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# Addressing the perennial problems of disaster response

Background study for the  
Disaster Response Dialogue Conference  
Manila, Philippines, October 2014



Cover photo: Philippines- Debris and dead animals cover the Anibong district of Tacloban in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan.  
UNHCR / R. Rocamora

Design: Christina Samson

*Addressing the perennial problems of disaster response*

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# Executive summary



Pakistan: A little girl comforts her baby sister among the ruins of their village, near Balakot after the 2005 earthquake. UNHCR / M.Pearson

Continuously making efforts to improve the effectiveness of the response to the humanitarian consequences of natural disasters is a moral and ethical obligation that rests on all involved in these responses. Better cooperation between international and local actors, especially the government, is part of these efforts. This study looks at ways how the relationships and cooperation can be improved. It presents a number of elements that are by no means new topics for discussion, but tries to shed light on them in a way that calls for more honest and frank dialogue among international actors, and especially between these actors and the governments of disaster-affected countries. The problems in disaster response are generally well-known – **it is time to get serious about finding solutions collectively.**

## Strengthening trust and relationships

The study devotes ample time and attention to trust as an essential factor in collaboration. The research team was struck how much interviewees referred to the need to build more trust. Trust cannot be just switched on. It comes over time when actors know each other and rely on each other. This study recommends to take a step back in discussing trust and to look at ways on how it can be built, as a matter of priority.

In order to improve collaboration, those who consider themselves part of the international humanitarian system should further reflect on their behaviours when operating in a disaster-affected country. Although many international actors have done much work to address a number of (bad) habits, there is still work to be done if the caricature of Westerners taking over a country in a colonial fashion to rescue the poor and needy is to be eradicated for good and forever.

Humanitarian principles set the parameters for collaboration in the response to natural disasters. **Humanitarian actors should not hide behind principles in order to reject collaboration with the**

## MORE HONESTY AND TRANSPARENCY IS NEEDED IN DISASTER RESPONSES.

**governmental authorities.** On the contrary, the principles should underpin the dialogue as there may be different views between the government and international actors on the precise nature and scale of the needs among the affected population. Interviewees also referred to the international disaster response law as providing a very important framework in this regard.

The call for more accountability for the activities of the international humanitarian community has also been heard in the context of this study. Much has happened in the landscape of accountability mechanisms and processes, including in the area of the relationship between those affected by the disaster and those who provide assistance. Perhaps, it is time to look at the connections between the various levels of accountability and to connect them. For example, in further establishing processes for accountability between the affected populations and international humanitarian actors, the accountability of the government vis-à-vis the population is equally important and this relationship should also be part of the attention of the international actors.

## Making cooperation more effective

In making disaster response more effective, this study notices two priorities that are running in parallel: there is emphasis on the need of strengthening the role and capacity of the governments of disaster-affected countries, and, at the same time, much of the international efforts in recent years have gone into further building the international system. These two priorities may point in different directions and it is time to clarify if and how they go together.

The same can be said for the role of regional organisations in disaster response, which

## “MUCH CAN STILL BE WON IF HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS KEEP EACH OTHER BETTER INFORMED.”

has been increasing. It is unclear if these organisations for the time see themselves as operational actors in the sense of delivering assistance on the ground, or if they want to take the role of coordinators, possibly replacing OCHA at the regional level.

This study also looks at the affected state in managing the response to a disaster. It is beyond any question that the state is the primary actor and many of them have established national disaster management authorities to address the need for more coherent and coordinated disaster management activities. This study, however, raises the issue that the **state is not a homogenous entity** and, as a fact of life, politics between ministries or between the capital and regional or district levels play a major factor in disaster management. It is needless to say that the role, attitude, and capacity of the government is central to the collaboration with the international system.

This, in turn, touches on the topic of coordination. The international system has developed a large range of mechanisms, tools, and guidelines to coordinate its response. With the government in the lead, it is a question how this system relates to what the government has in place. The term of interoperability has come into use, which some have explained as the minimum level in which different (coordination) systems at least do not work against, but with each other.

The decades-long discussion on the relationship between humanitarian response and development is one that this study could not leave aside. Disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction are the obvious areas where both types of actors, often represented within the same international organisations, find each other. This study finds that much can still be won if humanitarian and development actors keep each other better informed on their respective efforts and

activities, especially in terms of their actions in supporting and strengthening the role of the government.

## International Humanitarian Financing and the Affected State

In all of this, the financing of disaster response has huge impact. This is why this topic is highlighted in a separate chapter. In recent decades there has been a shift towards the international humanitarian system, which receives the large majority of humanitarian funding from donors directly, without much involvement from the national government. The chapter notes a number of factors that lie at the heart of this trend. It also wonders, however, if in strengthening the role of the state it could be reversed. The study tests the idea that channelling more finances directly to and/or through the government might provide a way forward in future responses. Different views exist on whether or not this is feasible and/or desirable. Most likely is a picture in which a number of different financing options and channels, including one through the national government, will exist in parallel.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, many may say that this study does not cover new ground. That is right. It was not the intention. This study tries to shed new light on old, well-known issues. In essence, it calls for more honesty and transparency in terms of the motivations and intentions in disaster responses. The larger the disaster, the more politics and money will play into it, which are ‘the elephants in the room’ in terms of the unspoken aspects that may prevent more effectiveness. However, as this study makes clear, **more effectiveness starts with continuous dialogue about the real issues that affect those who have been the victims of disasters.** The issues for consideration raised in this study, hopefully, provide a source of inspiration for those who want to engage in this dialogue.



Indonesia: The coast of Sumatra was heavily hit by the Indian Ocean tsunami. UNHCR / J. Austin

# 1. Introduction



Somalia: A villager prays on the remains of a mosque, situated about 150 metres from where his house used to be, in Puntland, which was also hit by the Indian Ocean tsunami.  
UNHCR / B.Heger



International cooperation to assist countries affected by natural disasters is a long-standing practice and tradition within the international community. Nowadays a broad range of actors are involved: government agencies, military forces, civil defence units, UN agencies international organisations, regional (disaster management) bodies, NGOs, other civil society groupings, diaspora communities, and so on. The growth of this community has taken place parallel to a number of large-scale disasters in the last decade: the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004); Hurricane Katrina in the US (2005); the monsoon floods in Pakistan (2010); the earthquakes in Pakistan (2005), Haiti (2010), and Japanese pacific coast, followed by a tsunami and nuclear disaster (2011); cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (2009), and typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) in the Philippines (2013). Due to the impact of climate change predictions, the frequency of natural disasters may further increase in the coming years and decades. Given this reality, **continuously making efforts to improve the disaster response efforts is a moral and ethical obligation that rests on all involved in these responses.**

It is against this background that the aspect of international collaboration in disaster response has received increased interest. Among the international mechanisms or platforms for exchange is the Disaster Response Dialogue (DRD), a process that aims to provide a forum for dialogue on particularly the policy sides of international collaboration in the response to natural disasters. The DRD finds its origin in a conversation on quality and accountability in the humanitarian sector. In discussions following the 2010 mega-earthquake in Haiti, which looked at the need for more regulation of international disaster response, especially with regard to the entry of 'foreign' organisations to a disaster-affected area or country, it was found that there are very few opportunities and mechanisms that involve disaster-prone countries. Those forums that exist are taking place within a specific institutionalised framework and the DRD has sought to create a space for open and frank dialogue on humanitarian policy issues.

## IMPROVING DISASTER RESPONSE EFFORTS IS A MORAL AND ETHICAL OBLIGATION.

The DRD is a unique process in the sense of providing a non-institutionalised and non-political platform for dialogue aimed at creating a better understanding between affected states and the international community. It seeks to bring up issues for discussion that otherwise may be regarded as sensitive or critical. This study, undertaken by DARA and HERE-Geneva, provides the background for the upcoming DRD high-level global conference in Manila on 13 and 14 October 2014. The overall objective of this background study is **to review lessons emerged from international disaster responses in the past and to identify necessary changes for more inclusive, principled and effective humanitarian action.**

In developing the study, the team took into account a number of considerations: firstly, key-informants consulted for this study generally agree that the issues identified by the study are the ones that are relevant in realising more effective collaboration and thus, more effective disaster response. Many of these issues have been discussed for years, if not decades. It follows that the DRD dialogue should aim to move on from problem-analysis to solutions orientated conversations. In the research phase, many key-informants noted that solutions should be tailor-made and relevant to the local context, instead of following a one-size fits all approach.

Secondly, the DRD focuses exclusively on natural disasters. Many interviewees pointed to the fact that more and more disasters take place in countries that also have armed conflicts on their territories. For those contexts, especially non-international armed conflict where the government is a party to the conflict, the terms of engagement between international humanitarian actors and the government are significantly different from natural disaster responses. In relation to countries where these two types

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## “THE DRD DIALOGUE SHOULD AIM TO MOVE ON FROM PROBLEM-ANALYSIS TO SOLUTIONS ORIENTATED CONVERSATIONS.”

of situations are taking place at the same time, it is perhaps too artificial to distinguish natural disasters and look at them in isolation from other events and the political context. The study, however, followed the DRD policy line of keeping the two separate as much as possible.

Thirdly, most, if not all, of the issues raised in this paper are inextricably linked. The quality of the relationship between international organisations and the government, for example, is highly dependent on trust, which in turn, depends on behaviour. Trust and behaviour could be regarded as the softer issues in cooperation, but as this study suggests, they are, at least as important as other issues that determine the quality of the relationships.

The study also came across a number of terms that may not be sufficiently nuanced or entirely reflect a precise definition or understanding as they seem to be used interchangeably. Some of these terms are: humanitarian or disaster response; affected government and/or affected state; affected communities and/or affected populations; new, emerging, or non-traditional humanitarian actors; national and international or foreign; humanitarian system, community, or enterprise etc.<sup>1</sup>

The findings of this study have been derived on the basis of a literature review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and feedback sessions with key-informants. The group of DRD convenors functioned largely in the latter capacity to this study. It should be stressed that they endorse the general sense of this paper, but that this paper may not necessarily reflect the views and positions of their governments or agencies.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of actors (United Nations agencies, Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, OECD, governments of donor or/and affected states, NGOs and independent consultants) in different geographical regions (West and East Africa, South-East Asia, America, Europe). Three focus group discussions were organized in Geneva, Switzerland, one with independent experts and/or practitioners, one with donor countries and one with disaster-affected countries.

This paper is structured as follows: chapter II discusses the elements and parameters that are essential in improving the quality of relationships and making humanitarian collaboration more effective. The third chapter covers a description of the actors and processes relevant to humanitarian collaboration. Chapter IV focuses on humanitarian financing, as this is a particular factor in making collaboration more effective in the future. It is adapted from a paper drafted by Lydia Poole, independent consultant on humanitarian affairs, as part of the research for this study.



Pakistan: An Afghan refugee salvages his belongings from the mud after the floods.  
UNHCR / Alixandra Fazzina

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# 2.

# Strengthening trust and relationships



Philippines: 6 months after Typhoon Haiyan, children play basketball in storm-damaged Animong near Tacloban.  
UNHCR / Jeffrey Maitem

## 2.1 Trust as the central element

*When collaboration is carried out successfully, it can be an incredibly powerful tool for maximising reach, impact and scope: the combined weight of the partners proving to be infinitely more profound than any one individual agency could ever achieve. Successful collaboration can also have important related effects, such as improved relationships, higher levels of trust and cost efficiencies that are carried forward in other activities.<sup>2</sup>*

In the context of working together in order to better respond to disasters, the importance of trust among those involved in the response cannot be overstated. Trust is a prerequisite for successful relationships.<sup>3</sup> In interviews and consultations for this study, the need to focus on building trust was mentioned throughout. Interviewees agree that the lack of trust is a hindrance to the effective response to natural disasters. Background paper 1 of the 20011 DRD dialogue refers to the lack of trust between national authorities and international aid agencies as one of the key challenges to disaster response. It goes on by saying that a necessary first step in addressing this ‘trust deficit’ is to identify where this lack of trust comes from, why it exists, and what can be done about it.

The response to Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) in the Philippines has been singled out as an operation in which there has been a remarkably cooperative spirit among both international responders and domestic authorities.<sup>4</sup> As outlined in the DRD Learning Review on the response to Typhoon Haiyan, one of the negative factors impacting trust is the perception of “foreign responders as high paid consultants using the disaster to make money, or otherwise acting in self-serving ways.”<sup>5</sup> This view is very similar to those heard in the context of the interviews and consultations for this study. The high turnover of expatriate staff, a well-known phenomenon in the first weeks of disaster response, was noted as obvious

obstacle to developing trust. To make matters worse, as one interviewee noted: “There is now an international emergency elite who know each other and who demonstrate an attitude of ‘we are running the show’. When I landed in Tacloban (in the Philippines), I felt like being home in Geneva. This international elite stays among each other and they tend to handle situations with avoiding national actors just to make things go faster or easier.” Clearly, this is but one example of how the behaviour of the international humanitarian community impacts on trust.

In looking at building trust as a prerequisite for effective disaster response, there are a number of issues that should be noted. First, many issues, several of which are raised in the context of this paper, have a high impact on the existence of trust. Conversely, demonstrating a genuine interest and willingness to address these issues may yield positive results. Secondly, where trust is mentioned in the dialogue of the humanitarian community, it mostly concerns the relationship between operational agencies and disaster-affected states. Those who have an influence on this relationship, such as donor governments, should not be left out of the equation. Lastly, in addition to this, trust is a fairly abstract notion. Perhaps it is for this reason that in the humanitarian community, at the inter-agency or collective level, has devoted relatively little time and effort to the aspect of trust, besides a few exceptions, including the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007, the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) project, and the DRD.

One initiative that made an attempt to look at relationships among operational partners (UN, Red Cross / Red Crescent and NGO organisations), but died a silent death, is the Global Humanitarian Platform, which, in 2007, endorsed the Principles of Partnership (PoP). The PoP contain several principles that are highly similar to the six elements of trust identified as relevant for the DRD.<sup>6</sup> These elements of trust, outlined in the following

**TRUST IS A PREREQUISITE FOR  
SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS**

box, are based on a quick literature review and while not surprising, as with the PoP, putting them into practice seems to be more difficult than expected.

### Box 1 The six elements of trust

**Competency:** Confidence that an organisation/institution has the necessary professional expertise and works to accepted quality standards

**Transparency:** An organisation/institution displays its mandate and objectives, as well as its particular plans in a given context

**Integrity:** An organisation/institution acts in accordance to recognised values and principles

**Predictability:** The confidence that an organisation/institution will act and behave in a consistent manner and will honour its commitments

**Reciprocity:** An organisation/institution sees the benefit of cooperation and shows a willingness to put aside some of its own interests for the greater good

**Compatibility:** Organisations/institutions need a common set of values and a shared understanding to trust each other

**Trust cannot just be switched on and must be generated through a series of experiences building from predictability and reliability.**<sup>7</sup> While there is not much written in humanitarian literature on the subject, business literature has a number of studies on the importance of trust and its value in collaboration and service relationships. In the literature, it recognises two main kinds of trust: cognitive trust (reliability) and emotional, value-centred or affective trust.<sup>8</sup> Cognitive trust is a customer's confidence and willingness to rely on a service provider's competence and

reliability. Translated to disaster response, this implies that if the responder and recipient have worked with each other before, they may understand each other as reliable and predictable partners.

Affective trust is a more complicated concept. It is the confidence one places in a partner on the basis of feelings generated by the level of care and concern the partner demonstrates. It is the belief among members that others in the team would make decisions that optimise the team's interests. They understand each others' values and perspectives and priorities. Affective trust is related to personal relationships, common values, and effective communication.<sup>9</sup>

With a humanitarian sector that has matured in the last decade and a half, it is a welcome development that the issue of trust is gradually put on the agenda. That being said much needs to be done to work on increasing trust. The existence of trust suggests a level of knowledge about each other and it remains a question on how much the various actors in humanitarian response really know about their backgrounds, mandates, or the way that they set priorities and operate.

Looking at the lessons from the corporate sector, building trust among (potential) partners is a process that needs time and effort. However, in view of the importance given to trust in the context of this study, investments in trust-building exercises of teams should no longer be considered as a luxury but necessity. Thought should be given to the question what kind of trust building efforts the humanitarian community and disaster-affected governments might benefit from. **Trust-building is better done through ongoing dialogue and exchanges than single exercises or events.**

**“INVESTMENTS IN TRUST-BUILDING EXERCISES OF TEAMS SHOULD NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED AS A LUXURY BUT NECESSITY.”**

## 2.2 Behaviour of the humanitarian community

Closely related to trust is the issue of behaviour. Interviewees for this study cited a number of problems that they think impact the relationship between humanitarian agencies and the disaster affected state. A number of closely-related issues were particularly mentioned: the perceived Western image of the humanitarian community; the use of jargon in communications; and the practices and perceptions associated with well-resourced foreign teams brought into disaster-affected countries to the rescue of poor and vulnerable communities in need. Some of these issues can be qualified as highly caricatured and are also large generalisations that do not do justice to the efforts that have been made by many agencies to address cultural or other divides. Another complicating factor is to speak of the humanitarian community as a single group of actors, whereas in reality, **it is highly diverse** and it is unclear who does and does not belong to it. Despite the work already being done to address these different issues, the fact that they still exist as perceptions shows that they are not easily rectifiable.

The perceived Western image of the humanitarian community, which was frequently raised in the interviews and focus groups, has to do with the fact that it is still largely actors and organisations that have their roots in Western countries that are the dominant forces.<sup>10</sup> Even though many of them have rapidly internationalised or regionalised and decentralised their offices and operations, and many, if not the majority, of their staff come from non-Western countries, the Western influence seems especially linked to the origin of the financial resources.<sup>11</sup> Linked to this Western dominance is the question **whether or not humanitarian principles are truly universal**.<sup>12</sup>

A second issue seen as part of the behaviour of the humanitarian community is the use of

“THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY IS NOT A SINGLE GROUP OF ACTORS. IT IS HIGHLY DIVERSE AND IT IS UNCLEAR WHO BELONGS.”

jargon in communications. The use of English in coordination meetings is well-documented as a barrier for local actors to participate in coordination forums.<sup>13</sup> Addressing this issue, a senior OCHA regional representative explained that he views it as standard practice to have translation available in every coordination meeting. While such practice, should it become the norm, would be highly welcome, interviewees for this study also noted the use of acronyms, technical terms, and other lingo as an issue that makes it hard for them to connect. Some might view this as a temporary issue, as a number of actors from developing countries appear as quick in adopting the jargon. The terms clusters, for example, is one that is also in use now among governments from disaster-affected countries.<sup>14</sup>

International humanitarian actors should keep in mind that local actors may be intimidated by the jargon and the way of communication of the international humanitarian community. **It is hard to feel welcome and to fit in when the language being used is not understood by all.** The jargon creates a gap and disconnects the international humanitarian system from local actors, and private sector; messages are communicated in such a way that makes it hard to understand for outsiders.

Interviewees also commented on the expensive equipment and the profile of international teams, including teams from neighbouring countries, sent to a disaster stricken zone, with search and rescue teams particularly singled out. Views are divided between the need for capacity and effectiveness, and the image that this may create with local communities given the large gap with local standards. Moreover, as explained above in the section on trust in the context of the high turnover of staff

in the first weeks, the emphasis is often on the technical side of the response, which as one discussion group commented, overshadows the focus on partnerships and personal relationships. On the positive side, recent evaluations on the response to typhoon Haiyan have shown that many organisations tried to send experienced staff, which was appreciated on the ground, as this experience helps both in the creation of trust as well as reducing the communication gap in partnerships during a response.<sup>15</sup>

One perennial issue that was raised is the continuing practice of international actors to hire well-educated locals, whose daily professions may have been interrupted due to the disaster as drivers, cooks, or cleaners, etc., and the poaching of staff members from local organisations. The experiences of a local NGO responding to the consequences of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines are telling:

*A second factor that made our response difficult was the challenge that we've had in retaining our senior staff. Although we have trained a number of staff in previous humanitarian responses, we have had a constant turnover of staff who opt to work for better paying INGOs and UN agencies. This has meant that we have to constantly recruit new staff and because of the project-based nature of our humanitarian funding it is difficult to train them apart from on-the-job experience.<sup>16</sup>*

One issue worth reflecting on is what effects the emerging or new humanitarian actors will have on the perceived Western image of the international humanitarian community.<sup>17</sup> They have different ways of working and do not necessarily use the same language in the context of humanitarian assistance or disaster response.<sup>18</sup> New emerging actors may have a broader understanding of humanitarian assistance, one that includes different types of charity, development cooperation and other forms of help to people in need. The **increased presence of new emerging actors is a reality;** one which the international humanitarian community needs to face. Relevant partnerships and dialogue with local and

## “THE INCREASED PRESENCE OF NEW EMERGING ACTORS IS A REALITY; ONE WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY NEEDS TO FACE.”

regional actors, which differ from traditional humanitarian organisations become even more relevant in today's more complex humanitarian environment.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.3 Humanitarian principles

**Humanitarian principles set the parameters in defining the relationship between the disaster affected state and those delivering assistance.** The interviews and focus groups held for this study did not raise humanitarian principles as much as could be expected. The lesser attention may be because the focus of the interviews was on natural disasters and issues around the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence are generally less prevalent and significant than in situations of armed conflict. When interviewees talked about humanitarian principles, however, their views covered the wide spectrum between questioning the relevance of the principles, on the hand, and stressing their importance on the other.

The 2010 ALNAP paper stresses that humanitarian principles are compatible with the principle of encouraging and supporting the government to assist and protect the civilian population, but it adds that more guidance is needed on how to put this into practice.<sup>20</sup> Supposedly, this recommendation for more guidance has to do with the issue of potential difference in views between operational agencies and the affected state, which raises the question if international humanitarian agencies work as implementers for a government? Or, do they see themselves as independent actors maintaining a level of autonomy in assessing needs, setting operational priorities, and evaluating their effectiveness?



At the heart of the potential differences between the affected state and international humanitarian actors is the question: who decides on humanitarian needs?<sup>21</sup> Who decides that a government is unable or unwilling to assist and protect all parts of the disaster-affected population on its territory? Also, if there are international humanitarian organisations who want to help and there are affected populations who want to be helped, on what basis would a government legitimately decline assistance? The growing assertiveness of a number of disaster-prone countries and their desire to manage their affairs internally is an issue that was raised repeatedly in the context of this study. Within the international humanitarian community, assertiveness is often associated with a negative image of a state that blocks international assistance. However, as a number of key informants noted, it should be realised that a state can also decline international assistance if it has the capacity to fully respond. This also leads to a question of standards, while the disaster affected country might view the needs low and the assistance provided sufficient, the international community might consider the needs much higher and the assistance provided by the affected government insufficient.

To openly discuss differences in views on data coming out of needs assessments or on priorities requires trust and willingness to cooperate, while, in practice, it may create delicate situations possibly even leading to controversy and antagonism (also between levels of governments within countries). It is worth noting that Assessments Capacities Project (ACAPS) has worked on developing joint needs assessments that are coordinated with governmental authorities. In Bangladesh in 2011, for example, ACAPS worked with the ECB consortium on developing an assessment approach that is embedded in national coordination mechanisms and has the buy-in of a broad range of stakeholders including the Government.<sup>22</sup>

One interviewee warned against the principles being used as an excuse by the

**“ASSERTING INDEPENDENCE AS AN ABSOLUTE VALUE THAT MUST BE UPHELD AT ALL COSTS MAY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.”**

humanitarian community to not engage with national governments. Another expert added that asserting independence as an absolute value that must be upheld at all costs may be counter-productive. This view fits with the perception expressed by a number of interviewees that international organisations, especially international NGOs, are too autonomously operating at times and that they are generally reluctant to engage with government authorities. The humanitarian organisations, for their part, may feel that a too close relationship with the government compromises their respect of the humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality, but this argument is perhaps more valid in a context of armed conflict than in a situation of natural disaster.<sup>23</sup> Independence is an operational tool that could also contribute to creating trust.<sup>24</sup>

Disasters that occur in countries where there is an internal (armed) conflict may see an even more sensitive relationship of the government and the humanitarian community. In such situations, humanitarian organisations may find themselves in a delicate balancing act: they need to maintain close relations with the authorities for their operations in response to the floods, hurricane, or earthquake, while they may need to take some distance where the government forces are implicated in the hostilities. This may be even more problematic when the same forces are part of the response operations. In the response to the 2010 Monsoon floods in Pakistan, for example, humanitarian organisations had

**“IN COUNTRIES WHERE THERE IS AN INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT, HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS MAY FIND THEMSELVES IN A DELICATE BALANCING ACT.”**

## “LOCAL VALUES, BELIEFS, AND CULTURES ARE IMPORTANT IN UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLAINING HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES.”

to work closely with the Army in the flood-affected provinces, while in 2009 (and into 2010) the army's actions in South Waziristan were a major driver in displacing more than 2 million people. The context in Nigeria is a similar one. The 2012 floods, unprecedented in their size and magnitude, saw the government emergency agency NEMA work closely together with a range of international agencies. In the context of the current conflict in the northern part of Nigeria, reportedly, two international agencies are still working with NEMA in addressing the humanitarian consequences.<sup>25</sup> The question about the implications of this relationship for the agencies' application with humanitarian principles is one that remains to be answered.

While the debate on humanitarian principles and their universality is by no means a new discussion, **questions continue to exist as to which principles individuals or agencies are referring to when they speak about humanitarian principles in general.**

Recently, views were expressed, for example, on the need to include accountability as a core humanitarian principle (see next chapter on quality and accountability).<sup>26</sup> At the same time, others seem to be of the view that neutrality should no longer be considered as a humanitarian principle.<sup>27</sup> Humanitarian principles should be grounded in the reality on the ground, instead of being “preached as a mantra,” as one expert noted. Local values, beliefs, and cultures are important in understanding and explaining the principles and taking them into account prevents that the principles are imposed from the outside as external concepts. Discussions continue on interpretations and different priorities given to certain principles by different agencies. As one key informant noted, the way humanitarian actors take operational decisions suggests that one principle may prevail over another, which may have to do with their shorter or longer-term strategies

and priorities. Assessing the effectiveness of these strategies by looking at whether agencies were right in their decisions and assumptions is an extremely complicated matter. An approach that requires organisations to explain the rationale of their decisions and how principles featured in the decision-making process may, however, provide a productive way forward in terms of strengthening accountability.

The relevance of humanitarian principles and their application continues to be a source of inspiration for intense debates in the humanitarian community. Next to the DRD, other (upcoming) forums and events that will discuss these principles include: the 20th anniversary event of the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in disaster relief, organised by the Norwegian Refugee Council, the World Humanitarian Summit meetings, and the International Conference of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 2015.

## 2.4 Quality and accountability

Further to humanitarian principles standards covering quality and accountability aspects can be regarded as another major factor in shaping relationships and developing trust. **Many of the interviews and focus groups conversations touched on the need for more accountability.**

Much has happened since the early 1990s in terms of building a set of standards relevant to quality assurance and developing an accountability framework for humanitarian response.<sup>28</sup> Some have even spoken about an ‘accountability revolution.’<sup>29</sup> In essence, many of these quality and accountability standards are concerned with the relationship between those providing assistance with disaster-affected populations.

As the accountability standards that have been developed are focused on the delivery of assistance, they are mostly written from the perspective of and/or addressed to



Haiti: The former mayor's office lies in ruins in Port-au-Prince. IRIN / Phương Tran

operational humanitarian agencies. The relationship between the national state authorities and the affected populations, which clearly also includes accountability aspects, seems to have been less a point of concern in the standards.<sup>30</sup> On this issue, Harmer and Harvey noted in 2011 that there is a need for more attention to the ways in which international aid agencies can work with national civil society actors to promote greater accountability between governments and citizens for effective disaster response in ways that states see in positive rather than antagonistic terms.<sup>31</sup>

Recently, UN agencies have also given more attention to accountability to affected populations, through the IASC Transformative Agenda, which devotes a section to it and prompted the Heads of Agencies to adopt 5 commitments.<sup>32</sup> Likely as a result of these commitments, measures to implement accountability to affected populations were prioritised in the response to Typhoon Haiyan and experiences are reported to have generated positive feedback from those involved on the part of the international organisations.<sup>33</sup>

Overall, however, **there seems to be a need to increase knowledge among the representatives of disaster-affected states, especially among those outside Geneva, about the progress that has been made in developing quality and accountability standards.**<sup>34</sup>

A number of governments have adopted the SPHERE standards in their national legislation (Indonesia for instance)<sup>35</sup> and other countries are considering it. An increased dialogue would provide an excellent opportunity to build more trust, as it would make governments aware what has been achieved so far. The dialogue and dissemination efforts of one regulatory framework deserve particular mention: the “Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance” (IDRL Guidelines), which were adopted during the international conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 2007. One of the recommendations of the Guidelines is that a link be made between the facilities

provided to international responders (such as exemptions from legal rules, such as those related to visas, tax and customs requirements, as well as support for transport, storage, etc.) and their adherence to humanitarian principles and internationally accepted standards of quality. In other words, they call for a sort of “fast lane” for organizations that are good humanitarian citizens. The IDRL Guidelines were quoted as relatively well-known by authorities responsible for managing disaster response and, so far, 17 countries have adopted new rules or procedures relying on them and another 16 have bills currently pending – however, not all of them have taken up the recommendation on making facilitation of aid conditional in this way.

In discussing the need for more accountability with representatives from disaster-affected countries, a number of them pointed to the challenge they have in keeping an eye on all humanitarian activities, especially those undertaken by NGOs. As one discussion in the context of this study revealed, these representatives may find themselves in a situation where they have to read on international websites, such as ReliefWeb or the OCHA Financial Tracking Service, what amounts are being spent on which activities by whom in their countries. It should be added that the information on these websites may not be accurate and it is unlikely that they provide the full picture as it depends on donors and agencies and whether or not they are using these public channels for their reports.

It follows that there remains a need for improved and more frequent communication between national authorities and humanitarian agencies, especially NGOs.

#### **Exchanging timely and accurate**

**“THERE REMAINS A NEED FOR IMPROVED AND MORE FREQUENT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES, ESPECIALLY NGOs.”**

## “ACCOUNTABILITY BETWEEN DONORS AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS IS ALSO A HOT TOPIC FOR DEBATE.”

**information and a deeper engagement with each other will contribute to ensuring that quality and accountability standards are upheld.**

Another ongoing effort to further improve the accountability of NGOs deserves particular mention: the certification review project, undertaken by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR). This two-year project, that is supposed to be finished by the end of this year, is examining if it would be feasible and relevant to establish a global certification scheme for humanitarian organisations, in order to demonstrate compliance with humanitarian principles, quality and accountability standards.<sup>36</sup> Part of this process has been an initial assessment of how governments from affected countries would view such a certification scheme. The report notes that key-informants, while expressing interest in the idea in principle, “did not see how it might influence national procedures and criteria for government registration of NGOs, at least in the short term, given the modest familiarity of most national authorities with existing international standards for humanitarian quality assurance.”<sup>37</sup> This SCHR initiative is not without controversy as a number of large international NGOs have taken the view that this is the way forward to ensure better quality and strengthened accountability. In the course of the initiative, there have been numerous comments and critiques wondering what problem this initiative seeks to address and questions remain if certification will be a means to strengthen quality and accountability.

Accountability between donors and humanitarian organisations is, of course, a hot topic for debate as well. With the substantial growth of official humanitarian aid from governments and the EU institutions since the early 1990s, donors introduced increasingly stringent requirements on

their funding recipients, including stricter requirements on financial controls (which often include specific tendering, procurement and audit procedures) and the ability to demonstrate results.<sup>38</sup> This has affected almost all humanitarian actors reliant on international funding (especially INGOs and NNGOs) and not just crisis-affected states, but international actors have tended to adapt more successfully (if not always willingly) to these requirements.<sup>39</sup> Linked to this, the notion of long-term ‘partnerships’ between humanitarian donors and implementing agencies has gained currency, notably with the introduction of the ECHO Framework Partnership Agreement in 1993. The majority of humanitarian funding flowing from major institutional donors to international NGOs is now conditional on organisations having passed exacting pre-selection processes to verify in advance that prospective partners meet minimum criteria with respect to financial controls, corporate governance, organisational capacity and commitment to humanitarian principles.<sup>40</sup>

International humanitarian actors have invested heavily in their ability to demonstrate quality, accountability and management of fiduciary risk. Growing demands from donors for evidence of the return on their investments grew in close correspondence with an increasing facility among international NGOs to account for their actions, measure and demonstrate results. As further reflected in Chapter 4 international actors therefore have become extremely adept at meeting donor accountability requirements – including supplying useful public relations information.<sup>41</sup>

Mutually acceptable approaches to accountability and control for government recipients of international humanitarian aid are largely uncharted territory for bilateral donors. Development donors have adopted practical approaches to managing capacity and accountability challenges to enable them to channel funds in alignment with government priorities and systems. Approaches include undertaking governance assessments to inform the level and nature of controls, performance and reform assessment frameworks and incentives;<sup>42</sup>

establishing multi-donor trust funds in fragile and conflict affected states which enable alignment with government development priorities while minimising fiduciary risk to individual donors; and potentially approaches using payment on results. The equivalent attention to developing tools to enable alignment of financing investments with national priorities and systems has not been afforded to humanitarian financing where efforts of reform have focused on strengthening funding mechanisms for the benefit of international actors.

## 2.5 Issues for Consideration

- **The humanitarian community and disaster-prone countries should consider investing in trust building initiatives.** The 2011 DRD Action Plan and initiatives in the area of joint training and simulation; peer review; and joint evaluations may serve as ideas. International agencies could look more closely at translating internal accountability, M&E and quality management processes externally to build trust by: demonstrating how they maintain consistency in the quality of their response and relationships; and by making it clear how they ensure their actions are consistent with stated values and principles.
- **Existing forums covering cooperation in humanitarian response may wish to look at their dialogues and processes.** Reviewing the benefits of these processes they could use the 2007 Principles of Partnership and the DRD Six Elements of Trust as benchmarks in assessing the quality of their collaboration.
- Although humanitarian principles provide a common framework for all involved in setting goals, it remains unclear how impartiality and independence should be interpreted when the government and operational actors do not share the same views on priorities or strategies.

Perhaps, they should consider working together in developing on further guidance on this issue. There might be a need to go back to the origins and roots of the principles and see how they apply to today's humanitarian environment.

**There is clearly a need to increase the level of involvement of affected states in discussions at global level on quality and accountability in humanitarian action.** What are the ways to involve governments from affected countries in these discussions?

- **From the perspective of affected states and donor states, how might current structures and processes used to manage development aid be adapted or built on to facilitate humanitarian assistance that is more respectful of local authorities?**

Also, what lessons have been learned from the 'good governance' regimes in development aid that can be drawn on to understand national government receptivity to outside influences on their relationship to their citizens?

### Discussion questions

- Should there be more systematic efforts and investments in initiatives which contribute to strengthening trust? (joint training, simulation, peer review, joint evaluations, etc.)
- How to increase the involvement of affected states in discussions related to quality and accountability of humanitarian action at global and national level?
- Should affected authorities exercise more oversight of international disaster response than they do currently, and if so, how?

**“THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY AND DISASTER-PRONE COUNTRIES SHOULD CONSIDER INVESTING IN TRUST BUILDING INITIATIVES.”**



Myanmar: A cyclone survivor shelters in the ruins of her destroyed home in Mya Ba Go village, Bogale township, Ayeyarwaddy Division. UNHCR / May 2008

### 3. Making cooperation more effective



Indonesia: Flyers asking for information on missing family members are everywhere after the tsunami of late 2004. UNHCR / J. Austin



## 3.1 The international level– support or implementation

A central question, among a range of changes taking place, concerns the relationship between the government of the affected country and the international humanitarian community: **what is the appropriate role for all involved in the response?** There is no question that the government of the affected country should be in the lead in responding to the consequences of a disaster, and that the international humanitarian community works in support (not substitution) of the affected state.<sup>43</sup> Generally speaking, the capacity, commitment, and desire to govern and respond to domestic crises have grown among some crisis-vulnerable states. A number of interviewees also noted that they see a shift in the international community's role, from one that is focussed on carrying out direct response operations to capacity-building of national and local actors. At the same time the need to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and the importance to tailor each response to its specific context was highlighted by interviewees as well as during focus group discussions. It is a question, however, as to whether or not this fundamental shift from direct response to capacity building is just a policy intention expressed in politically correct rhetoric or if it is also taking place in practice? In analysing the research for this study, the review team came across an issue on which it feels there is a significant level of ambiguity: **does the international humanitarian community see the strengthening of the response capacity of disaster-affected states as its first priority, or is it more concerned with strengthening its own capacity first?**

Since 2011, at the international policy level, the most significant development has

been the adoption of the transformative agenda (TA) developed by the IASC, an UN-led international coordination body for humanitarian action.<sup>44</sup> This agenda focuses exclusively on the role and capacity of the UN and its partner agencies in supporting and building local and national capacity. It does not cover the role of the affected state. Major governmental donors have spent significant time and effort in pressurising the UN agencies to implement the transformative agenda. By and large these policy developments fit with the continued expectations from donors, be they private or public, that 'their' national organisations will be directly operational. Such expectations exist in particular in the context of large-scale, televised disasters, which may generate enormous public support in rich countries, especially among migrant communities who have family ties in the affected country. In the UK, for example, Filipinos initiated major fundraising efforts to raise funds following Typhoon Haiyan, which in turn may have been a factor in prompting the Department for International Development to step up its financial contributions, as the UK became the largest donor of the response.

The declaration, by the IASC, of a system-wide 'L3 response,' i.e. the highest level of response in case of a large-scale crisis developed as part of the TA process, brings as one interviewee called it "enormous baggage with it." The L3 declaration, for the first time invoked for a natural disaster in the case of typhoon Haiyan, sees a large international deployment of UN and international agency staff. Although exact numbers are hard to obtain, the number of international OCHA staff deployed in the Philippines, for example, grew to more than 100 international staff, and possible even peaked at more than 200. It looks as a debatable issue whether or not such a large international presence could be seen as working in support of the affected state and whether or not it should be repeated in the future.<sup>45</sup> It is also worth noting that the host government has no (formal) say in the L3 declaration.

## WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE ROLE FOR ALL INVOLVED IN THE RESPONSE?

## “FROM THE CHANGES IN NGO LAWS IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, IT IS CLEAR THAT AN INCREASING NUMBER OF THEM SEE THE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AS UNDERMINING THEIR AUTHORITY.”

The question if a direct operational role of the international humanitarian system contradicts a supporting role in which humanitarian actors work ‘under’ the government is one that deserves further reflection. In addressing it, it would be appropriate to distinguish the different parts that together make up the international humanitarian community and to assess each for their role in relation to the capacity of the affected State.<sup>46</sup> In relation to the role of donors, the issue of working in support of the affected state is closely linked to the way in which their development programmes contribute to the disaster response capacity of a state that is potentially affected by a disaster. In the development domain, it seems more popular to work on disaster prevention.<sup>47</sup> It is particularly non-Western donors that provide humanitarian assistance to affected states bilaterally.<sup>48</sup>

With regard to UN agencies, they may find themselves in a split position between direct implementation and a supporting role (a situation which might also be true for other actors of the humanitarian community). In a recent policy consultation one of the larger UN agencies admitted that it finds itself faced with different expectations: the government of the affected country expects them to take a supporting role, while its donors wants to see their emergency response team deployed, especially as they are leading several clusters. With regard to direct operations, as different from the UN’s coordinating role, most UN agencies depend heavily on NGOs. The number of contracts that they have with NGOs continues to rise, especially with local NGOs. There may be a tension, however, in promoting the role and work of national and local NGOs and

the increased focus on financial reporting. Many local organisations may not (yet) dispose of the financial systems that enable them to meet international donors’ financial accountability requirements.

The International Movement of the Red Cross/Red Crescent has its own challenges. Movement regulations prescribe that national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies (i.e. those from other countries than the affected country) that want to intervene in a disaster-affected country must receive the approval from the host national society. In a sense, this procedure is a microcosm of the approval process by the affected state to allow for international assistance. Interviews with representatives from the Movement revealed that it is believed that the host society is often under a great deal of pressure in major disasters, making it difficult for it to refuse the entry of the ‘foreign’ (national) society. Recognising this, the Red Cross/Red Crescent recently updated its key rules for disasters,<sup>49</sup> in order to make the operational mechanisms supporting the role of the host national society clearer, while preserving the strong value placed on international cooperation within the Movement.

As noted earlier, a number of representatives of disaster-affected countries interviewed for this study noted in particular the difficulties that they have in obtaining the full picture of the work of international NGOs. One reason for this is that international NGOs are traditionally focused on direct operations or on working through local NGOs and civil society. Clearly significant differences exist in the views of affected states on the financial contributions and other forms of support from international NGOs to local NGOs. From the changes in NGO laws in a number of countries, it is clear that an increasing number of them see the international support as undermining their authority.

## 3.2 Regionalisation

Regional organisations play an increasingly important role today, with many governments

## REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS ARE A BRIDGE BETWEEN NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY.

eager to work with them for reasons of cultural understanding and like-mindedness. They act more and more as a bridge between national governments and the international humanitarian community. As Haver and Foley state “a regional entity, working from cultural and linguistic commonalities can provide a forum for building trust and familiarity that is not possible on a global scale. For this reason they can often be more effective in establishing common policies and resolving issues of contention.”<sup>50</sup>

Regional bodies are mentioned in studies and evaluations, but in a rather descriptive way. Regional mechanisms are increasing their engagement in humanitarian and disaster response and it seems important to explore their impact in the humanitarian system. There are only few studies about the strengths and weaknesses of regional organisations and even less on what their role exactly is with regard to humanitarian response to natural disasters – and it seems that sometimes it is not even entirely clear for regional bodies themselves.<sup>51</sup> Despite the call for more importance of strengthening national capacities and for developing deeper relationships between international and national disaster management mechanisms, many regional bodies are still in the planning stages of these strategies and plans.<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, the global architecture of regional organisations is very complex. In some regions there are organisations, which include most countries of the continent as members (such as the Organisation of American States or the African Union) and have at the same time sub-regional organisations in which only some of the continent’s countries participate. In other regions, there are many sub-regional bodies, but no organisation, which includes the entire continent (such as in Asia for

instance). Additionally, there are countries, which participate in both, continent-wide and sub-regional organisations (such as Egypt which is a member of the League of Arab States as well as the African Union). On top of this landscape of regional and sub-regional organisations, one finds many regional offices of international organisations and UN agencies, also covering the same countries and issues.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, each regional organisation has unique historical and cultural background and context, which influences how they see their role in a given situation.

The constellation of political forces and interests included in regional bodies additionally asks for a nuanced approach from the international humanitarian community.<sup>54</sup> Most regional organisations, such as the African Union for example, have a combination of political and humanitarian mandates, which work in parallel.<sup>55</sup> The above-mentioned like-mindedness between disaster affected countries and regional organisations allows some regional bodies easier access to certain regions.<sup>56</sup>

In most regions, the role of regional organisations still seems limited when it comes to large-scale responses to natural disasters (and even more limited in contexts of armed conflict). The European Union for example, with the introduction of the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre and the Civil Protection Mechanism,<sup>57</sup> combined with civil protection mechanisms of member states, including their bilateral agreements with neighbouring states, rarely needs assistance from outside the EU. In other regions however, the “traditional” humanitarian community still largely takes on

**“THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS STILL SEEMS LIMITED WHEN IT COMES TO LARGE-SCALE RESPONSES TO NATURAL DISASTERS (AND EVEN MORE LIMITED IN CONTEXTS OF ARMED CONFLICT).”**

that operational role.<sup>58</sup> Given the increased relevance of regional organisations, there is a tendency to invite them more often to participate in international humanitarian forums and events. Interestingly, in the context of the research for this study some of them noted that they have a hard time in switching on to the international discourse and/or getting a global overview of the state of play within the humanitarian system. It seems as if there is a preference to invite regional organisations to global policy-level discussions especially when it concerns ‘technical issues’ such as the discussions around the Hyogo Framework for Action.<sup>59</sup>

One interesting example of international collaboration with two regional organisations that has sought to strengthen their capacities in disaster risk management, especially disaster risk reduction, is the ECOWAS-ASEAN<sup>60</sup> exchange programme, run as part of the FOREWARN Initiative.<sup>61</sup> The FOREWARN Initiative, led by the Humanitarian Futures Programme, King’s College, London. With the support of others including DARA, Humanitarian Futures has worked with ASEAN and ECOWAS in transferring knowledge and skills and in building strategies to anticipate and address risks. While this project has provided important indications as to the potential of regional organisations in disaster (risk) management, it has also made clear that there are significant differences in the capacities of regional organisations and the pace at which they are able to strengthen these capacities.<sup>62</sup> One potential ‘growth area’ for regional organisations relates to early and/or longer-term recovery. This potential has to do with the fact that regional development banks play an important role in reconstruction.<sup>63</sup> The relationship between regional organisations and regional development banks has not been analysed for this research paper.

### 3.3 The affected state

Thorough strengthening of disaster management systems requires government leadership and commitment to change.<sup>64</sup>

## “THOROUGH STRENGTHENING OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS REQUIRES GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT TO CHANGE.”

Harkey notes that many governments are slow to assume this leadership and to commit to developing an effective and comprehensive disaster management system. Reasons for this include a lack of government leadership, minimal popular support for changes or governments’ undervaluing of popular will, and a lack of national expertise on the issues.<sup>65</sup>

Expectations from local populations play a crucial role in the willingness of the government to invest in disaster prevention and its response capacity. As one representative from an affected country said in an interview: “they expect us to be in the lead and not to be run over by hordes of foreign actors.” It is a common feature that investments in disaster management capacities are usually brought about by a specific natural disaster. This is as true for developing countries as much as it applies to developed countries. As Harkey notes, advocacy from civil society is another significant factor in pushing the government to prioritise strengthening its capacity in disaster management.<sup>66</sup>

A real-life, but complicating factor in disaster response management may be the various parts of the national government that are (or consider themselves) responsible for managing the disaster response. Today, many disaster-prone countries have established national disaster management authorities (NDMAs). The role, powers and capacities of these NDMAs differ from country to country: in some countries they cover both the responses to natural disasters and armed conflicts, while in others they are restricted to dealing with natural disasters. In some countries they are placed in the offices of Prime Ministers, while in other countries they are found in the Ministry of Social Welfare and Planning, or other ministries.



Philippines: The Abas family in front of their devastated home in badly hit Tanguban, in Leyte. © UNHCR/Isaac Camora

In some countries, although there may be a government unit covering disaster risk reduction, it is the civil protection authorities that are responsible for managing and implementing the response. The way the national authorities of a disaster-affected country are organised has an immediate impact on the relationships and interaction with the international community.

On several occasions, this study touched on situations in which it appears that various parts of a government are not necessarily aligned in setting priorities in disaster management. This is a global challenge which concerns governments around the world. Many government interviewees explained that there are disaster coordination mechanisms that are inter-ministerial. The existence of such mechanisms, however, does not guarantee full alignment of the government as a number of government representatives from affected countries admitted. Some interviewees particularly cited examples in which the NDMA in their country may have different views on disaster management priorities than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is the entry and often also the focal point for international organisations in their relations with the government. Harkey refers to the need to mainstream disaster management responsibilities throughout the policies and initiatives of government ministries.<sup>67</sup> This study came across a number of initiatives at the national level in West African countries, but interviewees also admitted that they have a long way to go in making this a reality.

Counting on the differences in views among ministries, one focus group participant explained that he was aware of international organisations talking to different ministries in his country, once they had not reached agreement with one ministry. In addition to alignment at the national level, there may be issues in the relationship between the national (federal) authorities and those in charge at the provincial or district levels. It is a no public secret that those who are closer to affected communities may be more forthcoming in their responses and relationships than those at the capital level. That being said, one interviewee explained

**“THE WAY THE NATIONAL AUTHORITIES OF A DISASTER-AFFECTED COUNTRY ARE ORGANISED HAS AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON THE RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.”**

that in his country a number of the districts have no capacity whatsoever to respond to disasters.

Harkey points to the need for governments to have national capacity strengthening needs assessments in place. Ideally, those responsible for disaster management, be it at the national or sub-national level, have a realistic perception of their capacities and can be relied upon when working on contingency plans. During one of the focus group discussions for this study, representatives mentioned that in many contexts, however, **it seems that contingency plans exist on paper, but the corresponding capacities may not be available.** Analysing gaps and identifying capacities may be sensitive issues; depending on the region or the country it can mean that the government has to admit its weaknesses and capacity gaps. In addition to capacity issues, an important way to clarify “who is in charge” domestically with regard to managing international assistance is through clear national legislation, regulation and procedures. Developing such rules was another one of the strong recommendations of the IDRL Guidelines, described above. However, according to the IFRC, it is still the case that relatively few states have developed a comprehensive rule base. It is therefore almost inevitable that international responders will be addressing multiple authorities for exemptions, permissions and support of various kinds

**If there is one actor that may have disaster response capacities in abundance it is the military.** In certain parts of the world, such as South-East Asia, the military plays a pivotal role in disaster

response, especially in the first phase of a response. They have the capacity and means to work when the infrastructure is highly damaged, can bring in heavy transport equipment, and mobilise resources that nobody else has at their disposal. The questions of how their involvement in disaster response impacts on humanitarian principles and whether or not some organisations are right in taking a distance from the military are definitely issues that might merit further reflection and discussion.

One interesting phenomenon is that in order to further develop their capacities and skills, military forces often undertake simulation exercises. This is understandable: militaries prepare for what they may come across, including worst-case scenarios. What is less straightforward is why other parts of government, and other parts of the humanitarian community, are still seeing simulation and other training exercises as a luxury, instead of as a necessity. A number of interviewees from NDMAs noted that in their regions OCHA organises workshops to familiarise them with the international humanitarian system, but these events come across as single, one-off exercises, instead of a comprehensive capacity strengthening strategy. There seems to be a need for more systematic, inclusive and better documented capacity building exercises building on the single trainings and simulation exercises taking place at regional level.

### 3.4 Coordination

In the event of a natural disaster, affected states find themselves in the position to be both responding to the disaster and overseeing and coordinating the humanitarian response. As mentioned in previous chapters, governments do have the primary responsibility and also the right to coordinate disaster response.<sup>68</sup> In the event of a sudden onset and large-scale natural disaster however, coordinating the response and the international organisations involved in it can be a big challenge. Although the international coordination mechanisms,

## OTHER THAN THE MILITARY, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY SHOULD ALSO SEE SIMULATION AND TRAINING AS A NECESSITY RATHER THAN A LUXURY.

such as the clusters put in place by the UN, foresee a co-led system between the national authorities and UN agencies, in practice this relationship is rarely smooth and relationships can be difficult.<sup>69</sup>

Coordination as an issue was raised both during interviews and focus group discussions. The general agreement seems to be that the current international coordination system working through clusters has gaps and weaknesses, but that some useful reforms have been seen. Taking the example of the response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, coordination of the humanitarian response was overall seen as strong, but several concerns remained.<sup>70</sup>

On the ground there still seems to exist confusion about how the international cluster system is working – especially in relations with the national government. Particularly in one focus group discussion it was stated that **it is difficult to keep the overview of the roles and responsibilities of all international humanitarian actors**, such as the cluster leader for example. One day the lead agency acts with its specific mandate, but the other day it appears in the role of the cluster leader – both with the same national interlocutors. Even though it was part of the rationale of the cluster system to have major operational agencies leading their sectors, it creates a lot of

“THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION SYSTEM WORKING THROUGH CLUSTERS HAS GAPS AND WEAKNESSES, BUT SOME USEFUL REFORMS HAVE BEEN SEEN.”

## SHARED COMMITMENT TO COORDINATION AND INTER-OPERABILITY MOTIVATES DIFFERENT SYSTEM ACTORS TO WORK TOGETHER.

confusion with and within the government. Another issue that has been repeatedly mentioned is the process-heavy atmosphere that the clusters bring with them. Much has been said on the functioning of the clusters since their introduction in 2005.<sup>71</sup> In recognition of problems with the cluster approach, the IASC issued new guidance on the implementation of the approach at country level in 2012. These guidelines place a strong emphasis on taking context as the starting point and tailoring international ‘coordination solutions’ according to context, taking into consideration existing coordination capacity and noting the responsibility of cluster coordinators to build the capacity of national counterparts where they exist.<sup>72</sup> Especially for smaller (local) NGOs, it remains a challenge to follow the process and attend the meetings given that many of them are deployed away from the (regional) capital or coordination hub and are focused on carrying out operations.<sup>73</sup>

A further complicating factor is that a number of governments have developed their own cluster-like structures, sometimes overlapping and sometimes illustrating gaps between national and international systems. This development may have triggered a new term has been heard in the jargon of the international humanitarian community: interoperability. It seems that this has been added to explain the relationship between different coordination systems, although it is unknown what is exactly meant by it.<sup>74</sup> The “national” cluster system in the Philippines, for example, led to some confusion as to whether or not it worked in parallel to the international humanitarian clusters or in a combined manner during the response to Typhoon Haiyan. The number of meetings requiring government officials was also seen as an issue, as stretched out government resources did not always allow government

officials to participate in all of the international cluster meetings.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, some of the confusion was related to the fact that the cluster approach had not been widely employed by the government at the sub-national level in the islands prior to Typhoon Haiyan. The national level clusters, which had been in place for quite some time before the storm, were acknowledged to have added value in terms of mutual comprehension. Some of the interviewees referred to interoperability in technical contexts. An example of this is the use of different radio frequencies. Others said that it points to the interface between different (coordination) systems ensuring that they, at a minimum do not work against each other. More ambitiously, it would promote the idea that different parts of the humanitarian system should work together coherently, efficiently and effectively, to achieve shared strategic and operational objectives. Since shared commitment to coordination and inter-operability provides strong motivation for different actors in the system to work together, it encourages them to be creative, improving relationships and minimise competition.

### 3.5 Relationship between development and humanitarian assistance

The perennial gap between the development sector and the humanitarian community is an issue that was raised during various interviews conducted for this background paper. One interviewee stressed that the humanitarian community should not assume that development actors will work on certain issues automatically once the humanitarian “machinery” leaves, an assumption which is also linked to the discussions around resilience<sup>76</sup> and the importance to “put everyone on the same page.” There seems to be a lack of clarity or knowledge from both sides on each other’s roles in the context of disaster prevention, disaster risk reduction and strengthening the capacity of the government, despite the fact that the subject of linking relief, rehabilitation and





Pakistan: A boy makes his way through thick mud and debris carrying belongings he managed to salvage from his family's home in Pir Pai. UNHCR / Alixandra Fazzina

development (LRRD) has been around for decades.<sup>77</sup> Some attempts of minimising the divide between the humanitarian community and the development sector are being made. The UN has for example developed an integrated regional strategy for the Sahel region, which brings together security development and humanitarian objectives.<sup>78</sup>

During one of the focus group discussions it was said that when it comes to working with national authorities, especially NDMAs, there seems to be a disconnect between the work done by the development sector (in areas such as resilience, preparedness and building capacity) and what is done by the humanitarian community (direct response to needs when a disaster occurs). It was then mentioned that depending on the context, the number of people affected, the complexities and the size of the countries; it can be easier or harder to draw the dots together and bridge the gaps between the development sector and the humanitarian community.

**Humanitarian assistance and development cooperation are mostly viewed as two distinct areas of activities**, with different objectives and different principles. While humanitarian organisations aim to save lives and alleviate human suffering, driven by the humanitarian principles, development actors aim at concrete policy goals and at creating systems and institutions for long-term development.<sup>79</sup> Humanitarian organisations and development actors often do not seem to benefit from connections between their work and these missing links between the two can create difficulties on the ground

**HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS OFTEN DO NOT SEEM TO BENEFIT FROM CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THEIR WORK. THESE MISSING LINKS CAN CREATE DIFFICULTIES ON THE GROUND FOR THE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE DISASTER.**

## **HUMANITARIAN FINANCING SHOULD WORK IN COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING, INCLUDING FROM AFFECTED GOVERNMENTS THEMSELVES.**

for the people affected who, especially in the aftermath of a disaster, depend on the continuity of assistance provided by international organisations. Missing links can also lead to insufficient awareness of the humanitarian-related issues on the ground and thus complicate the situation once development actors arrive in a country.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, there does not seem to be a common understanding among humanitarian and development actors on what strategy they should follow in strengthening the capacity of the government.

One issue relating to the gap that is rarely highlighted is that many humanitarian and development actors are active in both fields. This raises a question as to how these multi-mandate organisations set and/or combine their priorities. As an example, one advantage for these organisations could be that they should be able to engage in long-term relations with the government, which help in building trust and getting to know each other better, thus facilitating emergency (humanitarian) interventions when required. During a focus group discussion a number of participants stated that through a well-established presence, humanitarian agencies usually have a good level of understanding of the local context, cultural sensitivities and have established relationships with actors on the ground. Development actors, through their long-term presence in countries, already have these relationships with authorities already a disaster even occurs.

Another key-issue is the different funding streams and modalities supporting humanitarian activities or developmental programmes. Humanitarian financing is one source of funding to meet post-disaster needs, but it should work in complementarity with other sources of funding, including

from affected governments themselves. International humanitarian funding is unpredictable and often falls short of humanitarian post-disaster needs.<sup>81</sup> The needs-driven model of the response therefore also limits the possibility for humanitarian actors to develop lasting partnerships with affected states, and humanitarian actors often also lack the technical capabilities to support governments to develop sustainable disaster preparedness and response tools including financial mechanisms.

Humanitarian actors may however work effectively in cooperation with states and development actors to help ensure that investments in new capabilities and responses support principled humanitarian response. For example, the Africa Risk View<sup>82</sup> regional risk pool financing mechanism enables financing of response to food security crises with funds channelled directly through governments. While the mechanism is owned by the African Union and member states and was developed with the technical support of the World Bank, humanitarian actors have played a leading role in the design and implementation of the mechanism. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) developed an objective targeting mechanism – the Africa Risk View donors with long humanitarian experience in the region have been key to conceiving and supporting the realisation of the fund and ensuring robust accountability measures are in place; and international humanitarian organisations are expected to be identified by governments as potential funding recipients and responding partners in their response plans.

Humanitarian actors can benefit from a growing commitment among governments and development actors to support the capacity of states to manage disasters. As international commitments to manage disaster risk have become increasingly strongly articulated, development actors are placing a growing emphasis on supporting states to manage and reduce their disaster risks.<sup>83</sup> This includes developing a range of approaches, mechanisms and tools to support governments and populations

## “HUMANITARIAN ACTORS CAN BENEFIT FROM A GROWING COMMITMENT AMONG GOVERNMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS TO SUPPORT THE CAPACITY OF STATES TO MANAGE DISASTERS.”

vulnerable to disasters to reduce their exposure and put in place financial preparedness measures against risk. These developments are likely to create many opportunities for humanitarian actors to work more effectively with affected states, including providing mechanisms through which international funds could be channeled and programmed. As yet, however, strengthening domestic capacity to manage international assistance has not been a strong part of the funding for local capacity building efforts.

At the affected-country level humanitarian actors often may not be aware of the large sums available to disaster affected governments through concessional loans and grants from multilateral development banks for relief and reconstruction. These funds are typically used for longer-term reconstruction needs, nevertheless humanitarian actors may need to be more aware of contributions of development actors under a broader collective approach to responding to risks. Development actors are more likely to have a practical grasp of the institutional capacities of developing country governments to administer and account for funds effectively and would be logical partners to advance any efforts to channel humanitarian funds directly through government channels. Multilateral development banks in particular regularly undertake institutional capacity assessments of creditworthiness and provide technical capacity to enhance financial management. Becoming eligible for lending from a multilateral development bank is typically a long-term partnership, which includes a detailed understanding of institutional capacities and often involves

targeted technical assistance and capacity building to institutions alongside provision of financing.

## 3.6 Issues for consideration

- **More honesty is needed around the role of the humanitarian community** and the different actors need to look at themselves with a realistic view when it comes to defining those roles. Can strengthening national capacities be combined with internationally led humanitarian coordination? An element, which is often not included in discussions around the different roles of all the actors involved are the political realities. How can they be addressed?
- **Thought should be given to continuing inclusive dialogue on disaster policy and coordination** especially involving disaster affected states, through forums such as the DRD, which is the only international forum for affected states where they are involved in policy and coordination discussions (other than the humanitarian segment of ECOSOC, which is not a forum for dialogue.).
- Past experiences where humanitarian clusters were co-led by the international humanitarian community and the national authorities should be looked at as well as the role of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and its Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). **The attempt of the transformative agenda to better adapt the clusters to each context needs to be pursued and strengthened.**
- In terms of benefiting from the actions of humanitarian and development actors in mitigating and addressing the (potential) impact of a disaster, consideration should be given to the question **how to improve the information and knowledge on actions from both types of actors.** Who has the overview? How can affected states be enabled to

have this overview? As mentioned above, Humanitarian actors may often not be aware of the funds available to disaster affected countries through grants of multilateral development banks and even though these funds are used for longer-term needs the humanitarian community may need to be more aware of contributions of development actors under a more collective approach to responding to risks. The discussion on the gap between the humanitarian community and the development sector also needs to take into account that most operational organisations are multi-mandated and involved in both sets of activities. This seems to suggest that the gap is also the result of a management problem within those organisations. Multi-mandate organisations should consider looking at their institutional strategies and reflect on how they manage combining their development and humanitarian work.

### Discussion questions:


- What can be done to speed the development of domestic rules and procedures for managing international disaster assistance?
- What are the concrete changes needed in current coordination mechanisms to ensure a more central role for national actors?
- Should the HCT discuss increased involvement of affected governments on a regular basis, in their annual meetings for instance?

**MORE HONESTY IS NEEDED  
AROUND THE ROLE OF THE  
HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY.**



Haiti: Earthquake survivors stand on ruins in Leogane. IRIN / Phuong Tran

# 4. International humanitarian financing and the affected state



Somalia: Hafun, originally built some metres below sea level on a peninsula, was badly hit by the tsunami. All of the roughly 800 buildings on the seafont were totally destroyed or damaged beyond repair. UNHCR / B.Heger.

This chapter considers the reasons why **current humanitarian financing approaches and mechanisms by-pass national authorities and provide direct funding to ‘non-state’ international humanitarian agencies**. It also considers alternative approaches to working more effectively with affected states; looks at new financing approaches; and a more efficient division of labour among international actors in anticipation of a future in which international humanitarian actors may play a less prominent role in leading and delivering disaster response.

## 4.1 Channelling humanitarian aid— a historical perspective

Contemporary humanitarian action rarely considers the affected state as a channel through which to direct international humanitarian financing, yet this has not always been the case. Until the mid-1970s humanitarian financing was frequently channelled directly to the affected state but the reverse is now more often the case. In 1976 for example, 90% of the European Commission’s humanitarian aid was channelled bilaterally to affected governments.<sup>84</sup> In contrast, in the five-year period between 2009 and 2013, just 2% of humanitarian financing to recipient countries reported to the UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS) was channelled directly to crisis-affected states. This may have to do with the nature of reporting to OCHA, which does not take into account provisions provided by international financial institutions to allow governments to create disaster funds or have more national financial resources available for emergency spending. In addition, the overwhelming majority of these funds were provided as in-kind support rather than cash. For example, of the USD 955 million in humanitarian funds provided to the Philippines in 2013 and the first six months of 2014, just USD 77 million (8%) was channelled bilaterally to the affected government.<sup>85</sup> And of this, just USD 3.3 million was clearly identifiable as cash with the rest comprising in-kind donations of relief

goods, services and technical assistance. During the 1980s and 1990s, the affected state fell out of favour as a potential recipient of international humanitarian assistance. A variety of changes in politics and policy contributed to this volte face including (adapted from Macrae et. al., 2002):

- A post-Cold War shift in the politics of aid in the early 1990s away directing aid to states as a foreign policy tool and towards a consensus that liberal values would guide international intervention in crises.
- A growing conceptual separation of humanitarian aid as a distinct field of intervention separate from development assistance (particularly assistance governed by foreign policy) and governed by separate ethical principles, notably independence and impartiality.
- A shift in understanding of crises away from seeing ‘natural’ disasters as politically neutral events and towards an understanding of crises as having more complex origins and dynamics – in which states might play both positive and negative roles.
- A popular loss of confidence in the efficacy and efficiency of government including the state provision of public services in developed countries during the 1980s (notably the US and UK) and a championing of civil society as alternative providers of public goods and services.
- A shift towards a more ‘hands-on’ approach by donors, who often increased their field presence and level of engagement in the allocation and management of humanitarian funds, prompted in part by concerns that aid could be doing harm including unintentionally fuelling conflict.

**“UNTIL THE MID-1970S  
HUMANITARIAN FINANCING WAS  
FREQUENTLY CHANNELLED  
DIRECTLY TO THE AFFECTED STATE  
BUT THE REVERSE IS NOW MORE  
OFTEN THE CASE.”**

- Rapid growth in the number and size of humanitarian NGOs and consequently, their ability to receive funds and programme humanitarian assistance on a large scale.

These developments coincided with an increased emphasis on financial control and accountability. With the growth in volume of funds, donors introduced increasingly stringent requirements on their funding recipients including stricter requirements on financial controls (which often includes specific tendering, procurement and audit procedures) and the ability to demonstrate results.<sup>86</sup> This has affected almost all humanitarian actors reliant on international funding and not just crisis-affected states, but international actors have tended to adapt more successfully (if not always willingly) to these requirements.

## 4.2 Is direct financing of disaster-affected states an option?

The Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship agreed in 2003 acknowledge the role of government under the ‘General Principles’ encouraging donors 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 co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.” The language and commitments made in other principles, however, reinforce the role of ‘humanitarian organisations’ as the expected recipients of funds. Notably, the GHD Principles encourage funding via coordinated appeals – which do not include governments as funding recipients – as good practice, clearly identifying common humanitarian action plans (CHAPs) as “the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and co-ordination in complex emergencies.”<sup>87</sup> In this respect, the question is what needs to happen for donors to engage with affected

## “WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN FOR DONORS TO ENGAGE WITH AFFECTED STATES AS (DIRECT) RECIPIENTS OF THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT?”

states as (direct) recipients of their financial support?

First, a number of disaster-prone countries are ranking low on Transparency International’s corruption perception index. Clearly, these rankings do not serve as an encouragement. In addition to this, a number of these countries do fulfil donor governments’ standards requirements of financial reporting and accountability. This said, one donor government representative was honest enough in her interview to admit her doubts that her government would directly channel humanitarian funds to a government, even if it would meet these requirements. One could only guess for the reasons, but losing control and influence may have to do with it.

Secondly, donors may prefer supporting humanitarian organisations for their capacities. Affected states vary hugely in their capacity and commitment to meet the needs of crisis-affected citizens however, and this will necessarily influence approaches and mechanisms to supporting crisis-affected states. Humanitarian donors often have very little capacity or inclination to critically assess government capacities, nor indeed are they well equipped to address these capacity gaps.

Thirdly, especially (but not only) in disaster-affected countries where there is also an armed conflict, humanitarian principles will be relevant. Where donors have insufficient assurance that assistance will be provided based in an impartial manner and based on needs, in observance of their own commitments to humanitarian principles, they are unlikely to channel funds directly to affected states. In these situations donors will prefer the delivery of assistance by impartial humanitarian organisations.



Fourthly, as discussed above, government donors may prefer that humanitarian funding is spent directly on the delivery of assistance. Development funding would be the right source for providing support to the government. Within the development community global commitments recognising the critical role of states in pro-poor development (the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Fragile States Principles) as well as commitments to manage disaster risk and climate change (the Hyogo Framework) have shaped modes of engagement increasingly in favour of harmonisation and alignment with the developmental and risk management agendas of developing country governments.

**The major problem for humanitarian organisations continues to be that they see development actors coming in too late and too slow, and a result, humanitarian funds being spent on what many of them consider as developmental activities.**

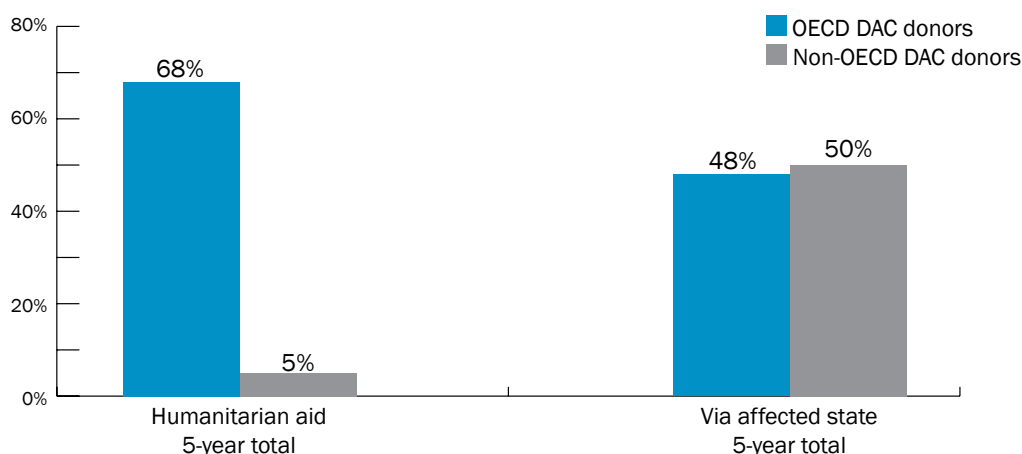
### 4.3 Alternative approaches

Not all donors followed the same historic trajectory and non-OECD DAC donors are much more likely to provide bilateral support to the affected state. **OECD DAC donors provided more than two thirds of the**

**total humanitarian funding reported to the OCHA FTS between 2009 and 2013, while non OECD DAC member governments provided just 5%.**<sup>88</sup> In contrast, non-OECD DAC governments provided 50% of bilateral humanitarian contributions to affected governments between 2009 and 2013 and five of the top ten donors of humanitarian funds to crisis-affected states were non-OECD DAC donors. Furthermore, the importance of contributions from non-OECD DAC government donors to the total humanitarian response has grown rapidly during the last five years. It should be noted, however, that some of them follow the example set by the ‘traditional’ donors in terms of channelling funding primarily through their national agencies.

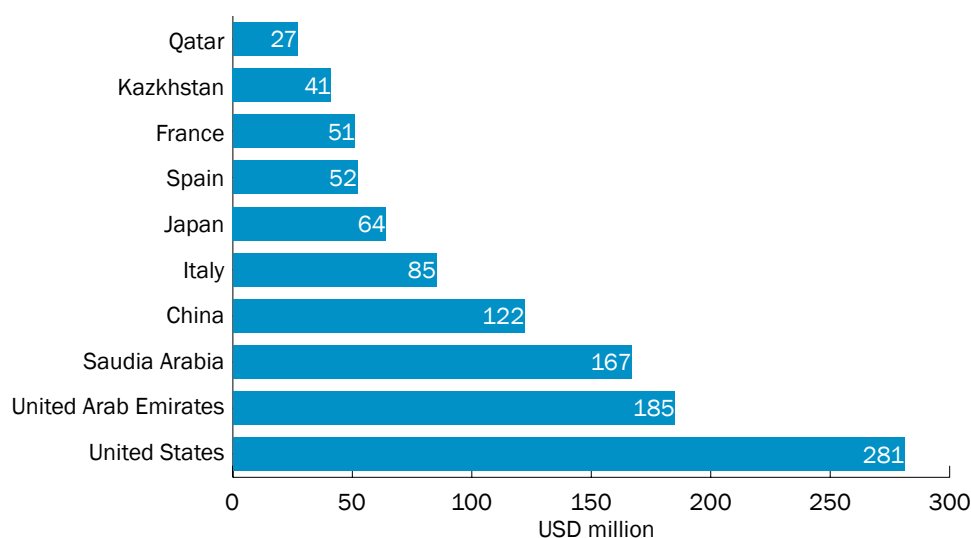
**Non-western donors are more likely to conceive of their relationships with crisis-affected states in terms of partnerships and relations of cooperation.** For many non-Western donors, respect for the sovereignty of the crisis-affected state is an important norm and governments are often seen as the logical actor to identify needs and receive funding (Binder and Meier, 2011). Binder and Meier also note that, in contrast to Western donors, many non-Western donors do not always require stringent tracking of resources from their partners. This statement, however, was strongly rejected at one of the focus groups for this study, in which representatives from

Non-OECD DAC governments are far more likely to channel humanitarian aid via affected states



Source: UN OCHA FTS data

### Top 10 donors of bilateral humanitarian aid to crisis-affected states, 2009-2013



Source: UN OCHA FTS data

emerging donor countries stated that his government sets very high standards for transparency, reporting, and accountability.

Non-western donors may also have valuable experience in responding to natural disasters, as some of them have experienced major catastrophes in the past. They may also feel comfortable in disaster risk financing or administering large-scale social protection schemes. Countries such as Brazil prefer to refer to humanitarian cooperation as a new way of undertaking humanitarian action. Interestingly, and contrary to this spirit of partnership, funding data indicates that in practice contributions are often ad-hoc and short-term and non-Western donors also exhibit a preference for providing in-kind rather than cash support.<sup>89</sup>

## 4.4 Developing financing for humanitarian purposes

Whether or not there will be more humanitarian funding channelled to governments of affected countries remains to be seen. Most likely, for their humanitarian funds donor governments will continue their preference for having multiple channels at their disposal. This said, instead of working around governments of affected states, the default setting should be to consider how best to work with these governments.

As noted, humanitarian financing is far from the only or the best source of funding to meet post-disaster needs and it should work in complementarity with other sources of funding, including from governments themselves. Government leadership of the financing of crisis response is a long-term objective and one which is ultimately depends on the leadership and commitment of governments. External humanitarian funding is highly unpredictable and typically falls well short of post-disaster financing needs.<sup>90</sup> The ability of humanitarian actors to develop lasting partnerships with affected states therefore is limited by the needs-driven model of response, which results in modulations in levels of financing and practical programmatic support in any given context. Humanitarian actors also realistically lack the technical capabilities to support governments to develop sustainable disaster preparedness and response tools including financial mechanisms, since they typically engage in a rather small-scale way in disaster management but less so in fiscal policy and establishing budgetary mechanisms.

Development actors may be much better positioned to address longer-term structural problems in domestic capacities to finance disaster response. As noted, the question is often the timing and pace of these funds being released. At the same time, at affected-country level, humanitarian actors often may not be aware of the often

quite large sums available to crisis-affected governments through concessional loans and grants from multilateral development banks for relief and reconstruction. The speed of disbursement of these funds may not match that of rapid response humanitarian financing mechanisms and in practice funds are typically used for longer-term reconstruction needs, nevertheless humanitarian actors may need to be more aware of contributions of development actors under a broader collective approach to managing and responding to risk.

Development actors are far more likely to have a practical grasp of the institutional capacities of developing country governments to administer and account for funds effectively and would be logical partners to advance any efforts to channel humanitarian funds directly through government channels. Multilateral development banks in particular regularly undertake institutional capacity assessments of creditworthiness and provide technical capacity to enhance financial management

## 4.5 Issues for consideration

- **Supporting disaster-affected governments is straight-forward in principle, but in practice there are levels of engagement which apply to different contexts.** Decision-making should be transparent and coordinated with government unless there are very clear humanitarian reasons to indicate this is not appropriate. This should be a high-level priority for reform at the global policy level and tools and approaches to coordination and information sharing may need to be modified to support this shift in attitude.
- What **legal and institutional guarantees** would be required to allow donor governments provide greater funding directly to affected governments and local civil society for humanitarian response?
- In a longer-term commitment working in partnership with governments, it should be discussed to **channel funds directly to affected states and local civil society**, which includes much closer cooperation with development actors who are in working to advance risk management and risk financing solutions in a growing number of countries. In the foreseeable future, functioning, transparent and accountable domestic disaster response financing mechanisms are likely to be a reality in which case not only will governments be better able to meet their own financing needs, but international humanitarian response will have a much thinner justification for by-passing the state in their financing responses.
- In order to exchange information and facilitate dialogue and coordination, humanitarian **actors may need to modify their information management tools** to ensure they are accessible, comprehensible and useful for governments of affected states and adapt their approaches to coordination to enable government inclusion.

### Discussion questions:

- What are the necessary changes in humanitarian financing, from both donors and affected states, for greater transparency and stronger engagement of disaster-affected states in decision-making processes?
- How might humanitarian financing mechanisms and methods, from both donors and affected states, need to evolve to more directly support strengthening national and local capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies?
- How can we effectively bridge the gap between humanitarian and development funding?

# 5. Conclusions



Somalia: A women's resource centre is constructed in Hafun after the Indian Ocean tsunami. UNHCR / January 2005.

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## IT IS TIME TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT FINDING SOLUTIONS COLLECTIVELY.

As this study shows none of these issues it identified can or should be addressed in isolation. They are inextricably linked. Further to this, no single actor can solve them on its own. **They require collective analyses and solutions.** This is why the DRD process and the space it fills in terms of policy dialogue is so important. **Continuous dialogue is essential in establishing trust and addressing behaviours.** Trust cannot be just switched on and **investments should be made in trust-building measures** if it is to be taken seriously. This study also found that in spite of the investments made in addressing bad behaviours, **it is not easy to get rid of certain perceptions of a system that is dominated by a Western agenda**, that has its own jargon, and that does not sufficiently strengthen local capacities. As this study also shows, however, **humanitarian principles and accountability standards set an essential framework that should guide the dialogue and underpin the relationship.** Undoubtedly, these values and norms contribute to increased trust when governments of disaster-affected countries genuinely are included in the debates on principles and standards.

Further to this, the agenda and vision of the international community in strengthening disaster response remain highly important. **How does the international system reconcile the central role of the affected state with its ongoing efforts to strengthen its capacity and its**

**mechanisms for coordination that may run parallel to those set up by the government?** Regional organisations have already demonstrated to be well-placed to provide a link between the global system and national actors, but a question remains if they see themselves as operational actors or coordinators (or both). This study also found that their capacities may be variable. **Much can be won by humanitarian and development actors better communicating about each other's activities**, especially in the areas of disaster prevention and risk reduction.

This study found that the question if and how humanitarian financing can strengthen the role of the disaster-affected state is a difficult one to answer. Clearly, governments from disaster-affected countries that see many announcements on international funding contributions, that may be allocated through channels that exclude them, may become suspicious on what is happening in their countries. At the same time it is likely that the present picture of a variety of funding channels will continue to exist. **The importance of information-exchange and openness of activities cannot be overstated.**

As this study notes many of the problems in making disaster response more effective are generally well-known – **it is time to get serious about finding solutions collectively.**



# 6. Footnotes

Indonesia: Following the Indian Ocean tsunami, debris and devastation plagues the coast of Sumatra.  
UNHCR / J. Austin

- 1 See Annex 4 list of definitions.
- 2 Hockaday, D. Collaboration between humanitarian agencies and national governments, the ECB project experience, ECB Project Case Study (2013). p.5.
- 3 Hockaday, D.
- 4 See DRD Learning review of the cooperation between the Government of the Philippines and humanitarian actors in the response to Typhoon Yolanda, June 2014.
- 5 DRD learning review
- 6 Principles of Partnership as printed in Humanitarian Reform: Basic Information Leaflet Series, the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (2010).
- 7 See Maznevski, M. and Lane, H.W., International Management Behaviour, Global and Sustainable Leadership, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2014), p. 104.
- 8 See Johnson, D., Grayson, K. Cognitive and affective trust in service relationships, in Journal of Business Research (58), 2005, pp 500-507.
- 9 Maznevksi
- 10 See also Holmes, J. Humanitarian Action: a Western-dominated enterprise in need of change, in FMR 29 (2007) p.5, Donini, A.,
- 11 See Donini, A., The Golden Fleece, Manipulation and Independence in Humanitarian Action (2012), p. 43
- 12 See section 2.3. Humanitarian Principles.
- 13 See, for example, The Evolving UN Cluster Approach in the Aftermath of the Pakistan Earthquake: an NGO perspective, ActionAid International (2006), p.7.
- 14 See further: Chapter 3.4 Coordination
- 15 Grünewald, F., Boyer, B., URD (2013): *Lessons Learned on Typhoons in the Philippines*. <http://www.alnap.org/node/12699.aspx>
- 16 Regina "Nanette" S. Antequisa, ECOWEB Executive Director, remarks at ECOSOC humanitarian segment 2014 side-event/
- 17 During the focus group sessions, participants discussed the inadequate terminology in using terms such a new, non-traditional, or emerging actors. None of these terms are really satisfactory and especially "non-traditional actors" may be problematic as it comes close to suggesting that only traditional actors
- 18 Binder, A., Meier, C. (2012) *Opportunity Knocks: Why Non-Western Donors Enter Humanitarianism and How to Make the Best of it*, International Review of the Red Cross, 93 (884), pp. 1135-1149. [http://www.gppi.net/fileadmin/media/pub/2012/Binder-Meier\\_2012\\_IRRC\\_Non-western-humanitarian-donors.pdf](http://www.gppi.net/fileadmin/media/pub/2012/Binder-Meier_2012_IRRC_Non-western-humanitarian-donors.pdf)
- 19 Donini, A. (2014) *Gale warnings: all hands on deck!* DRD think piece, academic perspective. <http://www.drinitiative.org/v2/files/armadillo/media/Academicsthinkpiece.pdf>
- 20 ALNAP, p. 5. The 2011 DRD Background paper I echoes this point on p 25.
- 21 As Harmer and Harvey note how international aid actors work with States also depends on the capacity of the State to meet the needs of its own citizens. DRD Background Paper 1 (2011), p.14.
- 22 See : <<http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/336-coordinated-assessments-what-we-know-now-key-lessons-from-field-experience>> and <http://www.acaps.org/en/news/taking-joint-needs-assessment-preparedness-to-the-field-in-bangladesh-district-hub-training/1>
- 23 White, S. DARA (2013): *The views of National Authorities on Global NGO Certification: A Scoping Exercise – Draft Report*. <http://schr.info/assets/uploads/docs/Crisis-Vulnerable-States-and-Certification-draft.pdf>
- 24 Haiyan learning review
- 25 Interview.
- 26 See World Humanitarian Summit, Regional Consultation, North and South-East Asia, Final report, July 2014. p.4.
- 27 See, for example, the second draft of the Core Humanitarian Standard, section iv. Values and Principles, p.7. <http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/CHS%20Draft%202.pdf>
- 28 The Sphere Project, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), and ALNAP are among the most well-known initiatives and organisations created. Since 2011, UN agencies have also given more attention to accountability to affected populations, as the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda includes a section on the issue of accountability to affected populations. The IASC is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is a unique forum involving the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/>
- 29 See Editors Introduction, The Accountability Revolution, in Humanitarian Exchange

- Magazine (2003) <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-24/editors-introduction-the-accountability-revolution>
- 30 It is known that a number of disaster-affected countries have integrated the Sphere Standards in their national legislation.
- 31 DRD Background paper I (2011).
- 32 <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-subsidi-common-default&sb=89>
- 33 See AAP-PSEA Interagency Coordination to the Haiyan Typhoon Response, end of first mission report, November-December 2013.
- 34 Few of the interviewees in West Africa, for example, knew about the quality and accountability initiatives.
- 35 See: <http://www.sphereproject.org/news/indonesian-national-humanitarian-guidelines-incorporate-sphere-standards/>
- 36 <http://schr.info/certification>
- 37 White, S., p.2.
- 38 Mitchell, 2003, describes for example: "Andrew Natsios, head of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), told an audience of NGO representatives: 'Doing good is no longer enough. We have to show results. If you cannot measure aid empirically, then USAID will have to find other partners to fund'"
- 39 See further chapter IV and draft paper Lydia Poole
- 40 Poole, 2013)
- 41 The OECD (2009) notes that specific purposes of governance assessments include: "informing decision-making about: overall allocation of aid to and between countries; country strategies and allocations to sectors; incentive-based aid allocation linked to the outcome of a governance assessments; risk management (country procedures versus donor procedures); general accountability to donor constituencies."
- 42 Kenny and Savedoff (2013) argue for example that input tracking programmes encourage spending money almost without regard for impact. A payment on results approach limits the capacity of dishonest agents to divert funds unless those agents first improve efficiency and outputs, because payment is contingent on achieving pre-agreed results at a pre-agreed rate of payment.
- 43 See UNGA Res. 46/182 (191), Annex, Guiding principle 4.
- 44 See <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87>
- 45 At a policy consultation with a large UN agency in Geneva in July, one NGO representative referred to a large donor as having taken the view that in the future with a disaster happening in a country that has a functioning government (like the Philippines) there should be fewer international actors showing up. Asked on this being a formal position in the context of this study, a representative from this donor nuanced the statement.
- 46 Harmer and Harvey describe the international humanitarian system in some detail, DRD Background paper 1, p. 8-11.
- 47 See section 3.5.
- 48 See further chapter 4.
- 49 Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance, adopted by the IFRC General Assembly, November 2013.
- 50 Haver, K. and Foley, C., DRD Background Paper 2: *Regional and International Initiatives*. <http://www.ifrc.org/Page-Files/93533/Background%20paper%202.pdf>, p.17.
- 51 One interview revealed that the regional organization in question is still sorting out the appropriate role for itself in terms of coordination and/or direct operations.
- 52 Haver, K. and Foley, C., DRD Background Paper 2: *Regional and International Initiatives*. <http://www.ifrc.org/Page-Files/93533/Background%20paper%202.pdf>.
- 53 Ferris, E. and Petz, D. (2013) *In the neighbourhood: The growing role of regional organizations in disaster risk management*, The Brookings Institution – London School of Economics Project on Internal Displacement, February 2013. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/02/regional%20organizations%20disasters%20ferris/regional\\_disaster\\_mechanisms\\_2013.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/02/regional%20organizations%20disasters%20ferris/regional_disaster_mechanisms_2013.pdf)
- 54 Zyck, S. (2013) *Regional organisations and humanitarian action*, HPG Working Paper, November 2013. The Overseas Development Institute: London. <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8733.pdf>
- 55 <http://www.au.int/en/about/nutshell>
- 56 Although it concerns the response to an armed conflict, the activities of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Somalia



- could be seen as one example. <http://oic-somalia.org/english/director-message/>
- 57 <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/what/civil-protection/emergency-response-coordination-centre-ercc>
- 58 Zyck, S. (2013) *Regional organisations and humanitarian action*, HPG Working Paper, November 2013. The Overseas Development Institute: London. <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8733.pdf>
- 59 For more information, please see: <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/hfa>
- 60 Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Association of South-Eastern Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- 61 For more information, please see: <http://www.humanitarianfutures.org/projects/forewarn/>
- 62 See forthcoming paper by Alice Obrecht and Justin Armstrong for the Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI: 'Regionalism and Humanitarian Action in West Africa and South-East Asia: A Comparison of ECOWAS and ASEAN'
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- 64 See Harkey, J., Experiences of National governments in Expanding Their Role in Humanitarian Preparedness and Response, Feinstein International Center (2014).
- 65 Harkey, p 6.
- 66 Harkey, p. 7.
- 67 See Harkey, J., Experiences of National governments in Expanding Their Role in Humanitarian Preparedness and Response, Feinstein International Centre (2014).
- 68 UN GA Resolution A/RES/46/182: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm>
- 69 Harvey, P. and Harmer, A. (2011), DRD Background Paper 1: *Building Trust: Challenges for national authorities and international aid agencies in working together in times of disasters*. <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/93533/Background%20paper%201.pdf>
- 70 Hofmann, C., Schmidt, M., Nogra, J. (2014): *DRD – Learning Review of the cooperation between the Government of the Philippines and humanitarian actors in their response to typhoon Yolanda*.
- 71 As an example, two of the evaluations of the cluster system: Cluster Approach Evaluation submitted by the joint research team of Dr. Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer, Katherine Haver, Dr. Dirk Salomons and Victoria Wheeler (2007, <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4955.pdf>) or Cluster Approach Evaluation by the Global Public Policy Institute and Urgence Rehabilitation Development (2009, [http://www.gppi.net/approach/consulting/cluster\\_approach/](http://www.gppi.net/approach/consulting/cluster_approach/))
- 72 IASC (2012) Inter-Agency Standing Committee Transformative Agenda Reference Document 4. Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level, November 2012. <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloder.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87>
- 73 See, for example, presentation “Local Capacity Building Key for Effective Humanitarian Partnerships, by Regina “Nanette” S. Antequisa, Executive Director, ECOWEB, remarks at ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment side event (2014).
- 74 During the Global Humanitarian Policy Forum 2013, convened by OCHA, humanitarian practitioners, academics, private-sector representatives, international organizations, and non-governmental and government representatives gathered to discuss the future of the international humanitarian system. It was concluded that there is not just one but several systems and that the major challenge is to improve these systems’ interoperability and effectiveness, through understanding each other’s advantages and discussing possible coordination frameworks, standards and practices:
- [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/GHPF\\_Report\\_FINAL%20\(web%20and%20printing\).pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/GHPF_Report_FINAL%20(web%20and%20printing).pdf)
- 75 Hofmann, C., Schmidt, M., Nogra, J. (2014): *DRD – Learning Review of the cooperation between the Government of the Philippines and humanitarian actors in their response to typhoon Yolanda*.
- 76 Article by Jérémie Labbé for The Global Observatory on the debate around resilience and humanitarian action (28 march 2014): <http://theglobalobservatory.org/analysis/708-deliver-humanitarian-aid-or-build-resilience-the-answer-is-in-the-context.html>
- 77 The origins of the debate around linking

- relief, rehabilitation and development go back to the food security crises in Africa in the 1980s. Mosel, I., Levine, S. (2014) *Remaking the case for linking relief, rehabilitation and development, How LRRD can become a practically useful concept for assistance in difficult places*, HPG <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8882.pdf>
- 78 United Nations (2013) Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Sahel Region: <http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/report-secretary-general-situation-sahel-region-s2013354>
- 79 Binder A., Koddenbrock K., Steets J. (2009) *Improving Humanitarian Assistance: A Transatlantic Agenda for Action*. GPPi, [http://www.disastergovernance.net/fileadmin/gppi/RTB\\_action\\_paper.pdf](http://www.disastergovernance.net/fileadmin/gppi/RTB_action_paper.pdf)
- 80 Steets, J. (2011) *Donor strategies for addressing the transition gap and linking humanitarian and development assistance*. GPPi, [http://www.gppi.net/publications/reports/donor\\_strategies\\_linking\\_humanitarian\\_and\\_development\\_assistance/](http://www.gppi.net/publications/reports/donor_strategies_linking_humanitarian_and_development_assistance/)
- 81 Becerra, Cavallo and Noy, (2012) calculate that international aid surges cover just 3% of post disaster economic damages.
- 82 ARV is a risk analysis tool, which combines weather and crop data with data on vulnerable populations and historic analysis of the costs of response to generate information for decision-makers to anticipate emerging crises and initiate preparedness and early response to drought. ARV is able to provide estimates of the number and location of people likely to be affected by food insecurity and the probable maximum costs of drought-related responses before an agricultural season begins and as the season progresses for every first-level administrative unit in sub-Saharan Africa. ARV operates as a parametric tool to trigger cash payouts from the ARC risk pool for early response to emerging food security crises. See <http://www.africanriskcapacity.org/africa-risk-view/introduction>
- 83 An overview of international commitments and institutions supporting disaster risk management: Current international commitments can be traced to the 1990 with the declaration of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) (A/RES/42/169) and the adoption in 1990 of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World. In 1999, the UN GA endorsed the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) (UNGA 54/219) and mandated the creation of the UN secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) to support the implementation of the strategy and coordinate approaches to risk reduction across the UN system ([http://www.unisdr.org/2012/docs/whoware/UNISDR\\_Fact-sheet.pdf](http://www.unisdr.org/2012/docs/whoware/UNISDR_Fact-sheet.pdf)). In 2004 and 2005 during a review of the Yokohama strategy, which identified a need for far greater investment in reducing the risk of disasters, informed the content of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (HFA). The HFA was formally adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005 and subsequently endorsed by the UN GA (A/RES/60/1952) (UNISDR, 2011). The HFA has been hugely influential in guiding international approaches to supporting risk reduction in developing countries and has stimulated the creation and modification of institutional capacities to support disaster risk management. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, established in 2006 under UN GA resolution 61/198 provides a forum to share experience and develop guidance on the implementation of the HFA. At the level of implementation, many long-established multilateral organisations have significantly increased their financial support and technical assistance to support the capacity of developing country governments to manage risk. The UNDP was mandated by the UN GA to assume operational responsibility for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness. UNDP currently spends around USD 150 million annually providing support to governments to develop policy, legislation and planning and integrate risk reduction into national development plans as well as training communities and first responders ([http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/focus\\_areas/climate\\_disaster\\_risk\\_reduction\\_and\\_recovery/](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/focus_areas/climate_disaster_risk_reduction_and_recovery/)). The Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR) was created in 2006 to support implementation of the HFA through providing technical and financial assistance to developing countries at high risk of disaster in order to mainstream disaster reduction into national development strategies (<https://www.gfdr.org>). The World Bank (WB) is the world's leading source of financing to support disaster risk management in developing countries and has increased its spending at a rate of 20% annually for four years culminating in 2013, when their total spend was USD 4 billion (Based on [http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disaster\\_riskmanagement/overview#2](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disaster_riskmanagement/overview#2) accessed 23 July 2014). The WB also has credit lines for governments to access financing for post-disaster response and reconstruc-

tion. Regional development banks – most notably the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) are also leading providers of technical assistance and financing for financing

to support disaster risk management, response and reconstruction.

- 84 Borton in Macrae et. al., *Uncertain Power: The Changing Role of Official Donors in Humanitarian in Humanitarian Action*, HPG Report (2002),
- 85 Includes funds reported to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2014.
- 86 Mitchell, 2003, describes for example: “Andrew Natsios, head of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), told an audience of NGO representatives: ‘Doing good is no longer enough. We have to show results. If you cannot measure aid empirically, then USAID will have to find other partners to fund’”
- 87 <http://www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org/gns/principles-good-practice-ghd/overview.aspx>
- 88 The OECD DAC has 29 members in 2014: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US.
- 89 It is important to note however that not all contributions may be captured within the OCHA FTS.
- 90 Becerra, Cavallo and Noy, (2012) calculate that international aid surges cover just 3% of post disaster economic damages.

# 7.

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# 8. Annexes



Haiti: A local walks past Earthquake damage in Port au Prince. IRIN / Phuong Tran



## Annex 1

### Terms of Reference

May 2014, Background Study

#### **Addressing the perennial problems of disaster response**

##### **1. The Disaster Response Dialogue**

The Disaster Response Dialogue is a platform convened by OCHA, the Swiss Government (SDC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). Initiated in 2011, it brings together governments and humanitarian organisations involved in international disaster response to improve trust and mutual cooperation. It offers a facilitated space in which issues of concern can be identified and discussed openly and honestly, leading to practical solutions. Along with its four conveners, an Advisory Group of permanent Mission representatives in Geneva provides strategic guidance to the dialogue. Further information on the dialogue can be found here: [www.drdinitiative.org](http://www.drdinitiative.org). The dialogue is planning its follow-up Global Conference that will be hosted by the Government of the Philippines on 11-12 September 2014.

The central goal of the dialogue is and remains to improve trust and cooperation between national and international actors (disaster-prone countries, donor governments, national and international humanitarian actors). This goal is based on the following underlying assumption: without trust and cooperation between national and international actors, effective humanitarian assistance is not possible. Indeed, lack of trust and cooperation leads to poor coordination, duplications, delays, wastages, etc. and ultimately ineffective and/or inappropriate aid for the affected people.

##### **2. Background**

In the last decade, a growing number of countries have developed their national disaster management capacities, particularly in Middle-Income Countries, with greater control over humanitarian assistance. Some regional bodies such as ASEAN or the AU are becoming increasingly important players. We

are witnessing much more assertiveness and scepticism towards the international actors and the international humanitarian system. The monopoly of Western donors and some international humanitarian organisations on the humanitarian enterprise is called into question, with negative perceptions of a self-preserving, self-perpetuating system unwilling to be questioned or changed. International humanitarian actors can no longer legitimately make the assumption that governments of affected States are unwilling or unable to respond to the needs of their people, and that national actors have inappropriate response capacity. Finally, not least as the result of technology and innovation new forms of humanitarian action are emerging (e.g. direct giving through the internet), and a growing number of actors, including the private sector and the military, want to play a legitimate role (or may go their own way).

Efforts to reform the system – such as the IASC led transformative agenda - have so far concentrated on improving rather than changing the status quo: changes have been made within the existing framework, rather than the more fundamental changes that may be required. Consequences for not addressing these challenges may be profound, with further fragmentation and mistrust, and ultimately, ineffectiveness in meeting the needs of affected populations.

At a high-level preparatory meeting in April 2014 which gathered a number of senior Officials from Governments and Humanitarian Organisations to discuss the proposed thematic focus of the 2014 DRD Conference, it was noted that a strong emphasis of the Manila Conference should be on learning lessons from recent large-scale disaster responses (e.g. Rwanda, Indian Ocean tsunami, Haiti earthquake, Pakistan “century floods” etc.) to find out why these lessons are well-known and documented, but haven’t led to the necessary changes to the humanitarian sector described above.

##### **3. Research objectives**

The overall objective of this study is to review key lessons emerging from international disaster responses in the past decade in order to identify necessary changes for

more inclusive, principled and effective humanitarian action.

The specific objectives are:

To do a meta-analysis of reviews, evaluations and relevant research over the last decade to identify key lessons in situations of international disaster response, with a particular focus on whether these lessons have led to the necessary adjustments and changes in terms of cooperation between national and international actors

1. On the basis of the meta-analysis, to explore with relevant stakeholders (humanitarian organisations, donors and affected-states) the incentives and disincentives that have led to changes in terms of international disaster response, with a particular focus on the cooperation between national (particularly government) actors and international humanitarian actors
2. On the basis of the above, to identify key “forward looking” recommendations (organised around specific thematic areas to be determined) which will form the basis of the DRD Manila Conference

#### 4. Research questions

The research will be guided by the following questions:

- A. Many findings and problems identified in evaluations of major disaster responses bring up the same issues. If these problems are recurring and well-known, the main question for this research is why have the necessary adjustments and changes not taken place?
- B. What are the reasons behind the current humanitarian financing mechanisms in which international donors by-pass the national authorities and provide direct funding to humanitarian agencies? Are these reasons still appropriate at a time when national ownership is promoted?
- C. What are the best practices or

systemic changes required to set up/enable the international humanitarian system to support local response efforts in more complementary ways, rather than trying to contribute separate arrangements?

- D. What is the level of shared understanding of the principles and values that underpin humanitarian action? To what extent is it an obstacle to greater cooperation between affected-states and humanitarian actors?
- E. How inclusive is the humanitarian sector, particularly regarding the engagement of affected states in decision making processes at national and international levels? To what extent are current decision-making processes in the humanitarian sector transparent?
- F. What overall improvements in the relationship between the national authorities and international system in the response to disasters have been seen, particularly in the last three years, and what are the remaining changes needed for more inclusive, principled and effective humanitarian responses?<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. Scope and methodology

The period covered by the meta-analysis is 10 years (from the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami to the 2013 typhoon Yolanda response), looking at the lessons emerging from the disaster responses in large-scale disaster situations which involved a significant international humanitarian response triggered by an international appeal. A brief list of disaster responses covered by the meta-analysis will be established.

The meta-analysis will also include short reference to the earlier decade, focusing on the lessons from 1994 Rwanda response and 1998 Hurricane Mitch in particular.

The study will be based on:

- secondary review of reviews, evaluations, and studies related to the established list of disasters

- stakeholder interviews of a selected group of affected-states, humanitarian actors, donors as well as experienced disaster managers.
- Focus group discussions with experts/practitioners; representatives from governments of affected countries; representatives from donor governments.
- The ongoing NDMA interviews conducted by DRD will provide some elements of analysis that will be integrated in this study
- Field visits to 2-3 regional hubs/countries to enlarge the group of stakeholder interviews

Cooperation with ALNAP and other relevant initiatives will be sought, to ensure complementarity with existing research.

## **6. Timeframe and outputs**

An inception report which will provide the findings from an initial desk review (specific objective 1) and further details on the research and methodology design, including refined and narrowed-down research questions, will be produced by 15<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

A draft should be available by 15<sup>th</sup> July, with final report signed-off by 31<sup>st</sup> July and report designed and printed by 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

The DRD Working Group, Advisory Group and Executive Coordinator will be consulted in the study and will be providing comments on the inception and draft reports.

The final report, fully referenced, should be of a maximum of 15,000 words with executive summary and excluding annexes.

The report will be the main background document for the DRD Manila Conference. The recommendations that emerge from the study should therefore be organised around some specific thematic areas, which will then be the same themes of the working groups on day 1 (each group will be looking at a particular theme, based on lessons analysed by the study, with a view to agreeing on some recommendations proposed by the study)

Themes may include inter-operability, supporting local and national capacity, resources and decision-making, disaster law, and engagement with non-traditional actors. Some of these themes are highlighted in the WHS humanitarian effectiveness scoping paper.

## Annex 2

### Interview questions

The interviews were guided by the following questions: (adjusted according to the institutional affiliation of the interviewee):

- a. What is your experience with being involved in the response to a (natural) disaster and interacting with the international community (or, alternatively, national authorities)? How would you describe this experience?
- b. What do you see as the main opportunities in the relationship between the national authorities and international humanitarian system? How would the optimal relationship look like?
- c. What do you see as the main challenges in the relationship between the national authorities and international humanitarian system? How can these be addressed?
- d. What can be done about the parallel structures that may be seen: one led and managed by the national authorities and one led and managed by the UN?
- e. What can be done about improving the dialogue and relationship between the international community and national authorities?
- f. To what extent does political will (of the affected state but also of donor countries) and the level of trust between national authorities and the international community influence disaster response? How openly are these issues addressed, with Governments and within the humanitarian community?
- g. Do you consider the current humanitarian financing mechanisms to represent the right tools? Do they appropriately include and support the affected state (decision-making,

transparency)? If not, what could alternative mechanisms look like?

- h. Recent major disasters showed an increased use of new technologies (means of communication such as social media platforms) in the disaster response. Do these additional means of communication improve or complicate the humanitarian response (in terms of transparency, dialogue, coordination, awareness of the situation by the Government at central level but also within the international community)?

#### **Disaster response funding through the affected state:**

- a. Do you currently channel any funds for disaster response directly through disaster affected states? If so, under what circumstances and through which government agencies (for example: Ministry of Finance, direction to NDMA, a national disaster fund)?
- b. Is there an appetite within your institution to channel greater volumes of funds via national disaster management authorities? What are the reasons for this?
- c. What are the most important preconditions you would need to see – both from your side and from the affected state - before your institution could consider practical steps to increase disaster response funding through affected states (could include changes to donor legal framework; fiduciary control requirements; commitments to principled action; demonstrated ability to handle and distribute funds)?
- d. To what degree do you see the concept of channelling humanitarian funding through the government as compatible or contradictory to humanitarian principles?

**Capacity-building investments:**

- a. To what extent is developing national response capacity a priority for your institution and do you expect this to change in the coming few years?
  - b. Is your emphasis on building government disaster management and response capacity or on civil society or both?
  - c. What programmes do you currently finance to support domestic response capacity in countries at risk of humanitarian crisis and who are your major partners?
  - d. Are these programmes financed through humanitarian or development budgets? Are humanitarian investments in capacity-building well aligned with your institutions development investments?
  - e. Do you have any sense of how satisfied your institution is with the return on these investments? Are there any notable concerns about the impact of these investments, which might affect your future investments in this area?
  - f. What are the most promising programme areas your institution is likely to invest in in the next few years, which might increase domestic disaster response capabilities?
- c. What kind of information or training have you received from the UN (OCHA or other agencies) on how the international humanitarian system operates?
  - d. What do you see as best practices in supporting your disaster response efforts?
  - e. What do you see as the relevant humanitarian principles in responding to a disaster?
  - f. Do you see issues when the military is involved in disaster response?

**For NDMA and other national government representatives:**

- a. What is your relationship with the UN Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator at national (capital) level?
- b. Have you been / are you involved in any of the international coordination and international decisions on financing of the disasters? What kind of expectations or requirements from donor Governments are placed on you (for you to receive international funds)?

## Annex 3

### List of interviewees and key informants

#### Abidjan, Ivory Coast

Lt. Col Alhajie Sanneh, Executive Director national disaster Management Agency, Republic of Gambia

M. Karim Nignan, Secrétaire Permanent, Ministère de l'accion sociale et de la solidarité nationale, Burkina Faso

Emmanuel tachie-Obeng, Senior Programme Officer, Environmental Protection Agency, Ghana

Zanna Muhammad, Director of Planning, National Emergency Management Agency, Nigeria

Col. Maj. Mahaman laminou Moussa, Directeur Général, Ministère de l'Interieur et de la Décentralisation Direction Général de la Protection Civile, Niger

Augustin Augier, Director General, Alima (Alliance for International Medical Action)

#### New York

Bob Gibbons, Humanitarian Programme Manager, UKaid

Adriana Telles Ribeiro, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Brazil, New York, USA

Christina Buchan, Director, International Humanitarian Assistance, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Canada

Erkan Doganay, Head of Disaster and Emergency Management Center Group, AFAD, Turkey

H. Halil Afsarata, head of Department of Strategy Development, AFAD, Turkey

#### Nairobi

Sharon Rusu, Head of Office, UNISDR Regional Office for Africa

Sylvie Montembault, Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Coordinator, Judith Munyao,

National Disaster Risk Advisor, European Commission- DG for humanitarian aid and civil protection (ECHO), Regional Support Office

Chris Brewer, DRR Africa Advisor, Norwegian Red Cross,

Pierre Gelas, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, OCHA Eastern Africa, Nairobi

Anthony Morland, IRIN News

John Oduor, CEO, NDMA and Izzy Birch, NDMA (Consultant seconded by DFID)

James Mwangi, Manager, Disaster Management, Kenya Red Cross

Aisja Frenken, Regional DRR Advisor, FAO

Abdi Nur Elmi, CARE International In Kenya, National Emergency Coordinator

Agnes Shihemi, Social Protection Advisor, ADESO AFRICA

#### Geneva

Jesper Lund, Chief, Surge Capacity Logistics Section (SCLS) Emergency Services Branch (ESB), OCHA Geneva

Jessica Alexander, Policy Analysis and Innovation Section (PAIS), Policy Development and Support Branch (PDSB), OCHA

Neil Buhne, Director, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Geneva Liaison Office, UNDP

Simon Eccleshall, Head, Disaster and Crisis Management, IFRC

Elise Baudot Queguiner, Legal Counsel, Legal Department, IFRC

Charles-Antoine Hofmann, Coordinator, DRD Initiative,

Lars Peter Nissen, Director, Assessments Capacities Project, Geneva

Anne de Riedmatten, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva

Nan Buzard, Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies

Tristan Slade, Counsellor, Permanent Mission to the UN of Australia in Geneva

Saeed Al Marazeeq, Permanent Mission to the UN to the UAE in Geneva

Abdullatif Fahfah, Permanent Mission to the UN to the UAE in Geneva

Göksel Gökçe, Permanent Mission to the UN of Turkey in Geneva

Marie-Louise Wegter, First Secretary, Permanent Mission to the UN of Denmark in Geneva

Mohammed Aamir Khan, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN in Geneva

Acep Somantri, Permanent Mission to the UN of Indonesia in Geneva

Saori Hamaguchi, Permanent Mission to the UN of Japan to the UN in Geneva

Vivian Talash, Permanent Mission to the UN of Kenya in Geneva

Victoria Romero, Permanent Mission to the UN of Mexico in Geneva

Shaoie Johnnette M. Agduma, Permanent Mission to the UN of the Philippines in Geneva

Claudia Nambinina Rakotondrahanta, Permanent Mission to the UN of Madagascar in Geneva

### **Telephone**

Samir Elhawary, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, OCHA, Regional Office for the Middle East And North Africa

Oliver Lacey-Hall, Head of Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, OCHA

Kaisorn Thantathep, Deputy Director General, Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change, Lao People's Democratic Republic

Larry Maramis, Director, Socio-Cultural Community Department, ASEAN

Kirsten Knutson, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Head, Regional Partnerships Unit OCHA, BKK

Rachel Scott, Senior Humanitarian Advisor, OECD, Paris

Mags Bird, Programme Co-ordinator, VOICE, Brussels

Aimee Na Nan, Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM), BKK

Sunny Jegillos, UNDP, Bangkok

## Annex 4

### List of definitions

The following list includes a number of terms used in this study. The definition provided here are to explain the meaning or understanding of the terms as the authors used them in the study.

#### **Humanitarian response**

Humanitarian response is one dimension of humanitarian action. It focuses on the provision of assistance in a given emergency situation. The term “response” refers to the provision of emergency services and public assistance during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Disaster response**

A sum of decisions and actions taken during and after disaster, including immediate relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.<sup>3</sup> It is often used inter-changeably with humanitarian response, but disaster response could be provided by non-humanitarian actors, such as the military.

#### **Affected government or affected state**

The term affected government is used to describe the government of the country in which a crisis has occurred.<sup>4</sup> The difference between the terms government and state is that the government is an instrument in the service of the state (which itself is composed of a territory, a population and a public authority).<sup>5</sup>

#### **Affected populations or affected communities**

Populations or affected populations refers to individuals and groups such as families and communities affected by disaster or crisis.<sup>6</sup>

#### **New/emerging/non-traditional humanitarian actors**

The terms new, emerging or non-traditional humanitarian actors used in this study refer to, on the one hand “non-Western” donors (such as China, Brazil, Turkey, Saudi-Arabia)<sup>7</sup> and on the other hand it refers to other actors that do not have humanitarian

assistance as their central mission (such as the military or the private sector).

#### **National**

Relating to or characteristic of a nation; common to a whole nation.<sup>8</sup> In the context of this paper it is used to describe those actors that are affected by a disaster as different from international actors who come to assist in the response.

#### **International**

The term refers to existing, occurring, or carried on between nations.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Foreign**

Of, from, in, or characteristic of a country or language other than one’s own.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Humanitarian system or Humanitarian enterprise**

The term describes the network of national and international provider agencies, donors and host-government authorities that are functionally connected to each other in the humanitarian endeavour and that share common overarching goals, norms and principles. The system also includes actors that do not have humanitarian assistance as their central mission but play important humanitarian roles, such as military and private-sector entities.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Humanitarian community**

The term describes national and international agencies, organisations, donors that provide humanitarian assistance and adhere to the same principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Adherence to these principles reflects a measure of accountability of the humanitarian community.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Collaboration/cooperation**

The action of working with someone to produce something, used interchangeably with cooperation, which is defined as the action or process of working together to the same end.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Coordination**

Coordination in humanitarian assistance is an approach based on the belief that a coherent response to an emergency will maximize its benefits and minimizes potential pitfalls.<sup>14</sup>



## Relationship

The way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected.<sup>15</sup>

## Partnership

The term refers to a relationship of mutual respect between autonomous organisations that is founded upon a common purpose with defined expectations and responsibilities. Partners can be small, community-based organisations or large national or international institutions. A partnership is one in which two or more bodies agree to combine their resources to provide essential services or goods to project participants.<sup>16</sup>

## Annex Footnotes

1. See Harvey, P. and Harmer, A.: "Building trust, challenges for national authorities and international aid agencies in working together in times of disasters," Background Paper 1 DRD, September 2011. This paper can serve as a baseline as it identifies many of the relevant perennial issues.
2. The SPHERE handbook glossary : <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=H&page=2>
3. Reliefweb glossary of Humanitarian Terms: [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4F99A3C28EC37D0EC12574A4002E89B4-reliefweb\\_aug2008.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4F99A3C28EC37D0EC12574A4002E89B4-reliefweb_aug2008.pdf)
4. Global Humanitarian Assistance glossary: <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/data-guides/glossary>
5. Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland: <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/topics/intla/cintla/recco.html>
6. The SPHERE handbook glossary: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=P&page=1>
7. Binder, A., Meier, C. (2012) *Opportunity Knocks: Why Non-Western Donors Enter Humanitarianism and How to Make the Best of it*, International Review of the Red Cross, 93 (884), pp. 1135-1149. [http://www.gppi.net/fileadmin/media/pub/2012/Binder-Meier\\_2012\\_IRRC\\_Non-western-humanitarian-donors.pdf](http://www.gppi.net/fileadmin/media/pub/2012/Binder-Meier_2012_IRRC_Non-western-humanitarian-donors.pdf)
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12. OCHA Glossary of Humanitarian terms: <http://un-interpreters.org/glossaries/ocha%20glossary.pdf>
13. Oxford English Dictionary: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/collaboration>
14. Reliefweb Glossary of Humanitarian Terms: [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4F99A3C28EC37D0EC12574A4002E89B4-reliefweb\\_aug2008.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4F99A3C28EC37D0EC12574A4002E89B4-reliefweb_aug2008.pdf)
15. Oxford English Dictionary: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/relationship>
16. Humanitarian Accountability Partnership : <http://www.hapinternational.org/who-we-are/about-us/faqs-about-hap-and-accountability.aspx>



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