Section 9: Good Governance and NGO Performance

The Importance of Good Governance in NGO Coordination

The Steering Committee and Secretariat are perceived as more representative by external actors: the Steering Committee as an elected body, and the Secretariat as an independent non-operational body. This does not necessarily reflect the views of Forum members themselves, who have expressed concern that their voice may not be represented through Forum channels (South Sudan Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field).

Previously, accountability between the Steering Committee and the Forum could be characterised as relatively weak, with the Forum meeting only monthly to receive information from SC members and therefore not included in many of their discussions (Sudan Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field).

Without an in-country steering committee for the NCSO, there was no local supervision of NCSO activities. In the absence of any field-based mechanism to express any favour or discontent, INGOs made comments to their headquarters or affiliate networks, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and ICVA (Haiti Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field).

For the last 10 years, the ExCom has been chaired by World Vision, Care, and Oxfam, resulting in some criticism that AIDA is "run by white northerners". (oPT Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field).

If NGOs are going to promote greater performance and accountability in the humanitarian system, they first need to demonstrate these same principles in the management of their own coordination mechanisms. This demonstration is particularly important when an NGO coordination body is perceived to represent the views of NGOs in a country. Such principles or rules to manage NGO coordination mechanisms are most often found in their Terms of Reference, Statutes, or Bylaws.

Examples of Good Governance Promotion

- In Afghanistan and Iraq, local NGOs have formal representation in governance structures.
- In oPT, a representative of a smaller NGO is always in the Steering Committee.
- In Afghanistan, oPT, and Iraq, the Steering Committee is comprised of elected members who are rotated on fixed terms.
- In Myanmar, representation of NGOs in the Humanitarian Country Team has
both fixed and rotating members, but the agencies always represents the interests of an inclusive international NGO Forum.

- In Iraq, South Sudan, and Somalia, the Secretariat is accountable to the in-country Steering Committee.
- In Iraq, oPT, South Sudan, and Somalia, NGO coordinating bodies commission public and independent evaluations.

**Key Considerations for Good Governance of NGO Coordination Bodies**

Translating the key principles of the [2010 Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) Standard in Accountability and Management](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/default/files/2010_Standard.pdf) (systems/structures, information and transparency, participation, complaints and feedback systems, evaluation and learning) into internal processes of NGO coordination bodies involves considering the following questions:

**Members**
- Who are the members?
- How are they chosen?

**Decision-Making**
- How will decisions be made and how will they be enforced?
- Who will make decisions and how will they be chosen?

**Governance**
- How will governance bodies be held accountable and, if necessary, members removed/replaced?

**Information**
- What information must be shared with which members and how frequently?
- How will this information be shared?

**Representation**
- How will participation or representation in non-NGO meetings be decided (rotational, nominated, fixed representation, depending on the subject)?
- How will information be fed back to members and decisions taken by the broader membership?
- Who will participate (members/non-members) in meetings and what rights/privileges do they have?

**Secretariat Staff**
- If staff are employed, e.g. Secretariat, who will be responsible for managerial and financial oversight?
- If there are staff, what are their necessary competencies? What are their terms of reference (TORs)?
- How will staff be disciplined and if necessary removed/replaced?

**Feedback and Complaints**
- How will stakeholders provide feedback and how will complaints be handled?

**Evaluation**
- How will the NGO coordination body be evaluated?
Promoting Quality, Accountability, and Performance through NGO Coordination

Accountability, quality, and performance are increasingly being looked at in humanitarian response. NGOs have been at the forefront on leading many of the quality and accountability initiatives, such as the Sphere Project, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, and the ECB Good Enough Guide, the Joint Standards Initiative, etc. In recent years, the introduction of the humanitarian reform process and the transformative agenda have started to put quality, accountability, and performance higher on the agenda of UN agencies, particularly through the IASC.

Increased NGO coordination may improve both collective and individual accountability through:

1. Promoting collective accountability, lately through constructively engaging in the IASC “transformative agenda” that includes a “step-change” in how the diverse elements of the humanitarian system (HCs, UN agencies, clusters, donors, and NGOs) can account to each other. Country implementation is now getting underway (see: http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info);

2. Establishing or adopting standards or principles specific to NGOs, and monitoring and enforcing adherence to standards. This latter approach has been used particularly in countries where humanitarian and military operations are implemented simultaneously and the humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence are threatened. The development of joint codes of conduct is one way to promote principles and standards in a country; and

3. Advocating for, participating in, and providing technical assistance in implementing practical measures to increase accountability to disaster-affected populations, such as shared complaints mechanisms.

Depending on a collective NGO analysis of the needs and priorities to improve any specific humanitarian response, NGO coordination mechanisms may choose to prioritise improving quality and accountability.
Reference and Further Reading

- **Principles of Partnership**
- **Accountability Library at the One World Trust**
- **Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief**
- **Developing a Code of Conduct for NGOs**
- **Cragg, L. (20130). *Mapping Exercise on Quality & Accountability Initiatives*, Joint Standards Initiative.**
- **Quality and Accountability Initiatives: Questions and Answers**
- **The International NGO Accountability Charter**

Initiatives

- **Do No Harm of the CDA Collaborative Learning Project**
- **Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC)**
- **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP)**
- **Joint Standards Initiative**
- **Quality COMPAS**
- **Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response**
- **Synergie Qualité: Coordination Sud Groupe Q & A (Quality and Accountability)**
- **The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)**
- **The Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)**
- **The Sphere Project**

For improving the management of human resources in humanitarian emergencies

- **Bioforce**
- **People In Aid**
- **RedR**