National NGO Humanitarian Financing Position Paper

National NGOs in Zimbabwe have been following developments in humanitarian financing in-country and have come to conclude that:

a) At global international level, NGOs are estimated to receive a quarter of their finances directly from humanitarian funds of donor governments;
b) Some international NGOs rely on national NGOs as implementing partners;
c) NGOs are financed in a manner that reflects and reinforces their divergent perspectives;
d) Humanitarian funds flow bilaterally through NGOs, mostly a handful of largest NGOs;
e) Donor funding for humanitarian assistance is accessed by national NGOs through international NGOs where they act as implementing partners in Zimbabwe;
f) Donors feel comfortable to fund human rights activities directly through national NGOs but not humanitarian assistance;
g) Many donor governments are channeling more aid through NGOs, resulting in closer relations between donors and NGOs, a factor that has cemented their relationships.

National NGOs acknowledge that learning and mastering the art of humanitarian assistance has not been easy and therefore, there is great need for capacity development for NNGOs. The undersigned NGOs also note that they occupy an important space in humanitarian assistance and have an important role to play as first responders as they are closer to the community than INGOs. It is noted by NNGOs that funding for emergencies goes to the big international NGOs despite these NNGOs participating in assessments. The latters appreciate the role INGOs, and some donors have played in building their capacities for emergency response and general management of relief operations and finances.

None donor funding channeled towards NNGOs has left them in a comatose situation as they depend on INGOs and UN agencies for funding humanitarian assistance. In most cases, when they receive funding through INGOs, they are left in a worse off position than before getting the funding. NNGOs remain indebted to the INGOs making it difficult for the two to mix resulting in implicit antagonism. There is an inherent power imbalanced between a recipient NGO and a funding partner, which usually puts the former in a subordinate position that may negatively skew the partnership arrangement. As a result coordination between national and international NGOs has remained an ideal yet to be achieved. This does not only affect the effectiveness of coordination but also the quality of assistance offered including accountability to the affected populations.

National NGOs are therefore calling upon the humanitarian sector, particularly donors to improve partnership in humanitarian assistance by:

a) Treating NGOs equally though differentially regardless of whether they are national or not;
b) Provide unconditional capacity support to NNGOs for them to master the art of humanitarian assistance;
c) Mentor NGO leaders to take on humanitarian coordination leadership positions;
d) Change policy framework that prohibits humanitarian funding to NNGOs and provide direct humanitarian donor funding to NNGOs in-country;
e) Promote NGO First-Responder concept in Zimbabwe for greater involvement of NNGOs in humanitarian assistance.