our interviews, for example, one representative spoke about the opportunity to improve the company's reputation with the government of a particular country in which it conducted business. Another said that humanitarian involvement showed that it was taking responsibility for addressing global problems, which was good for its overall image.

There may also be opportunities to open up new markets and extend a company's reach into new and untapped areas. Almost all those interviewed from the private sector mentioned future commercial opportunities arising from their engagement in humanitarian action. One corporate actor providing free medical care to children in developing countries stated that a key driver for partnering with a humanitarian agency was to gain understanding of the healthcare markets in these regions. Another stated that collaboration resulted in 'greater access to rural villagers and an ability to sell our products. Our reach will be much greater'. For some actors, these market opportunities are a primary motive for involvement, while others stressed that this was only an indirect benefit, and that they preferred to keep the two issues separate. Their primary rationale for partnering with humanitarian agencies was that 'we are committed to help, but we are not experts in humanitarian matters'. Partnerships with humanitarian actors may also help companies acquire new and specialised skills.

While each of these motives is in itself potentially consistent with humanitarian priorities, they suggest limits to the likely involvement of commercial companies in crisis contexts. Commercial opportunity will always be weighed against commercial risk, and in many cases will be outweighed by it – particularly in highly volatile or insecure environments where outcomes are hard to ensure and risks to staff and operations may be high. While these are also limiting factors for humanitarian agencies, they make different calculations about the cost-benefit 'threshold', allowing them to operate in environments that might not be viable from a commercial perspective.

The potential for commercial engagement in more stable environments appears to be greater. Here the question is whether the combination of CSR and business interest is sufficient to warrant sustained, strategic engagement by commercial actors, beyond the confines of a particular crisis situation.

Hopes, fears and expectations: views from both sides

Until recently, most humanitarian agencies have viewed commercial companies solely as potential cash donors. But

this appears to be changing. While some humanitarians have been wary of more substantive collaboration with commercial actors, the majority of those interviewed recognised that partnering with such actors has value beyond simple cash contributions. Many agencies are interested in accessing specific technical areas of expertise, including in transport, supply chain management and telecommunications. Ensuring long-term and consistent commitment from the private sector is still seen as a challenge, however, and agencies still seem unsure whether commercial actors are really prepared to develop the administrative, financial and training systems they need to ensure that their contributions are useful and sustainable: as one interviewee put it: ‘it has to go beyond being a PR exercise – companies need to make a long-term commitment in order to learn how to work in a way that is consistent with humanitarian conditions’. Another area of concern for humanitarians is the need for corporate ‘visibility’. Here, expectations can be higher than humanitarian actors are able or willing to meet. How appropriate would it be, for instance, for agency staff to be seen in the field wearing T-shirts carrying a company logo (as one agency was asked to do)?

Those on the commercial side have plenty of concerns of their own. Some of these relate to the use of donated funds, and how they end up being spent. One corporate interviewee noted that one agency it had supported had not spent the money on the agreed-upon projects, discouraging it from making future financial contributions. More generally, there are concerns about the efficiency of humanitarian agencies and a sense that humanitarian actors are not very good at recognising and explaining the technical gaps that commercial actors can usefully fill. That said, perceptions of efficiency can vary. As argued by one humanitarian actor, what looks like inefficiency to one sector might to the other look like a principled and measured response:

Some may think they understand how the humanitarian domain works. Admittedly, in the more technical areas we are in need of improvement, and should make better use of resources. But it is not always as simple as some people think – a refugee camp might not look very high-tech or efficient, but it is built and managed in a principled and measured manner, and is not too costly. Sophisticated technical solutions are not always what we want to see.

There is also some reluctance among agencies to admit that a given area is beyond their specific competence, and that bringing in commercial expertise in areas such as logistics can save time, effort and money. As one corporate actor commented:

Logistics is our core competency, we can work efficiently and quickly, and we can help NGOs save time, effort and money. Often NGOs will try and do the logistics work themselves, and when it doesn't work they turn to us. Doing this work is good for [our] image and visibility, there are also commercial incentives as we are contracted to deliver supplies. We [believe] NGOs have a niche role in humanitarian situations. But when it comes to logistics – leave it to the experts.

Box 1: Engagement with the commercial sector: the ICRC's experience

Following an internal review in the late 1990s aimed at guiding ICRC's strategic positioning with actors that had an impact on humanitarian issues, the commercial sector emerged as an important player, and one which the ICRC had not engaged with. While commercial actors were already recognised as potential contributors of goods and services, the analysis also highlighted the impact of commercial sector activities in humanitarian contexts, and the need for greater understanding of the private sector's role. To that end, the ICRC seeks dialogue with commercial actors operating in conflict zones in order to increase sensitivity to humanitarian concerns and the protection of affected populations.

Second, the ICRC has sought to diversify its funding base. This resulted in the creation of the Corporate Support Group in 2005, consisting of a core group of businesses interested in its ethical criteria and willing to commit long-term financial support, skills and expertise. Apart from the motivation of staff, affiliation with the ICRC is seen as beneficial in promoting the image of these businesses, as well as providing opportunities to learn from ICRC's operational experience in conflict zones.

A number of businesses also say that they see a role for themselves in helping to improve the managerial practices of humanitarian agencies; one corporate interviewee told us that at times humanitarian agencies ‘take on too many responsibilities’, so undermining the response.

Ways forward

A reappraisal of the role of the commercial sector in the humanitarian world is seen by some as part of a necessary new phase of ‘humanitarian reform’ that includes new forms of partnership with host governments, regional bodies and civil society groups. New donors, changing attitudes among existing donors – not least with regard to efficiency and value for money – and emerging critiques of the existing humanitarian system make a review of current practices necessary. So too does the increasing control being exerted by host governments over humanitarian action.

The case for more strategic engagement by commercial actors in the humanitarian arena is compelling when viewed against the scale and nature of needs and the competencies required to tackle them. This is perhaps most apparent in pre- and post-crisis areas of activity, including disaster risk reduction and post-disaster reconstruction. It seems likely that substantive commercial engagement has most potential in a relatively restricted range of activities, given the limited incentives for longer-term investment and the commercial risks associated with engagement in unstable environments.

Both commercial and humanitarian actors need to be more open about their motives and the nature of their interests in crisis contexts. This might enable both to

make more informed decisions regarding whether and how to collaborate. More strategic partnerships involve collaboration that extends beyond a particular crisis to encompass areas such as skills transfer and joint systems development. Nervousness among humanitarian actors about commercial motives might be overcome by a better understanding of the nature of those motives and the limits they impose on collaboration. For their part, commercial actors need to understand the reasons why humanitarian agencies act as they do – and that ‘added value’ may need to be measured in different ways when considered from a humanitarian perspective. Social, economic and political factors all have an important bearing on what constitutes good practice in crisis contexts, and the application of humanitarian principles creates its own demands.

Ultimately, the need to make a business case for engagement is always likely to be the limiting factor for strategic

involvement by commercial organisations in crisis contexts. The primary drivers of such engagement – CSR, brand enhancement, market development and staff motivation – all have their limits, as does commercial interest more generally. For their part, humanitarian organisations are not immune from competitive pressures and are themselves driven in part by marketing imperatives. Certainly the privileged position of the traditional agencies within the aid market is not guaranteed, and their ability to meet all the demands placed upon them is already under severe strain. The time has come for the aid and commercial sectors to have a more realistic and more strategic conversation about collaboration, based on a proper understanding of each other’s core interests and bottom lines.

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Partnering for security: the Citizens’ Police Liaison Committee in Karachi, Pakistan

Roman Pryjomko

In the Pakistani city of Karachi, an innovative cross-sector partnership is incrementally improving public safety, security and social justice within the context of a highly complex emergency. In a city deeply affected by crime, violence and fear, the partnership creates ‘safer spaces’ for humanitarian activities. This approach may offer new insights for the humanitarian sector, which struggles worldwide with emergency response and longer-term recovery in situations with serious security challenges.

Karachi: complexity and chaos

Specific areas of Karachi are experiencing what amounts to a slow-onset complex emergency. Violence and conflict have caused social and economic disruption resulting in humanitarian crises of varying durations, types and intensities. Home to approximately 20 million people, Karachi’s security challenges have multiplied since Pakistan’s foundation in 1947. Ethnic violence reflects persistent and fractious cultural divides. This is aggravated by weapons proliferation, widespread poverty and unemployment, drug-trafficking and the influx of refugees and displaced people fleeing natural disasters and conflict in Afghanistan and the tribal borderlands. Not surprisingly, organised crime and terrorist groups have flourished in Karachi, exploiting the absence of stable governance, endemic corruption and the politicisation of key institutions such as the police.

The CPLC

The Citizens’ Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) is a pioneering cross-sector partnership and the single most trusted and effective public safety organisation in Karachi today. With roots in the business sector, the CPLC is supported largely by private donations and voluntary staff. A legal mandate under provincial law provides the organisation and its

members with magisterial powers. Although the CPLC has not replaced the police, it has adopted and reformed core police functions and improved performance through technical support, partnering and supportive engagement with the community.

The CPLC maintains databases and communication infrastructures essential to police and public safety operations. It also provides specialised services including crime analysis, and the investigation of kidnapping and terrorism (often related incidents). In addition, by providing a range of support services the CPLC has created ‘safer spaces’ for humanitarian activities within the education and health sectors, for instance with a ‘Safer Schools’ initiative. Through its actions, the CPLC offers an alternative ‘hybrid’ service delivery mechanism especially where existing government structures or capacities are inadequate. This requires a long-term cross-sector partnership between government, business, NGOs and community groups, where all partners make contributions and share the risks posed by a deteriorating security environment.

Making a difference

Since its creation two decades ago, the CPLC has made a positive difference to Karachi, and the model is now being replicated in other Pakistani cities and in neighbouring India. The CPLC has demonstrated considerable resilience, surviving national and local emergencies, frequent changes in government including military rule and occasional hostility from political and criminal interests. Tangible results are evident in the following areas:

- Providing ‘safer spaces’ and enabling environments for humanitarian activities, including CPLC initiatives as



well as independent work by community groups and NGOs.

- Providing access to justice for the poorest and disenfranchised citizens.
- Improving police effectiveness and accountability.
- Providing essential information management, communications and analytical tools.
- Monitoring law enforcement activities and police-community relations.
- Maintaining professional integrity, transparency and effectiveness, internally and in external relations with diverse partners.

the CPLC has worked to build trust, consensus and confidence

Partnering in complex emergencies

Improving security and reducing fear amongst the population are fundamental challenges in complex emergencies. To this end, a systematic investment in building cross-sector partnerships appears to have significant value. Such collaborative arrangements (as opposed to single-sector approaches) can lead to measurable security improvements, while strengthening the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver programmes. In the case of the CPLC, the following factors were most significant:

Resources and incentives

First and foremost, the CPLC focused on police performance by providing the basic technical resources required to improve internal governance, routine operations and public perception, including community relations. Strategically targeted support with modest investments in infrastructure resulted in 'quick wins' and benefits for all partners, creating incentives for further collaboration. Spatial crime analysis in particular proved valuable in producing thematic maps of crime 'hot spots' and trends, thereby

engaging key partners in the development of collaborative strategies. These outputs were also invaluable in public awareness campaigns and stimulated popular interest in crime prevention.

Trust

The CPLC has made sustained efforts to build trust, consensus and confidence, especially with key partners such as the police as well as the wider community. For example, even though the CPLC has legal oversight over police performance and misconduct, rather than simply 'policing the police' it has also sought to resolve underlying institutional problems, including poor pay and inadequate housing and welfare policies. Building mutual trust through proactive cooperation at the operational level is a priority.

Partnership culture

As a largely voluntary organisation the CPLC has developed a partnering culture both internally and externally. The integrity of the organisation is paramount and embodied in a Code of Conduct, which is publicised and universally applied. Members exercise discretion, authority and expertise, with considerable autonomy. Small teams address issues such as carjacking, kidnapping and terrorism, where individuals with local knowledge and expertise can demonstrate leadership and innovation. The principles of equity, transparency and the sharing of benefits are at the heart of CPLC's institutional culture. Although members are drawn from Karachi's business elite the organisation is careful to protect its ethos of public service to all regardless of caste, creed, status or wealth. This includes proactive outreach and openness to the widest range of partners, large and small. From the outset, the CPLC's leadership has actively engaged in operational activities, often at great personal risk.

Engaging the business sector

The business community in Karachi remains the largest contributors of resources and financial backing to the CPLC. As a key partner, the private sector provides technical and logistical resources, know-how, supporting technology and infrastructure, as well as project management support, which are simply unavailable or inaccessible to most government and non-governmental entities. By collaborating with the CPLC the private sector has in turn extended the reach of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes, including health and education services.

The essential ingredient: partnership brokering

The CPLC has established working partnerships with a range of entities including governmental departments, some of which are more amenable than others. As a result, it has developed and institutionalised a powerful, independent 'brokering' capacity. The CPLC maintains a balanced and non-exclusive relationship with overlapping and sometimes conflicting partners (for example in law enforcement), notwithstanding occasional pressure to do otherwise.

Growing evidence worldwide suggests that cross-sector partnerships perform better when the partnering process is applied together with change management skills.

Individual leadership is essential, especially from those with the ability to convene, coach and build the capacity of partners and organisations so that they collaborate effectively. This change management role, exemplified by the CPLC as a brokering organisation, is possibly *the* critical success factor.

The operational and organisational sustainability of the CPLC hinges upon the maintenance of a complex and at times highly sensitive cross-sector partnership. This partnership must work within a politically-charged, unpredictable and changeable environment. Building, managing and maintaining this essential partnership requires dedication, sensitivity, persistence and political savvy. Although the CPLC partnership appears complex and awkward at times, there are clear channels of interdependence and mutual benefits.

Time is a critical factor and constraint in the partnering process, and in sudden-onset emergencies, the pressure to respond quickly certainly limits the available options. However, within the context of complex emergencies and longer-term recovery, the humanitarian sector should consider key elements of the ‘hybrid’ cross-sector partnering approach illustrated by the CPLC, in particular the strengthening, institutionalising and routine deployment

of partnership brokering capabilities. In situations fraught with insecurity, fear and mistrust, this offers the possibility of a more stable and secure operational environment.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the scale and complexity of the challenges confronting Karachi, the CPLC has demonstrated how a relatively small group of committed and resourceful citizens can make significant progress under the auspices of a cross-sector partnership. It has shown that ordinary people – working together – can confront extraordinary challenges and incrementally improve the security and welfare of a deeply troubled community. The CPLC has demonstrated that, even in situations of widespread despair, partnerships can be created – strengthened by personal courage and commitment, they offer hope for a better, more peaceful future.

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Cross-cultural collaboration: building partnerships

James Shaw-Hamilton, The Humanitarian Forum

The challenges involved in meeting humanitarian and development needs in the Middle East and North Africa are enormous. At the same time, there are few examples of cross-cultural collaboration, perhaps because misperceptions on both sides abound. Partnerships are needed, however, for practical reasons and to support humanitarian principles and demonstrate that humanitarianism is neutral. They are needed between ‘Western’ and ‘Islamic’ humanitarian organisations internationally, and between local and international actors.

A changing picture

The need for development and humanitarian aid is greater than ever: in 2010, 373 natural disasters killed over 296,800 people, affected nearly 208 million others and caused damage totalling nearly \$110 billion.¹ Muslims or Muslim-majority countries seem disproportionately affected.

At the same time, Western aid is declining. Government income has been affected by the global financial crisis, while the cost of aid is increasing due to changes in exchange rates and food prices. Meanwhile, aid from Gulf states and international NGOs based there is becoming

more visible and international. A few examples: Saudi Arabia’s \$500m donation to the World Food Programme (WFP); the work of the Qatar Red Crescent in Somalia, Haiti and elsewhere; and the increasing prominence of the Qatar Foundation and the Al Makhtoum Foundation. Countries in the Middle East and North Africa gave \$400m in humanitarian aid in 2010. Islamic NGOs have worked in Gaza, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen and elsewhere for many years. The Koran describes the religious obligation of *zakat* as one of the five pillars of Islam: this is calculated annually as a percentage of an individual’s net worth – and so the actual (and potential) giving throughout the region is enormous.

partnerships may help to break down the misplaced suspicion between the West and the Arab world

Cultural proximity may also be important. Donors who are inspired by faith prefer to give to organisations that share their values, and predominantly prefer to give to culturally similar organisations. Cultural connections between donor and recipient may also be a good predictor

¹ At the end of 2010, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) referred to the ‘increasing vulnerability of populations and the growing magnitude of emergencies’ while the UN Secretary-General spoke of the ‘unacceptably slow’ improvements in the lives of the poor.

of access to beneficiaries.² In December 2010, WFP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to deliver food aid in parts of Somalia. After the Indian Ocean tsunami, World Vision joined with the Indonesian organisation Muhammadiyah to rebuild schools. World Vision gained local legitimacy by working with a large, Muslim organisation that was respected throughout Indonesia, while Muhammadiyah gained international recognition through the partnership.

Developing partnerships may also help to break down the misplaced suspicion that marks relations between the West and the Arab world and promote humanitarian and development work as a neutral area to build trust between communities. There are widespread misperceptions on both sides. Crudely put, Islamic organisations are often seen as motivated by religion, and as supporting conservatism; their ‘humanitarianism’ becomes religion or politics by a different name, and they are thought to be run by zealots or terrorists, or they are seen as secretive, old-fashioned or ineffective. Conversely, there are widely held views in the Muslim world that Western and multilateral organisations are neo-colonial or intent on imposing their governments’ values; some see a deliberate policy to remove Islamic organisations from Muslim areas so as to enable proselytisation.³ It doesn’t help that ‘non-traditional’ actors are also thought to be excluded from the mainstream by language or cliques. The UN too is tainted; many cite the two Security Council meetings on the expulsion of Western NGOs from Sudan in 2009, while none were held on the listing of Islamic NGOs as terrorist organisations after 9/11.

Collaboration may also give an organisation some protection if it faces allegations of wrongdoing, or at least a range of locally accepted reference points. For example, when several INGOs were expelled from Sudan in 2009, they found it hard to speak with the government; The Humanitarian Forum facilitated meetings in London between them and Sudanese government representatives, re-establishing a vital communication link.

Emerging lessons

There are a handful of interesting examples of cross-cultural partnership. They suggest some useful emerging lessons, many of which can be illustrated through the work of The Humanitarian Forum.⁴

The Humanitarian Forum is a network of multilateral, Western and Islamic organisations. It uses the large area of

² Jonathan Benthall, in *Religion and Humanitarianism*, a conference organised by the Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, October 2009, www.graduateinstitute.ch/ccdp.

³ Mohammed Abdul Rahim, ‘Arabic Organizations Absent from the African Scene in Charitable Activities’, QACA (Qatar Authority for Charitable Activities), Edition 1, February 2007.

⁴ For more information see www.humanitarianforum.org. Other useful reading on the issues covered in this article includes Edward Kessler and Miriam Arkush, *Keeping Faith In Development: The Significance of Interfaith Relations in the Work of Humanitarian Aid and International Development Organisations*, The Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths; and Mark R. Janz, Noelle Soi and Rebecca Russell, ‘Collaboration and Partnership in Humanitarian Action’, *Humanitarian Exchange*, no. 45, December 2009.

common ground between religions and cultures as a non-political environment in which to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aid through training, dialogue and cooperation. Internationally and in pilot countries, it helps new humanitarian leaders to emerge and enables them to engage with other humanitarian leaders as equals. In the Middle East and North Africa, the Forum has convened conferences on Libya, Gaza and Somalia to discuss the humanitarian situation and build stronger relations between multilateral organisations, Western and Islamic international NGOs and local NGOs. It is also planning a conference with the League of Arab States on improved cooperation between NGOs and governments. In Yemen, it gives grants, mentoring and training to the Humanitarian Forum Yemen (HFY), an independent network of national NGOs. HFY developed a workshop with OCHA on coordination and cooperation for local NGOs, which also addressed issues of trust between local and international humanitarian organisations. The workshop helped set out concrete steps, such as translating reports into Arabic and broadening invitations to meetings, to ensure that local and international organisations can work together more closely.

Key emerging lessons for cross-cultural collaboration and partnerships include:

Investment. There is no ‘quick win’. Organisations need to have a strategy for engaging with other faith groups, and must build up credibility over time – and at a senior level – through their programmes, partners, policies and profile. Christian Aid and several other INGOs have employed an interfaith manager to lead on their relations with other faith-based organisations. Since 2004, The Humanitarian Forum’s steering committee of CEOs and Directors from key international Sunni, Shi’a and Western organisations has met regularly. It took several years to develop relations, but this has been vital to clarify and agree goals and commitments. Through this process, it has become possible to tackle contentious issues like Gaza and humanitarian principles in positive ways.

Mutual respect. It is vital to show that organisations respect each other’s experience and skills. Trust can evaporate very quickly. The author heard that one potential partnership between a US NGO and one from a Gulf country was destroyed by a passing comment from an American that ‘You have the money, I have the skill’.

Support base. Organisations’ leaders need to ensure that the support base understands and agrees with the cross-cultural partnership. Donors, staff, volunteers, partners and existing beneficiaries may all be suspicious about favouring another faith community before their own. This has been reported to me by Christian, Muslim and Jewish NGOs, but might be shared by all faith groups. In its early days, members of The Humanitarian Forum raised similar concerns, but the forum has the advantage of being ‘international’ and non-denominational.

Shared values. Ideally, partners need to share the same long-term vision and goals. They certainly need to

understand each other's incentives and share the same broad principles in their work. Clearly, there is a large area of common ground between faith-inspired organisations, but this cannot be assumed in all areas (e.g. views on HIV/AIDS or lottery funding), and may be diluted for other reasons (e.g. concerns about proselytisation).

For example, several NGOs have asked whether the Red Cross Code of Conduct of 1994 represents current, universal principles, and the OIC has developed a separate code of 'Islamic' humanitarian principles from scratch. To help organisations understand each other better, a working group of The Humanitarian Forum is identifying common ground in humanitarian principles and rooting the principles in Islamic law and tradition. To that end the Forum has brought together a diverse group from the Red Cross and from organisations in Indonesia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Yemen. This work is ongoing, but there is great congruence between the Red Cross and OIC codes: the OIC code suggests some extra principles, rather than disagreeing with the Red Cross ones.

Small may be beautiful. Tactically, it may be worth testing the ground – and stakeholders' buy-in – starting with a practical, focused area of partnership, for example joint pilot programmes. After it has been successfully started, the partnership needs to remain practical, relevant and rooted in communities. Partnerships must be preserved

through changing circumstances and personnel. As part of this, the more ambitious partnerships need to become embedded within organisations, through outreach to donors and in staff training, while maintaining each organisation's separate identity.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Muslim Aid developed a very successful partnership in Sri Lanka in 2006, sharing staff, resources, supplies and logistical support; meanwhile, their collaboration with faith and community leaders, based on shared humanitarian goals, helped to build trust between religious communities. UMCOR and Muslim Aid tried to replicate the partnership elsewhere (there were plans to merge projects in Cambodia and Sudan), but with far less success, perhaps because it was not owned and driven locally.

The unfolding events in Libya, Yemen, Syria and elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East have vast humanitarian and social implications. The communities and their histories are complex, and principled humanitarian action by the international community is not enough. Local organisations have to be involved in a genuine partnership, and Western and Arab donor organisations need to share a joint vision for the region.

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Partnerships in rapid-onset emergencies: insights from Pakistan and Haiti

Ruth Allen, Mercy Corps

Is it possible to take a partnership approach in rapid-onset emergencies? Coordination is often chaotic, communication is challenging and resources are limited – all factors that can work against effective collaboration among partners, whether local or international. At the same time, partnerships create the opportunity to combine resources and skills to achieve more than a single organisation can achieve alone. They also strengthen local organisations' leadership capacity.

This article discusses partnership considerations in rapid-onset emergencies and highlights some of the principles of partnership that merit attention in these environments. It then looks at two types of context: those where an international organisation was operational before an emergency event, and those where such groups are responding for the first time. The article draws on Mercy Corps' experience, with specific insights from Pakistan and Haiti.

Partnering in rapid-onset emergencies

Rapid-onset emergencies affect existing relationships between international NGOs and local partners, and new relationships are created. Managing partnerships well during these crises is, first and foremost, important for meeting the needs of affected populations. It is also critical

in order to support local partners' capacity and long-term interests, meet INGOs' relief goals and lay a foundation for a responsible transition to recovery and development.

is partnership possible in rapid-onset emergencies?

In contexts where INGOs are present in the area before the emergency hits, it is easier to make the transition to working with partners. The examples from Pakistan discuss some of the approaches taken and lessons learned. Too often, though, INGOs put existing partnerships on hold as they organise new, separate relief efforts and shift to coordination with other international actors. Local partners say that this is confusing and feels dismissive because it is regularly done without consultation or sufficient explanation. It also puts them in a precarious position, not knowing the future of their relationship with their international partner at a particularly uncertain time in their country. Thus INGOs compromise the partnership principles of equality and transparency, and the mutual

respect and commitment to sharing information between partners irrespective of their size and power.

In such situations, INGOs should reflect carefully on their motivations for making partnership changes, asking themselves whether it is for practical reasons such as insufficient joint planning about how the relationship will change in the event of an unexpected crisis, lack of capacity or mandate of the local partner, or whether it is for self-promotion. The need for visibility, a real tension given the nature of private and government funding sources in emergencies, is no less important for local partners than INGOs. Here there is a need to respect complementarity as a principle of partnership; building on comparative advantage has value beyond what organisations might be able to take credit for separately. Given many local partners' long-term interests in taking full leadership for local development, visibility needs and planning should be part of capacity-building approaches well before emergencies.

A commitment to learning from and with partners is extremely important during emergency response. Because learning is often thought of as something done at the end of a programme or when there is time to reflect, it is rarely at the forefront of planning during rapid-onset programming. However, learning is one of the most consistent expectations of local partners, in emergencies and otherwise. Particularly with new partners and those that require significant capacity support, or when working among sensitive groups, such as in conflict situations, creating a culture of continuous, intentional learning is a basic part of a 'do no harm' approach. Establishing an expectation among partners that coordination will be results-oriented instead of purely operational is a first step. It is equally important for INGOs to get feedback from partners about their own performance. Regular and frequent feedback can help keep programmes on track or enable quick realignment, identify new opportunities and keep INGOs accountable to partners and beneficiaries. Mechanisms for beneficiary feedback to INGOs can either be direct or through local partners depending on time and capacity constraints, as well as the goals for which the feedback is being solicited. While there is no one formula for learning with partners in rapid-onset emergencies, many proven approaches are described in *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*¹ and *The Good Enough Guide: Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies*.²

Pakistan: leveraging existing partnerships

Mercy Corps began work in Pakistan in 1986, responding to the Afghan refugee crisis in Balochistan province. Since then, long-term development activities with diverse government and civil society partners have often been interrupted by emergencies. In late July 2010, the worst monsoon-related floods in living memory hit the country, creating urgent needs for health care, clean

water and sanitation. Existing partners were well placed to take on new roles. In the Swat Valley Mercy Corps' established partnership agreements, including joint management structures, facilitated the quick creation of new Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) responsive to the changed environment. With coordination support from Mercy Corps, the Department of Health (DoH) was able to bring in trained staff and medication for health facilities in flood-affected areas.

In Sindh and Balochistan provinces, civil society partners switched from organising health fairs (providing communities with access to nutrition information and products) to conducting water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) initiatives in displacement camps and establishing mobile health units. National and international staff agreed that this speedy transition would not have been possible without a large core group of programme staff with expertise in community mobilisation and experience working effectively with local partners. For example, staff were able to identify the new skills that partners would need for WASH projects, such as procurement and teaching about hand washing, as well as the mobilisation skills partners were familiar with in order to design training that built on partners' existing knowledge base. This accelerated learning and increased partners' confidence in taking on new activities.

Another important lesson for partnering relates to securing resources in rapid-onset emergencies. Designing programmes and negotiating funding is one of the most time-consuming aspects of humanitarian response and something that local partners are often less well-equipped to manage because they have less experience with funding mechanisms and often do not have prior relationships with donors. By enabling local partners to fully lead programme implementation, INGOs can create opportunities for local partners to gain first-hand experience of financial management in emergency programmes, including accountability, operational planning and budgeting.

Mercy Corps took this approach with the well-established Pakistani NGO Balochistan Rural Support Program, as well as with smaller NGOs such as the Association for Community Development. These groups worked with Mercy Corps, but also collaborated directly with each other on health initiatives, were responsible for significant parts of grant management and were primary decision-makers on nearly all activities. This afforded them the chance to learn by doing, with an INGO to advise or support them when requested. It also put them in direct contact with government bodies and communities – experience useful for their longer-term local leadership of relief and development efforts.

Team members closely involved in planning Mercy Corps' response to the Pakistan floods also underscored the importance of establishing national, provincial and district-level partners. The DoH example above had the added value of modelling successful partnerships with INGOs and local civil society organisations (CSOs) to other government bodies, including local health departments. One result has

1 Mary Anderson, Lara Olson and Kristin Doughty, *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, 2003, <http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/publication.php>.

2 Emergency Capacity Building Project, *The Good Enough Guide: Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies*, 2007, <http://www.ecbproject.org/geg>.

been that government partners at local level have worked with provincial officials, local CSOs and Mercy Corps to develop a joint disaster risk reduction programme, drawing on the different strengths of the various actors involved.

Finally, INGOs are often part of the cluster system and can influence whether and how national partners are involved. In Pakistan, the direct participation of national and regional NGOs in the WASH cluster was a significant success. It provided local information to support rapid decision-making, and helped INGOs and local groups find potential partners. Being involved in the cluster process also gave CSOs their first significant experience of working with multilateral decision-making processes.

Haiti: forging new partnerships

Half a world away, the Haiti earthquake of January 2010 offers a different set of lessons about partnership. New to the context, Mercy Corps found it was much harder to establish partnerships while also trying to gain registration, set up an office and hire staff, not to mention respond to the urgent needs of vulnerable groups and build relationships with so many INGO actors on the ground.

In the weeks immediately following the earthquake, Mercy Corps and many INGOs collaborated with informal community-based groups that emerged out of the crisis, such as IDP camp committees. Since these groups were newly formed themselves, they found it easier to work with INGOs that were also newly operational in Haiti than did other local groups active before the earthquake. For Mercy Corps, the goal with IDP committees and other temporary groups has been to help them act as a point of contact for coordination with the UN, INGOs and the government on relief programming such as cash-for-work, but not to incentivise further formalisation, which might work against the reintegration goals of communities themselves.

temporary groups act as a point of contact for coordination in Haiti

Local government partners have also been essential for INGOs, in part because of the damage the earthquake inflicted on the central government. Because of massive displacement from Port-au-Prince, mayors of surrounding communities and *mairies* (neighbourhood mayors) became key relief/recovery decision-makers. In towns like Tabarre, mayors partnered with INGOs to identify the most vulnerable families and jointly operate and monitor aid distributions from public facilities. Unlike in Pakistan, formal MOUs were not established, but communities still commented that seeing government leadership working with INGOs on public services helped restore their confidence in local officials. A further step INGOs are starting to take is facilitating direct collaboration between local government partners and informal groups like the camp committees discussed above, to accelerate returns and prioritise services.

Another lesson for INGOs responding in a new country is the importance of rapid actor mapping to inform partnerships. For example, a small number of prominent Haitian NGOs quickly became overwhelmed by the number of partnership requests from INGOs and were given funds far beyond their capacity to manage. Yet there were hundreds of other NGOs and CBOs capable of playing important roles. Actor mapping can help less-established INGOs find a programming niche that fits with their expertise. Mercy Corps, for instance, tapped into this potential to help address the psychosocial needs of Haitian children. Over 120 organisations, including churches, schools and youth groups, have been trained in the Comfort for Kids curriculum.³

New contexts also offer opportunities to test new types of partnerships. Aware of the massive development challenges facing Haiti before the earthquake, Mercy Corps' early goal was to shift from relief and recovery programming to initiatives specifically aimed at addressing poverty. Not having an existing portfolio of programmes gave the organisation the flexibility to design programmes and create partnerships that took both the pre- and post-earthquake context into account. One example is the partnership between Haiti's second-largest mobile phone operator, Voilà, and Unibank, a leading Haitian bank. The concept is a mobile phone account – or 'mobile wallet' – that can store savings and work like a debit card. In a country where few people have bank accounts but 85% have access to a mobile phone, the potential for mobile banking is huge. Mercy Corps added value to this and other innovation partnerships by sharing with local partners its experiences from other emergency contexts, as well as from its long-term development work.

Conclusion

The decision to take a partnership approach and if so what roles partners will play is a complex one. However, INGOs should not assume that partnerships are impossible or undesirable in emergencies. Instead, there is a need to push the boundaries of what INGOs can expect to gain from partnerships in these contexts, and what working in partnership can bring to local organisations' ownership of decisions during emergencies. There are real challenges, from the frequent lack of advance planning where partners are already collaborating before a crisis, to the often unclear process of mapping potential partners in new contexts. However, especially when a solid commitment to capacity-building exists, as in the Pakistan examples, adjusting ways of collaborating can be efficient and beneficial for all parties. The reflections from Haiti show that collaboration with local partners can be a highly effective way of ensuring that humanitarian action opens doors to innovative programming. Across these diverse contexts, the relationships established, capacities built and impacts achieved by local partners are key to the sustainability of relief efforts and constitute a foundation for longer-term development collaboration.

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³ See <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/dbgoosid/AMMF-7ZWTZ3?OpenDocument>.

Partners in emergencies: RedR and Bioforce in Haiti

Catherine Russ and Rory Downham

In mid-2009, senior staff from Bioforce and RedR met in Paris to discuss how the two organisations might work together in future emergencies. Through that meeting it became clear that both engage in similar activities in emergencies. For example, both undertake learning needs assessments, recruit local trainers, contextualise training materials and procure office and training space. They also provide similar training to the same groups of people (entry- and mid-level staff working in emergencies) and share similar learning objectives and outcomes and complementary methodologies around experiential learning. In short, the meeting concluded that bringing together Bioforce's and RedR's training resources, capacities and expertise would have far greater impact on improving humanitarian response than individual efforts alone.



A training session for Islamic Relief staff in Haiti

Operationalising the partnership

In December 2009, RedR and Bioforce signed a Memorandum of Understanding outlining how the two organisations would work together on what became known as the 'Disaster Response Support Service' (DRSS) programme. This was based on the following principles:

- Traditional training is not appropriate in the aftermath of a disaster. An innovative approach, where training and support take place on the job, is essential in the initial period of the response.
- This training and support should concentrate on national staff. To that end, the DRSS programme includes an assessment process designed to certify nationals who have acquired relevant skills during the response.

The Haiti earthquake struck just weeks after the MoU was signed. A joint needs assessment team quickly determined that there was a huge need for technical training and support, generating immediate pressure to field a team and initiate the project. However, funding was available for only three staff at the outset. Given these constraints, the two agencies decided to send a country director, a logistics trainer and a finance administrator, who doubled as a logistician. Bringing the two organisations together in the field felt like a fast-forward mini-merger. Many decisions needed to be made before work could even start:

- How would decisions be made and who needed to know what, where, when and why?
- Whose job descriptions would we use and who would initiate recruitment?

- Which employment law legislation (i.e. UK or French) would be used when hiring international staff?
- Who would manage which staff and how would inductions be organised?
- What formats for training would be used? How did session plans and workbooks complement each other and differ, and how were they going to be presented?
- How would RedR and Bioforce brand ourselves as two organisations but one project?
- How would combined materials be branded?
- Which evaluation forms would be used?
- How would the two organisations' databases and email distribution systems be consolidated?
- How would data be collected, maintained and reported on?
- How would marketing and communication work, and which agency would take the lead?

The two organisations also needed to formalise their agreement to host the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) and Sphere.

many decisions needed to be made before work could even start

Challenges

Starting up

Not having a dedicated logistics position meant that already overburdened programme staff had to take on these tasks, when and if they could find time. This piecemeal approach to logistics had a detrimental effect

on the living and working conditions for staff; it also meant that the agencies being hosted (HAP and Sphere) received a haphazard service.

Ensuring sufficient quantities of appropriate, functioning and good-quality equipment, such as projectors, laptops, flipcharts and photocopiers, was a continual challenge; equipment was sourced from as many as three different countries, resulting in mismatched and sometimes sub-standard equipment and regular voltage problems.

Lessons identified:

- Employ a full-time dedicated logistician from the outset and ensure a good standard of working and living conditions so that staff can concentrate on delivering on their objectives.
- Do not bring additional partners or initiatives on board until the primary partnership is established and operational; most people look to be hosted so that they can easily and quickly get up to speed with their work.
- Source computer and electronic equipment from one place if possible, and ensure that systems are compatible.

Staff recruitment

The project team worked hard to recruit bilingual staff, including bilingual training staff. Despite cultural, organisational and linguistic differences and a highly pressurised and stressful environment, the team worked well together. Apart from some tensions around the use of English rather than French or Creole in staff meetings, grievances and irritations were no more pronounced than in most offices.

trainers needed a wide range of competencies

Trainers needed a wide range of competencies, including technical skills, learning and development skills and humanitarian experience, as well as proficiency in French and English. As finding people who possessed this full set of competencies was extremely difficult, the team had to intensively coach and mentor staff to help them gain the requisite skills. Headquarters staff had to temporarily cover some functions, affecting the continuity and consistency of training. The turnover of staff both at HQ and country level meant that many important implementing principles got lost along the way, including data management systems.

Lessons identified:

- Create a roster of trainers available from a range of countries at short notice before an emergency. Having insufficient training staff poses the biggest risk to any project.
- Standardise inductions and develop summaries of important implementation issues, rather than handing

over voluminous concept notes and documents which no one will read.

Preparedness: planning for the future

Although basic checklists were prepared for the joint operation, many things were missed. For example, no thought was given to how the joint project would handle decision-making around sensitive issues like management problems, disciplinary action and security breaches. What degree of involvement did each organisation expect to have in decision-making, and at what levels? How would urgent decisions be handled? In the first weeks of the project, the country director finally found an office but needed to sign a year’s lease to secure it. Even though she did not have the consent of both agencies as agreed, the director went ahead so as not to lose the premises. While this turned out to be the right decision, the episode highlighted flaws in the decision-making process.

Lessons identified:

- Prepare checklists as thoroughly as possible; include risk assessment questions and contingency planning.
- Create a field handbook for partners outlining agreed systems and processes, paying special attention to decision-making parameters, processes and timelines, and providing lists of key tasks and those responsible for carrying them out.
- Ensure that decision-making processes do not hamper or delay operations and are flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances.

Partnership and identity

One of the biggest challenges for the DRSS project was establishing a clear identity and communicating that identity to others. How did staff, partners and beneficiaries identify the partnership – as DRSS, RedR, Bioforce or RedR/Bioforce? This was clearly an issue despite repeated attempts at clarification from HQ to Haiti in-country staff that RedR and Bioforce was a joint project, that DRSS was not a legal entity and that both agencies needed to be jointly named in correspondence. As staff had been recruited from both agencies, they tended to identify with one or the other, causing confusion for anyone coming into contact with them; some local staff even wrongly believed that DRSS was the agency name. Clearly, a new identity cannot be created in such a short space of time. Because the initiators understood and identified so strongly with the project, it was assumed that, with good induction of new staff, the new identity and how to communicate it would be easily established. It was only when a staffer from HQ visited the office that the problem could be identified and miscommunications addressed.

Lessons identified:

- Make sure that the architects of the project are in touch with the implementers on a regular basis to ensure that the concept is upheld and the project develops in the right direction.

- Ideally, introduce a separate communications post or have one person in charge of communications – this sounds obvious, but in a partnership with multi-way communication with multiple players there are numerous additional ways communication can go wrong.

Working with HAP and Sphere

With communication already a problem between Bioforce and RedR staff, it was not surprising that HAP and Sphere were not always kept informed of what training was being delivered and what the project was all about. Despite joint security briefings, there was insufficient information-sharing and HAP and Sphere were not able to contribute in the way that was originally envisaged, as project partners and sometimes joint deliverers of training; this was partly due to the highly technical nature of the training delivered in the project and the lack of funding for humanitarian and people/project management training, areas in which HAP and Sphere could have made a more obvious contribution.

Lessons identified:

- Provide detailed précis of all agencies involved so that all staff are informed and aware of each agency's mandate, and hold information-sharing sessions on a regular basis to keep everyone abreast of developments.
- Involve hosted agencies from the outset and encourage their participation in the project's evolution.

Reflections

Despite the challenges, the DRSS project in Haiti delivered the training as planned. An internal evaluation, evaluation forms and meetings with managers in agencies all showed that this

training was greatly appreciated. Over 1,400 humanitarian staff got access to training. HAP and Sphere were hosted,¹ as was an inter-agency security forum. Had funding for the project continued it would have been possible to start to embed the process of assessing and certifying staff, which had started towards the end of the project, so that local staff skills could be recognised and transferred to future emergency responses. The impact of the project was only beginning to be felt as relationships bedded in, agencies became aware of the training being delivered, trainers became more confident with the courses and materials and the project as a whole gained local respect.

Conclusion

Partnering in the Haiti emergency enabled RedR and Bioforce to combine capacities and resources and avoid competition for scarce management and training staff and duplication of effort. More humanitarian staff were trained as a result, and arguably a greater positive impact was made on the quality of the humanitarian response. Hard-earned lessons from this experience were identified and analysed at a workshop in Paris following the end of the project, and ways were identified to incorporate them into future partnerships. As in all lesson-learning exercises conducted in the humanitarian sector, the challenge is to ensure that these lessons are implemented.

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¹ Hosting entailed providing accommodation for office and home use, logistical and administrative support, transport and security and, with one agency, line management.

Humanitarian partnerships: what do they really mean?

Anne Street, CAFOD

What do we mean by partnership in humanitarian action, and what does partnership look like in practice? Effective humanitarian partnerships are about more than mechanistic relationships where actors come together to achieve a set of common objectives, dividing up responsibilities and planning joint work. They also involve underlying issues of power, attitudes and styles of working. Many of the largest international NGO providers of humanitarian relief work primarily as direct implementers, or adopt a mixed approach, employing their own staff to set up and run projects as well as supporting local partners. By contrast CAFOD, as part of Caritas International, works almost entirely through local actors, with more than 500 partner organisations across the world. We recognise the power dynamics that often reinforce the position of Northern agencies, and seek to acknowledge these influences and to reduce their effects. This involves considering how partnerships can be empowering, and what things Southern partners can contribute.

Humanitarian reform

Between the end of 2008 and 2010 CAFOD was part of the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project, along with six other

INGOs (ActionAid, CARE, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam and Save the Children) and the NGO coalition ICVA.¹ The project aimed to strengthen the engagement of local, national and international humanitarian NGOs in the humanitarian reform process at global and country levels, as well as increasing NGO influence in policy debates and field processes.

The project published a *Synthesis Report* in late 2009, based on five country studies of NGO engagement in reformed humanitarian mechanisms. The report noted that the initial focus of the reform process on the international community had been to the detriment of national and local actors. A stark example of this came in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in September 2009, when 49 representatives of Congolese NGOs, civil society organisations and the Red Cross/Red Crescent wrote an open letter to UN agencies and INGOs criticising them for failing to coordinate with or support civil society organisations in Dungu. The letter noted that, with few exceptions, internationals were brought in to staff virtually

¹ See www.icva.ch/ngosandhumanitarianreform.html.

all posts with the exception of menial jobs, and that promised capacity-building for Congolese organisations had not taken place.

Similar tensions exist in relation to access to humanitarian funding where INGOs are themselves implementing partners for UN agencies. For example, Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) money can only be disbursed via UN agencies and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), although NGOs implement a significant percentage of CERF-funded projects. Funding constraints often mean that national NGOs lack the financial means to deliver humanitarian assistance, despite the fact that they are well positioned to do so in terms of their geographical location and knowledge of local community structures.

Two examples: Haiti and Afghanistan

After the earthquake in Haiti national actors found themselves sidelined by international actors. Whilst some international NGOs sought to build on experience of working with national actors during the 2004 and 2008 floods in Gonaives, the international response frequently relegated national NGOs to the role of implementing partners, effectively excluding them from the clusters and other coordination mechanisms. This was summed up in both the Haiti Real Time Evaluation and the IASC's six-month report, which noted that 'the international community needs to strengthen its engagement at the local level, particularly supporting local level initiatives and responders wherever possible with the broader objective of contributing to building national capacity and more sustainable approaches to humanitarian assistance'.²

The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project found surprisingly high levels of participation in clusters and other field coordination mechanisms among national NGOs in Afghanistan, although it would often be more accurate to describe this as attendance rather than participation. Despite the humanitarian community's best efforts to encourage the involvement of national NGOs, project staff found that in reality there was only limited interest in coordination, strategy formulation and policy elaboration. Most national NGOs prioritised access to funding.

Funding issues

The sidelining of national actors in humanitarian coordination mechanisms is reflected in access to funding: national NGOs, or their coordination representatives, rarely participate in the Humanitarian Country Teams, provincial committees, inter-cluster meetings or other fora where funding allocations and priorities are discussed.

National NGO access to pooled funds varies considerably from country to country. In DRC national NGOs received 23% of the first allocation of the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) in 2010, up from 3.95% in 2006 and 15% in 2009. By contrast the OCHA-administered Emergency Relief and Recovery Fund (ERRF) in Haiti, which distributes unearmarked funds to NGOs and UN agencies, distributed just under \$63 million between February and July. Twenty-

² See <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-news-newsdetails&newsid=143>.

six international NGO proposals were funded during that period, but only two national NGO projects were approved.³ On the other hand, although in some countries more national NGO projects are now successfully applying for pooled funds the size of grants they receive is much smaller than those awarded to international NGOs.

national NGO access to pooled funds varies considerably from country to country

National NGOs providing humanitarian relief often do not have the reach or capacity of their international counterparts, with the result that there is sometimes a perception amongst pooled fund managers or their advisory boards that they are not capable of successfully implementing projects with pooled funds. Yet there is no provision within the pooled funds for capacity-building for national actors, despite international NGO advocacy. In the case of DRC, the Pooled Fund Unit and most pooled fund donors have not been receptive to calls to make capacity-building part of the fund's remit. This task is typically left to international actors, for example the work CAFOD has undertaken to support its national partner Caritas Goma to gain accreditation, to enable it to apply for HRF funding in DRC.

Country-level emergency response funds typically have limited numbers of staff, so processing a small number of large project applications is much more realistic than dealing with numerous smaller applications, particularly in relation to monitoring and evaluation. One way to address this would be to ease the burden on pooled fund managers by involving UN agencies and INGO partners in monitoring and evaluation.

The role of the UN

UN agencies often find it easier to partner with international NGOs than national ones. Nevertheless, UNHCR works with a large number of national NGOs. Globally UNHCR worked with around 3,000 implementing partners in the period 2005–2007, the majority of which are national organisations (almost 700 globally in 2009, with \$288 million passed through national organisations that year). UNHCR intends to introduce simpler financial and administrative procedures in order to place less of a burden on national and local actors.

The theme of the 2010 Annual UNHCR–NGO Consultations was National Partnerships; of the 209 participating organisations, 98 were national organisations. A paper for the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in September 2010 noted that 'UNHCR will need to encourage all forms of partnership, notably with national and local entities'. The paper went on to state that 'It is often at the local level that problems are most acutely felt and solutions must be found. Local

³ See [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/SNAA-85EBAC-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/SNAA-85EBAC-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf).

Ethiopia: promoting stronger partnerships between international and national NGOs⁴

In Ethiopia the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project sought to gauge local capacity and gain greater understanding of partnership constraints between national NGOs and INGOs. Focus group meetings with national NGOs in three regions (Somali, Tigray and Amhara) enabled project staff to learn about local perceptions of INGOs, identify recurring themes relating to partnership practice and work with a variety of stakeholders to devise responses.

Challenges include:

- Ethiopian civil society involvement in humanitarian response remains limited.
- Although humanitarian actors place increasing emphasis on partnership and capacity-building, INGOs sometimes struggle to find suitable local partners to implement emergency programmes.
- INGOs are widely seen as donors rather than partners, and national NGOs see their roles as sub-grantees, clients or contractors, rather than equal implementing partners.
- These perceptions are not unique to Ethiopia, and go to the heart of the underlying challenges in working with local capacities to mount effective humanitarian responses.

Solutions include:

- Strengthen and improve the quality of INGO partnerships with national NGOs.
- INGOs should implement emergency response projects through partners and commit to devising innovative means of enhancing local NGO capacity and building effective partnerships with local organisations.
- INGO policies on partnership should move away from a project focus to a partner focus, and should be geared towards developing strategic, results-oriented ways of working, promoting equal relations, enhanced funding arrangements to support national NGO administration costs and capacity-building practices that enable a genuine transfer of competencies.
- INGOs must invest time in developing appropriate partnership framework arrangements. This will ensure that national NGOs are better able to respond to local development needs and mitigate against future emergencies.
- Best practice and lessons learned in partnership should be shared between INGOs to ensure that positive examples are utilised more widely.

partners are frequently better placed to design, develop and implement programmes specifically adapted to the needs of the populations being cared for.⁵ Although the agency has some way to go before it reaches its stated goal, these are all important steps.

⁴ This section is taken from the end of project report on project activities in Ethiopia by Dan Tyler, (unpublished) NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project's Humanitarian Reform Officer in Ethiopia. October 2010.

⁵ See <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opensslPD-FViewer.html?docid=4c99bad49&query=humanitarian%20partnerships>.

Donor roles

Donors too have a role to play in strengthening humanitarian partnerships. Thirty-seven donors have now signed up to the Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (first adopted in 2003). Principle 8 commits signatories to:

Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and coordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.⁶

The 2010–2011 workplan for GHD has a work stream on strengthened partnerships between donors, NGOs, the Red Cross and the UN, including further exchanges on the application of the Principles of Partnership (see pp. 5–8). However, unlike many of the other planned workstreams, this priority area does not identify which GHD members will be involved, nor does it set dates by which this work should be completed. The challenges involved in making progress in this area may well be reflected in this note, which is still on the GHD website six months into the workplan, to the effect that 'no detailed discussion has yet taken place on future engagement of donors in encouraging the implementation of the Principles of Partnership between UN and non-UN partners'.⁷

Humanitarian donors channel funding through UN agencies, which then work with national government to help strengthen their capacities. This is important, and helps national governments to meet their responsibilities to their people in times of disaster. Nevertheless, donors' focus on state-level capacity should not be to the detriment of a complementary focus on developing the capacities of national civil society. Some bilateral donors are reluctant to work directly with national NGOs or support national humanitarian coordination networks, preferring to fund their own NGOs. Others, such as DFID, have made an important contribution, funding international NGO humanitarian coordination initiatives as well as nationally based networks. These innovative approaches should be complemented with similar support to national non-governmental actors to staff and run humanitarian coordination networks and develop organisational and staff capacities. The active and committed support of donors is vital if national actors are to receive the recognition they deserve for their *de facto* role as providers of first resort in sudden-onset emergencies. The independent Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR) of DFID's humanitarian work published at the end of March 2011 noted that, if donors made participation by national actors and local groups a prerequisite for cluster funding in each emergency, the marginalisation of national actors from these humanitarian response mechanisms could be rectified.⁸

⁶ See www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org.

⁷ See http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/Libraries/GHD_Workplans/GHD_Workplan_2010_-_2011.sflb.ashx.

⁸ See <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Get-Involved/Disasters-and-emergencies/Humanitarian-Emergency-Response-Review>.

Conclusion

If the humanitarian community is to truly put partnership into practice international NGOs will need to focus less on the direct implementation of emergency response projects, and prioritise developing partnerships with local actors who can respond to the needs of crisis-affected people. These local organisations are increasingly being recognised as responders of first resort, although there is a long way to go before effective partnerships are in place on the ground, particularly after the initial response stage.

NGOs need to focus less on direct implementation and prioritise developing partnerships with local actors

Such partnerships should not be project-based, but rather should encompass aspects such as preparedness and contingency planning and developing knowledge and capacity for humanitarian response, ensuring that local partners are familiar with relevant codes of conduct and humanitarian standards and issues such as accountability and protection, as well as supporting local organisations to access funding.

What are the implications of this for INGOs? Such a scenario would mean a major shift for some big implementing agencies. Are they prepared to take more of a back seat and support national actors, to work in tandem with local

actors or even relinquish their role as direct implementers? Currently this would be a long stretch for many INGOs, which have built up considerable experience and expertise in humanitarian response, and whose humanitarian capability enables them to attract increased contributions, enhancing organisational profile and reputation.

Last year the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project produced a series of indicators that NGOs could use to monitor their progress in applying the Principles of Partnership. These included staff training, use of the POP as a framework within which to report on programme activities and monitor relationships with other humanitarian actors and the role that leadership within the organisation plays in enhancing a partnership approach.⁹ On a practical level, the POP should be integrated into job descriptions (including personal specifications and competencies), recruitment interviews and staff appraisals, and should be written into organisational standards, manuals and procedures. Clearly, for many international NGOs there would also need to be big shifts in organisational culture, as well as changes in procedures and practices, embedding the Principles of Partnership into organisational culture and practice, and ensuring that humanitarian staff are familiar with them and with the values embodied in them, and that new staff receive appropriate orientation: in short, putting partnership at the centre of organisational practice and culture.

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⁹ See <http://www.icva.ch/doco0004351.pdf>.

Operational Security Management in Violent Environments

Good Practice Review 8 (Revised Edition) December 2010

The first edition of *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (also known as GPR 8) was published in 2000. Since then it has become a seminal document in humanitarian operational security management, and is credited with increasing the understanding of good practice in this area throughout the community of operational agencies. It introduced core security management concepts and highlighted good policy and practice on the range of different approaches to operational security in humanitarian contexts. When it was published, the majority of aid agencies were only just beginning to consider the realities and challenges of operational insecurity. Few international or national organisations had designated security positions or policies and protocols on how to manage the risks of deliberate violence against their staff and operations. The GPR thus filled a significant gap in the policy and practice of security management.

Although a good deal of the original GPR 8 remains valid, the global security environment has changed significantly over the past decade. New conflict contexts have created new sources of threat to international humanitarian action. Increasing violence against aid workers and their operations, including more kidnappings and lethal attacks, has had serious implications for humanitarian relief work in insecure contexts. Meanwhile, agencies themselves have become much more conscious of the need to provide for the safety and security of their staff.

To reflect these changes, the Humanitarian Practice Network has published a new version of GPR 8. The new edition both updates the original material and introduces new topics, such as the security dimensions of 'remote management' programming, good practice in interagency security coordination and how to track, share and analyse security information. The new edition also provides a more comprehensive approach to managing critical incidents, in particular kidnapping and hostage-taking, and discusses issues relating to the threat of terrorism.

Cash transfer programming in emergencies

Good Practice Review 11

June 2011

Paul Harvey and Sarah Bailey

The vast majority of international humanitarian aid is provided in-kind, in the form of food, seeds, tools, medicines, shelter materials and household goods. At the same time, however, there is a significant and growing body of experience with the provision of cash or vouchers as alternatives or complements to in-kind assistance. As experience with using cash transfers grows, so it has become increasingly clear that cash can play a part in assisting people after emergencies across a range of sectors. It can support access to food, help to rebuild or protect livelihoods, help to meet people's need for shelter and non-food items, support refugees and facilitate return and reintegration processes. The question is no longer *whether* cash is an appropriate way to meet the needs of disaster-affected people, but *how* organisations, donors and governments can use cash transfers to best effect, in line with their missions and mandates.

Cash transfers are not a sector in their own right: cash is simply an instrument that can be used – when appropriate – to meet particular objectives in particular contexts and sectors of response. Cash transfers are not a panacea; nor are many of the fears that still attend their use in humanitarian response justified in practice. Ultimately, listing theoretical advantages and disadvantages of cash transfers in comparison to in-kind relief is not a helpful framework for discussion. The appropriateness of cash transfers depends on needs, markets and other key factors, all of which vary from context to context.

This GPR synthesises existing cash transfer guidelines, centralises lessons from research and evaluations and adds practical examples drawn from cash-based interventions. It covers the provision of cash and vouchers to individuals and households in emergencies, protracted crises and recovery contexts. Separate chapters are devoted to vouchers and Cash for Work to cover the additional issues these forms of programming raise.

The GPR is written primarily for humanitarian practitioners who plan and implement emergency responses – both those who are already familiar with cash-based interventions and those who are not. The GPR will also be useful for senior managers in the field and in headquarters offices who are involved in approving operational responses and ensuring that their staff have the capacity and systems to implement projects using cash transfers. Humanitarian donors, government officials involved in disaster response, students studying humanitarian assistance and aid agency staff engaged in policy issues will also find this GPR useful.

Humanitarian Practice Network

The **Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN)** is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience.

HPN's aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

HPN's activities include:

- A series of specialist publications: *Humanitarian Exchange* magazine, Network Papers and Good Practice Reviews.
- A resource website at www.odihpn.org.
- Occasional seminars and workshops bringing together practitioners, policymakers and analysts.

HPN's members and audience comprise individuals and organisations engaged in humanitarian action. They are in 80 countries worldwide, working in northern and southern NGOs, the UN and other multilateral agencies, governments and donors, academic institutions and consultancies. HPN's publications are written by a similarly wide range of contributors.

HPN's institutional location is the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), an independent think tank on humanitarian and development policy. HPN's publications are researched and written by a wide range of individuals and organisations, and are published by HPN in order to encourage and facilitate knowledge-sharing within the sector. *The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.*

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