When is Exclusivity in NGO Coordination Justified?

A common dilemma in emergencies is whether NGO coordination should be inclusive or exclusive, e.g. limited to a certain number or type of NGO. This obviously depends on the context and objectives of NGO coordination and derives from the initial needs assessment or problem and response analysis described in Section 4. The key here is not that one is better than the other, but how NGOs that coordinate among themselves relate to the greater humanitarian effort, again reiterating the principles of equality and transparency.

The questions below derive from nine country case studies in NGO coordination are presented for discussion and reflection:

- Will the inclusion of certain NGOs compromise neutrality and independence?
  - See Iraq case study.
- Does impact depend on consensus and cohesiveness within the NGO community or rather expediency?
  - See Myanmar and Haiti case studies.
- Does NGO coordination have short- or long-term objectives that depend on inclusivity?
  - See Haiti and oPT case studies.
- What are other potential positive and negative impacts of exclusive NGO coordination? How can negative impacts be mitigated?
Sample Elements of Terms of Reference of Inclusive NGO Coordination Bodies

Combined Elements from the TORs of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) and the Myanmar Local Resource Centre (LRC), highlighting aspects of the LNGO/NNGO/INGO Relationship

- Facilitate information exchange between the IASC coordinating bodies and local NGOs and other civil society groups;
- Facilitate participation in clusters where appropriate; including ensuring a local NGO counterpart and liaison in each cluster responsible for sharing information and communication in local languages;
- Translate key documents and key messages from clusters and IASC meetings, ensuring hard copies of key documents are easily available, providing Internet services;
- Communicate through locally appropriate means in local languages, e.g. posting minutes of meetings in an easily accessible site, sending tweets of key messages, creating Facebook pages, etc.;
- Work with clusters, OCHA, and Humanitarian Information Centres (HICs) to ensure complete and accurate local NGO mailing lists;
- Facilitate other coordination by providing neutral meeting spaces in safe and accessible places;
- Advocate and conduct action research to ensure that the work of local organisations is acknowledged and understood;
- Joint policy and advocacy including the NGO Code of Conduct;
- Link local organisations to donor funds and technical expertise;
- Provide support to local NGOs in proposal writing, reporting and procuring supplies;
- Provide local NGOs with information and training on principles of disaster relief including codes of conduct, accountability to affected populations (HAP) and minimum standards (Sphere); and government relations and legal services.

References and Further Reading

- The Global Humanitarian Platform
- Humanitarian Partnerships: a review of recent experience
- The Humanitarian Forum
- More than Implementers: Civil Society in Complex Emergencies
- Changing Roles: Governments, NGOs and Donors
- Ambiguity and Change: Humanitarian NGOs Prepare for the Future
- INTRAC: Understanding the importance of civil society