Regional Meeting of NGO Coordination Consortia

Bangkok, Thailand

22-23 October 2015
Thursday 22 October

Session 1: Overview of ICVA Strategy and the Asia Regional Hub

The role of ICVA’s Asia hub was highlighted, with particular reference to how it has been able to support and ought to continue to support NGOs at country-level. In general, the forum coordinators greatly welcomed an acknowledgement that ICVA has a role to play at country-level and that in 2016, there is a plan to include more opportunities for the Regional Representative to spend more time in countries, working with members and NGO Forums on improved NGO representation; NGO coordination and partnerships. Of particular relevance was advocacy for improved NGO representation on Humanitarian Country Teams.

Three examples were presented from the NGO Forums of HCT representation:

- **Bangladesh**: there are two mechanisms in humanitarian coordination - HCTT (Humanitarian Country Task Team) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).
There is no presentation of local NGOs in HCT and it is not mandatory to report back to the HCT. There is a need for partnership between INGOs and NNGOs to improve representation broadly on issues but also in particular with respect to representation.

There is a gap of mutual accountable partnership in the country amongst NGOs. If partnership could be encouraged, it was felt that INGOs and local NGOs would better be able to work collectively on representation issues, particularly improving national NGO engagement in the HCT.

- **Myanmar**: LRC has experienced difficulties to convince the HCT to include local NGOs and they have not seen a willingness by the UN or INGOs to rebalance HCT to include national NGOs. The recent example of an HCT meeting convened to respond to the recent floods, local NGOs were not invited although the HCT members relied on local NGOs to provide information on the affected areas. A later HCT meeting was convened where UN OCHA invited local NGOs to observe and contribute to discussion as guests. In total 4 seats were allocated to national/ local NGOs. Many of the national agencies believe that the HCT is only willing to invite local NGOs, receive information on their programs but to exclude them in decision-making processes.

  It was also highlighted that OCHA recommended national and local NGOs to apply for the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) but provided no support for NGOs (many first time potential users of the ERF) guidance on the regulations.

- **Pakistan**: equal representation and status of INGOs and NNGOs should be guaranteed in the HCT.

ICVA reminded all participants that they continue to work with HCTs and NGO forums to include national/local NGOs, including advocating at country, regional and global levels.

**Session 2: NGO coordination explored**

**Four NGO fora** were asked to prepare briefings that highlighted on their governance structures, membership management and activities focused on coordination (during emergencies).
Local Resource Centre Myanmar (LRC)

LRC was launched in 2008, following Cyclone Nargis, to enable better coordination between local and international NGOs and advocate on behalf of local groups. After the Nargis operation, LRC shifted its focus from disaster response to the development of indigenous CSOs. Although it is gradually transforming to a development agency, it regularly reactivates as a humanitarian coordinator when needed, such as in response to the recent floods. LRC operates through a head office in Yangon and 3 regional centers – Mon, Shan and Mandalay states. LRC is currently conducting mapping exercise of CSOs capacities and needs in Mon and Kayin states.

With respect to NGO registration in Myanmar, it is estimated that around 10,000 NGOs are in the country. Currently 3,000 are registered but many remain unregistered due to several reasons such as high cost of the registration (500 USD) and long process of registration; it may take up to 2-3 years for registration. Myanmar introduced a new Association Registration Law (Registration Law) which was enacted on 25 June 2014. The Registration law established a revised legal framework for the establishment of both local and international NGOs and associations.

Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR)

ACBAR was created in 1988 in response to the demand from aid agencies and international donors for a coordinated approach to humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. ACBAR hold a large membership: 135 NGOs (65 of which are international NGOs) working in Afghanistan. ACBAR provides a platform for NGOs, UN agencies, the Afghan government, and the donor community to exchange information, share expertise and establish guidelines for a more coordinated, efficient and effective use of resources for aid to Afghan people. Its activities have focused on information sharing to its members and the aid community.

General Assembly of the ACBAR meets twice a year to review budget, strategies and plans of the organization. During the General Assembly, all members of ACBAR are represented by their Country Directors or their formal delegates. The Steering Committee is elected and all annual documents are approved in the General Assembly. The Steering Committee consists of 15 members who meet on a monthly basis. The Committee works to monitor, inform, guide, direct and assist the work of ACBAR. ACBAR has four core meetings – directors’ meetings, advocacy working group, Afghan Development Forum (ADF), and Afghan Humanitarian Forum (AHF).
Monthly ADF provides a platform of communication between the Government and NGOs.

ACBAR’s members face a variety of problems, in particular issues related to tax. Thus ACBAR’s Capacity Building Department supports specific demand for NGO training including tax, human resources, and humanitarian principles. Recently ACBAR initiated a four year Twinning Program where Afghan NGOs are trained by INGOs to carry out assessment on protection, WASH, food security, health and nutrition; and to properly submit grants.

Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT)

CCSDPT was established in 1975 as a communications network for NGOs to exchange information and to discuss their work. CCSDPT coordinated their efforts and assisted in representing the membership’s interests to the Royal Thai Government, international organizations and embassies. Its monthly meetings attended by NGOs, international organization and interested embassies serve as a source of information on the current refugee situation as well as the coordinating point for refugee services and the exchange of technical viewpoint. Current membership is 19 and activities are now focused primarily on working with displaced persons from Myanmar. CCSDPT is funded by contributions from the membership and subscription from international organizations and embassies.

Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF)

The PHF was formed in 2003 as a coordination forum, after needs for increased partnership working and information sharing between NGOs was identified during the earthquake in the northern areas in 2002. It has 59 members and works as an independent coordinating forum that supports and facilitates the work of INGOs to effectively address the humanitarian and development needs across Pakistan.

PHF has a five-year strategy that reflects PHF’s mission and vision. Its mission is to represent, coordinate and advocate on behalf of NGOs to meet humanitarian and development needs. PHF has three main activities: safety and security; coordination and information; and advocacy and policy. PHF also engage with donors and governments; 75% of the PHF’s work is focused on building partnership with the government. PHF itself is unregistered, which allows the organization to be outspoken.
General Q&A and Exchange

Following the introduction of the four different NGO fora, questions regarding the work between humanitarian and development were raised by the participants. PHF informed that it holds regular coordination meetings for INGOs and partners on the key humanitarian, development and operational issues. It further went on to explain that the secretariat is guided by the executive committee. CCSDPT emphasized the mandate of Thai authorities in the case of emergency such as influx of refugees from neighboring countries. For example, CCSDPT explained that NGOs were excluded in the case of Rohingya arrivals this year following the Andaman Sea crisis. It also raised concerns on silence of NGOs in terms of engagement and participation.

LRC noted the difficulties in drawing a clear line between development and humanitarian affairs for local and national NGOs. ACBAR acknowledged the importance of closing the gap between development and humanitarian affairs and noting NGOs’ voices as a leading the way in Afghanistan with UN and government following their guidance.

Session 3: Power dynamics of NGO coordination

The Session focused on issues which arise in all fora and networks: organizing around collective action, how best to service our membership, registration of membership fees, and representation or decision-making.

- What is the best way to have a collective voice at global and central level, not undermining local level? How to make collective statements? Who takes responsibilities when releasing collective/private statements? Participants have faced difficulties to get members to engage in the process and their silent voices. They also emphasized the importance to get the message sustained. Managing transparency and accountability is another challenge faced by the participants.
• APRRN provided a model of representation for public statements which relies on 3 types of **statement processes** to ensure transparency: general statement, urgent statement (which does not require consultation with the complementarity) and solidarity statement (which allows the executive director to make decisions on joint statements)

**Session 4: Linkages with other coordination mechanisms (led by APRRN)**

APRRN is a network of 250 civil society organizations and individuals from over 26 countries in the Asia Pacific region. APRRN's members include members of refugee communities, community-based refugee organizations, service providers, human rights advocacy groups, research institutions, and law firms that provide legal aid. The majority of APRRN members are civil society groups working within local contexts, lobbying their governments for changes in policies and legislation to protect the rights of refugees. APRRN has 9 working groups; 4 geographic working groups (Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, East Asia, South Asia, and South-east Asia) and 5 thematic working groups (immigration detention, legal aid and advocacy, right to health, statelessness, and women & girls at risk). Each working group works according to action plans. In terms of funding, certain geographical and thematic working groups are preferred by donors such as Southeast Asia and South Asia (rather than East Asia) and immigration detention center (rather than legal aid). APRRN uses a variety of tools such as use of google groups and **face-to-face interactions** for effective partnership and communications among its members. It is also important to build close partnerships with members who are not part of the core working groups.

**Other contributions on the use of Member-led Working Groups included:**

Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) has national working groups that have annual and ad hoc meetings. All members of the working groups have annual plans and responsibilities to report their outputs to the Secretariat. The Secretariat delivers outcomes from the working groups to the Boarding Members.

PHF has working groups of finance, Afghan refugees and safety & security.

Cash Learning Partnerships (CaLP) has cash working groups for establishment of principles, mechanisms and joint efforts. CaLP is also trying to establish virtual and remote platforms for better partnerships among members.
Other ways to enhance members’ engagement such as providing training and assuring transparency and accountability between member groups were discussed in the session.

Friday 23 October

Session 1: Introduction to OCHA Regional coordination for 2016

For the next few years the Office will focus on high priority countries and large scale emergencies as small emergencies are usually handled by the governments in the region. Governments in the region are capable of handling emergencies and they are willing to cooperate with other stakeholders. However, when in emergencies, governments are not in response and the work is conducted by the communities or CBOs. As a small office, OCHA Regional Office cannot reach out to national or even to regional NGOs. The Office welcomes opinions or suggestions from NGOs and Networks.

The Office urges NGOs to advocate for inclusion and response. It also urges different stakeholders to discuss what is needed, what the international community can offer, and how all stakeholders can coordinate in case of emergencies. The Office recommends localization, speed, volume of response and review of best practices.

One of the challenges is that the “international response has not responding on the basis of needs in emergencies but on their own needs.” Humanitarian Reform has not been effective in terms of immediate needs. OCHA works in priority according to five clusters – food, health, shelter, WASH and NFI. There is a need to discuss what is the best method to deliver these assistance, who should be involved in delivering assistance and how we can coordinate (coordination structure).

General Q & A and Exchange

OCHA’s work in DRR Community: Yes and no. The more DRR progresses, the smaller OCHA get involves. OCHA’s contribution has to be effective.
Not equal representation of national and international NGOs in the HCT in Pakistan: the issue of inclusion is faced by most of the countries. National NGOs should consider if there is a necessity to be included in the HCT.

**Localization in complex emergencies, not in natural disasters:** globally, 80% of OCHA’s work is involved in complex emergencies. OCHA’s fundamental idea of the structure and system is focused on complex emergencies.

**No presence of OCHA Office in Bangladesh:** Bangladesh has strong networks of NGOs. Government has also actively involved in emergencies.

**LRC:** inclusion of local NGOs in the HCT is still important for effective coordination with governments and OCHA. Inclusion of NGOs is ensured at the global level but it has not reached out to the national level. For instance, after the recent floods that covered 2/3 of Myanmar, local NGOs were immediately deployed to the affected areas and finished needs assessment while it took one week for OCHA to get involved. OCHA later requested the LRC to call four NGOs to represent the HCT. OCHA was not aware of the work of local NGOs. OCHA needs better **coordination and constant communications with NGOs**, which has not been seen in Myanmar so far.

**OCHA:** in terms of coordination, the current structure is not reflective of the community needs. There is a need to start with the community, not responders. Also, there should be coordination among local NGOs regarding which organizations will represent the HCT.

**OCHA and INGOs as a part of localization:** OCHA is considered as added values in localization. Localization can be a threat and opportunity at the same time. It requires change. In middle income countries, there is power politics between governments and other actors and the issue of corruption and politicization. Localization should be as local as possible and as international as necessary. OCHA views that INGOs UN can be local. **Meaningful localization and assuring accountability** are key points. Meaningful localization is much better understanding of the needs and the situation of the communities including local vulnerabilities, markets, and cultural and political dynamics in peace time as well as in response. **(due diligence)**
Private sectors in inclusive partnership: Key groups of WHS are military and private sectors. These sectors are part of response planning and meaningful contribution. However, some governments are unwilling to include the civil society in the process.

**Session 2: NGO Coordination**

Although national NGOs are well aware of the situation on the ground there is no methodology for them to report effectively. There is a need for standardization of information sharing and strategic planning, ensuring mutual and clear understanding between the UN and NGOs.

**Effective resource mobilization and operational coordination:**

ADRRN approaches member countries to response to the affected countries such as Nepal or Haiyan in the Philippines with close coordination with the line ministries. It also engages with the civil society. However, civil society is not well aware of the cluster system. There is need for more effective coordination of information sharing.

Myanmar NGOs on humanitarian affairs and development have bi-weekly meetings and Myanmar Network Contingency Planning Response composed of NGOs that are working on humanitarian affairs.

In case of NGOs working for refugees in Thailand, CCSDPT organizes meetings with the NGOs in local languages including Karen and Burmese for planning and preparedness. However, translation process is sometimes time-consuming.

Philippines has strong local involvement in the case of Haiyan but local NGOs are weak in humanitarian principles.

Bangladesh has a system of consultative group where donors also meet with the civil society. However certain countries including India are not willing to participate in the group.

**Session 3: Global Protection Cluster and GBV intervention in humanitarian action**

Global Protection Cluster
Strategic Framework 2016-2019 has two objectives – increased support to the field and global engagement on protection issues. Current contexts of the cluster are development progress, governance failures (Arab Spring), funding, transnational crimes, rural-urban migration, climate change, and environmental degradation.

It is suggested that there should be **South-South coordination** such as Bangladesh and Pakistan for people on the move due to urbanization and climate change. In addition, protection cluster or gender based approach is not familiar to the participants. Online platform to learn about protection cluster is suggested.

Protection of returnees: as 70% of the displaced persons are from or reside in Muslim countries, there has been a debate whether it should be discussed in Muslim or Asian context. One challenge of the cluster system is NGOs’ little participation or contribution. It is recommended that participants share the information on the cluster system, receive feedback from their members and **provide feedback to GPC Simon Russell by the end of November 2015**.

**Guidelines for integrating gender-based violence intervention in humanitarian action**

Key changes from the 2005 guidelines: reflect changes in humanitarian architecture since 2005 (clusters); recommendations arranged according to humanitarian program cycle; ‘essential’ rather than minimum standards; provide suggested indicators; target audience – primarily non-specialists; can be used as a mainstreaming tool to make current programing safer and more effective; address risks across all humanitarian contexts including disasters, not restricted to sexual violence; and incorporate lessons learned from implementation of 2005 guidelines.

The guidelines propose to assist humanitarian actors and communities affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies to coordinate, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate essential actions from the prevention and mitigation of GBV across all sectors of humanitarian response. ([www.gbvguidelines.org](http://www.gbvguidelines.org))

Distribution and translation: the guidelines are being translated into the UN official languages. Difference from Sphere standards: main bodies of Sphere standards are UNHCR, UNICEF and UNFPA. The guidelines aim to link to the already existing standards while not duplicating the current workloads.
Session 4: Conclusion and next steps

What should/could ICVA do for NGO fora in 2016:

- Provide training on NGO coordination role (peer to peer), membership opportunities and different presentation tools;
- Provide manual of knowledge management for coordination bodies;
- Coordinate training and joint meetings between local NGOs and local governments – share best practices;
- Community of practice for NGO forum – modify website to be more interactive, provide mailing list, common directory and list of participants
- Initiate a local level consultative meeting post WHS and appoint an external NGO to play a leading role;
- Serve as partnership broker in country between stakeholders;
- Trade buy-in from larger (UN) agencies on potential IASC/global changes and the impact in the country;
- Guide the process to follow on the NNGO/INGO fora development and merger;
- Continue the advocacy on PoP;
- Continue the presentation of the inclusion of local NGOs and the global process;
- Promote partnerships and engage among local CSOs, governments and regional bodies including ASEAN and APG;
- Provide structured training for network coordinators on a regular basis;
- Package to support ‘networking’ on humanitarian response for national actors including local level governments and private sectors;
- Manage trainings for network improvements including how to be represent as a network;
- Platform development for CoP and interactive exchange;
- Learning models for sharing across networks including NNGOs, multi-sector stakeholders;
- CSO participatory audit – sample development and manual to improvement;
- Review the gaps for engaging with political powers;
- Coordinate exchange program;
- Initiate mapping of ICVA members’ activities and contact details according to 4Ws. Develop common data sets and interoperability. Contact UN or other agencies to seek for other existing mapping projects. Joint project is suggested; and
- Understand different donor funding cycles and the impact on NGO budget.
Participating NGO Consortia

1. Act Alliance representing ALWG Myanmar
2. Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR)
3. Asia Disaster Risk and Response Network (ADRRN)
4. Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
5. Australia Council for International Development (ACFID)
6. Bangladesh National NGOs
7. Cash Learning Partnerships (CaLP)
8. Caucus of Development NGO Networks - Philippines (CODE-NGO)
9. Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displace Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT)
10. HCCT Sub Committee on Emergencies – Bangladesh
11. Humanitarian Forum Indonesia (HFI)
12. INGO Forum Myanmar
13. Japanese NGO Centre for International Cooperation (JANIC)
14. Korean NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC)
15. Local Resource Centre – Myanmar (LRC)
16. Nak Akphivath Sahakum – Cambodia (NAS)
17. National Humanitarian Network – Pakistan (NHN)
18. Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF)
19. Statelessness Network Pakistan