

# POSITIVE DISRUPTION? CHINA'S HUMANITARIAN AID

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A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION



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Cover photo: Chinese ground staff load a plane with relief materials to Japan at the Beijing Capital International Airport in Beijing, China, 28 March 2011. Imaginechina Limited / Alamy Stock Photo.

Internal photos: Tianmen Mountain in Zhangjiajie, Hunan Province, China. xujun / Shutterstock.

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Established in 1962, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) is a global network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice. ICVA helps its members understand, engage and influence the humanitarian sector.

The Innovation Center for Risk Governance (ICRG) is an academic institution based at Beijing Normal University. The ICRG research team supports policy and strategy in disaster management, risk governance and resilience in China and Belt and Road countries through policy analysis, case studies and evaluation, and by promoting exchange of knowledge, tools and educational opportunities among partners including the United Nations, international NGOs, academia, civil society organisations and private sector in China.

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# INTRODUCTION

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**C**hina's global aid program is evolving and expanding prompting considerable interest from the international humanitarian sector. The China aid program allocated record amounts of funding to humanitarian contexts in 2017, and established a new aid agency – the China International Development Cooperation Agency – in 2018.

China's approach to humanitarian aid is different to traditional donors in terms of decision-making, funding processes and delivery. At the operational level, these differences can challenge existing norms and be a barrier for constructive dialogue between Chinese and traditional humanitarian actors in emergency response.<sup>1</sup> Understanding the differences, and mapping the challenges and opportunities, can support more effective engagement in the future, and ultimately better humanitarian outcomes.

Much attention has been paid to developments in Chinese aid. Most work examines the geopolitical, development aid and security policy angles, rather than the operational and policy implications for humanitarian aid. There is less understanding of how Chinese and traditional actors can engage on humanitarian reform.<sup>2</sup> This practice paper aims to address that gap by answering two questions:

**1 What challenges and opportunities**  
does China's approach offer for key humanitarian reform objectives?

**2 How can the opportunities be capitalised on** to improve impact for affected populations?

## About this paper

The first section gives a snapshot of Chinese humanitarian aid in the Asia-Pacific region. The second section examines the challenges and opportunities in relation to humanitarian reform in disaster contexts, including localisation, the humanitarian-development nexus, and diversifying resources. Finally, we suggest practical points of engagement for Chinese and traditional humanitarian actors. The scope of this paper is limited to operational engagement on humanitarian reform objectives; it does not consider broader geo-strategic issues in the region, human rights issues or conflict contexts.

This paper is part of the Humanitarian Horizons practice paper series, and intends to stimulate discussion and inform practice. It looks beyond business-as-usual approaches to humanitarian aid, focusing instead on practical issues of engagement.



# METHODOLOGY

This practice paper is based on interviews and a literature review of academic, policy, media and operational documents.

Interviews were conducted with academics, humanitarian practitioners, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the United Nations (UN), and government. The research was undertaken in cooperation with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the Innovation Center for Risk Governance at Beijing Normal University.

This report was co-authored by practitioners and academics with expertise in humanitarian action and Chinese aid.

Findings were tested with academics and experts working with China on humanitarian action.

## Terms and definitions

**Emerging donor:** a country which has become a substantial donor in the past 20 years, is either not on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Disaster Assistance Committee (DAC) or joined in the past decade, and received aid or development assistance in the recent past.<sup>3</sup> Examples include China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

**Traditional donor:** a country which is an established member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, with a track record of providing substantial development and humanitarian aid relative to GDP and contributing to international aid norms and standards. Examples include the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Japan.

These categories of donors are imperfect – they do not accurately reflect the long history of emerging donor assistance; for example, China began providing aid in 1950.<sup>4</sup> They are applied here in the absence of more appropriate terminology.



# CHINA DOES AID DIFFERENTLY

China's approach to humanitarian aid is fundamentally different from traditional humanitarian actors – from its conceptualisation to its delivery. This section provides an overview of key differences in the context of China's evolving approach to humanitarian aid. China established a new aid agency in 2018, the China International Development Cooperation Agency, with responsibility for policymaking, project approvals, coordination and funding management. While its impact on China's humanitarian aid is not yet clear, China appears to be engaging more multilaterally and funding responses to different types of humanitarian crises.

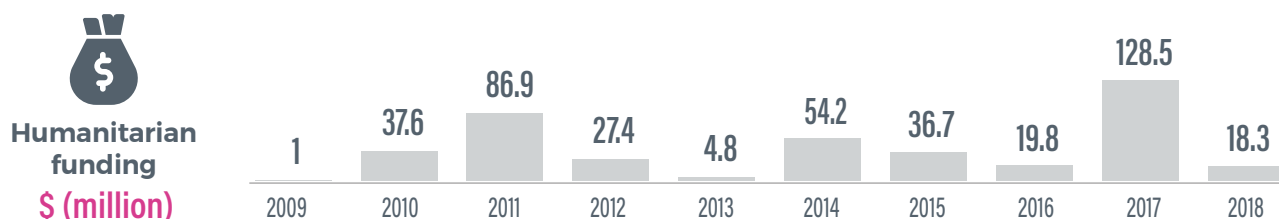
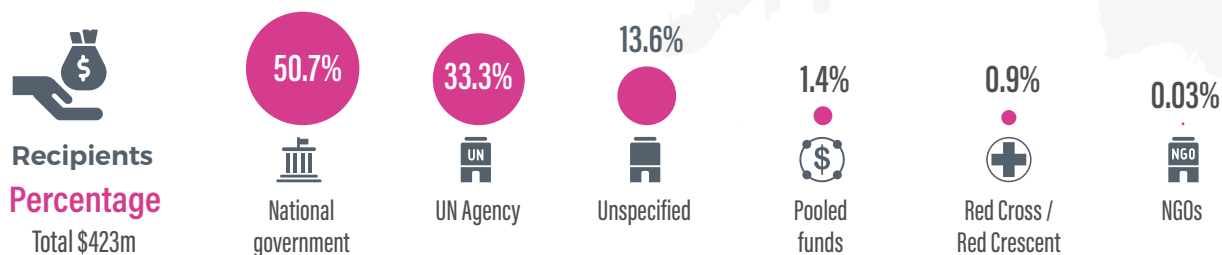
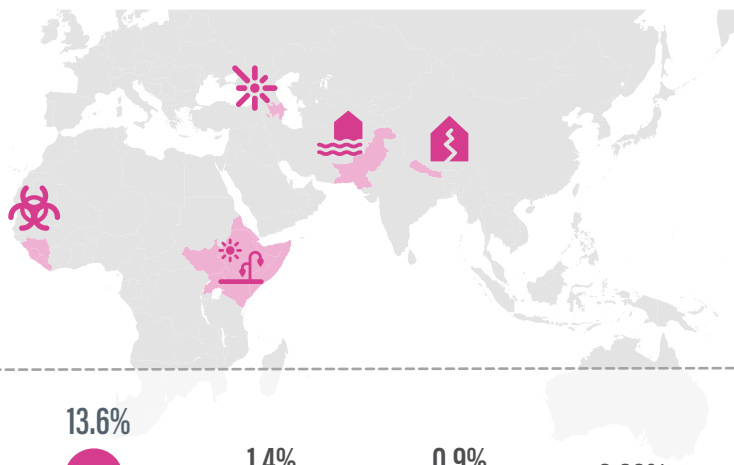
## A note on data

Information about China's humanitarian aid is often unavailable, even to some Chinese Government officials.<sup>5</sup> This report is based on publicly available data, supplemented by contextual information from interviews with representatives of Chinese NGOs and international actors who engage with China on humanitarian action.

## China's humanitarian aid over the past 10 years: how much and to whom?

Data drawn from the Financial Tracking Service for 2009-2018.<sup>6</sup> Figures are in \$USD.

### Top 5 crises funded



## At a glance: differences in humanitarian aid

 <b>Conceptual approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Traditional actors commonly treat humanitarian and development aid separately, while China conceptualises humanitarian aid as a <b>core part of its development aid</b>.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
 <b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ China is a significant humanitarian donor compared to non-DAC countries,<sup>8</sup> but not when compared to traditional donors. Its largest contribution to date occurred in 2017, constituting less than 1% of total reported humanitarian funding.<sup>9</sup></li> <li>▶ While traditional donors have public humanitarian policies and established national priorities that guide their allocation of humanitarian funding, China's contributions to humanitarian crises are more <b>ad hoc</b>.<sup>10</sup> Over the past 10 years China's annual humanitarian contributions have varied from US\$1 million to US\$129 million.<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>
 <b>Delivery modes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Traditional donors tend to provide humanitarian aid through multilateral and civil society partners; China has provided over half of its humanitarian aid <b>bilaterally</b>.<sup>12</sup></li> <li>▶ The Chinese Government predominantly <b>coordinates directly with host governments</b> rather than through the international humanitarian system.<sup>13</sup></li> </ul>
 <b>Disaster v crises</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ China's humanitarian aid <b>focuses on disaster response</b> rather than complex crises.<sup>14</sup></li> </ul>
 <b>Policy and strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There is <b>no commonly understood "system"</b> for Chinese humanitarian aid.<sup>15</sup> While a system has been described,<sup>16</sup> it is not always clear, even to some Chinese actors.<sup>17</sup></li> <li>▶ While many traditional donors have humanitarian policies, <b>China's policy is limited</b> to the obligation to provide humanitarian assistance; it does not outline how it does this. Known influences include South-South Cooperation,<sup>18</sup> China-Africa Cooperation, and Peripheral Diplomacy (prioritising near neighbours).<sup>19</sup></li> <li>▶ China's approach to disasters is more aligned with established international humanitarian norms than its approach to complex crises.<sup>20</sup></li> <li>▶ While China's interest in engaging in the formal international system is growing, it <b>does not actively participate in global humanitarian policy donor groups</b>, such as the Good Humanitarian Donorship Group, or OCHA Donor Support Group.</li> <li>▶ <b>Chinese NGOs are relatively new</b> to international humanitarian aid<sup>21</sup> and operate quite differently to NGOs from traditional donor countries (see text box on page 8).</li> </ul>
 <b>Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Traditional humanitarian actors have established approaches to quality. China's engagement on and use of these quality standards varies.</li> </ul>

## An interview with four Chinese civil society organisations

Beijing Peaceland Foundation, Blue Sky Rescue,  
Shenzhen Rescue Volunteers Federation and Green Boat  
Emergency Rescue

**A note:** Chinese civil society organisations are an integral part of China's domestic disaster management system. They are very diverse, as are their perspectives. This section seeks to provide insight into the perspectives of four NGOs with significant expertise in emergency rescue, community engagement and disaster risk reduction. They are actively seeking opportunities to support countries in need, particularly those participating in the Belt and Road Initiative and in the Asia-Pacific region.

**How they operate:** these NGOs work bilaterally, establishing links with the host country through overseas Chinese companies and the Chinese diaspora, which help with logistics, communication and translation, and coordination with the host governments and affected communities. This approach is seen as a more practical and effective way to deliver humanitarian action than engaging with the international system – while recognising its limits in relation to coordination.<sup>22</sup>

**Engaging with the international system:** they see value in engaging more with the international system to better understand it and its underpinning values and philosophies. They would like to find a way to communicate better with the international system. Their main barriers are a lack of human resources with the capacity to understand and communicate well with the international system,<sup>23</sup> and insufficient operational capacity to respond internationally. Only a small number of Chinese NGOs have these capacities.<sup>24</sup>

**Working with the Chinese Government:** these NGOs are operating largely in parallel with the Chinese Government, with minimal interaction or strategic guidance.<sup>25</sup> No government entity oversees Chinese NGOs' international humanitarian action.

### **Proposed opportunities to strengthen mutual understanding:**

- ✓ training on the international humanitarian system for Chinese NGOs<sup>26</sup>
- ✓ exchanging experiences on policy and practice – strengths and weaknesses<sup>27</sup>
- ✓ a partnership model that would allow for a Chinese NGO and international NGO to provide humanitarian assistance in an affected country together, as other NGOs have done.<sup>28</sup>



## ASIA-PACIFIC: CHINA'S HUMANITARIAN AID

The Asia-Pacific region has been a significant benefactor of China's humanitarian aid. 15.9 per cent of China's humanitarian funding has been directed to the region over the past decade.<sup>29</sup>

China is also active in regional fora. For example, it signed a memorandum of understanding with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2014 to build capacity to respond to regional disasters,<sup>30</sup> co-hosted the 2015 ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief Exercise, and has participated in and hosted regional conferences on strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR).<sup>31</sup>

### The Asia-Pacific advantage

The Asia-Pacific region benefits from many of China's approaches:

- ▶ Chinese policies on South-South Cooperation, and prioritisation of near neighbours<sup>32</sup>

- ▶ Its preference to respond to disasters resulting from naturally occurring hazards, to which the region is particularly prone
- ▶ Its participation in regional humanitarian architecture through ASEAN
- ▶ Its close alignment to international humanitarian norms in natural disaster response<sup>33</sup>
- ▶ Shared reform priorities – such as localisation and the importance of DRR.<sup>34</sup>

Despite international concerns about the influence of and motivations behind China's growing aid to the Asia-Pacific, it is not yet a major contributor to humanitarian aid in the Pacific, and even less so in Asia.

The following infographic demonstrates China's humanitarian aid to Asia for the five years from 2013 to 2017 sourced from the Financial Tracking Service.

### Comparing key donors: humanitarian aid to Asia 2013-17<sup>35</sup> *Figures are in \$USD.*

**\$1.9 billion**



US

**\$543 m**



Japan

**\$265 m**



Australia

**\$30 m**



China

### Chinese humanitarian aid to Asia 2013-17<sup>36</sup> *Figures are in \$USD.*



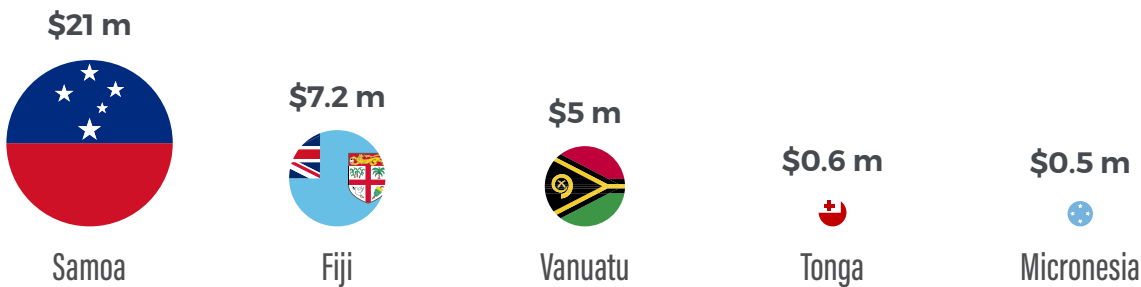
# Pacific

The Financial Tracking Service relies on governments to report their humanitarian contributions. The Lowy Institute takes an alternative approach, and has proactively identified aid contributions in the Pacific, with more detail on China's humanitarian aid.

To provide a more comprehensive sense of China's humanitarian aid in the Pacific, the data below is sourced from the Lowy Institute. This example also serves to illustrate the difficulty in sourcing accurate and complete data on China's humanitarian aid.

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## Chinese humanitarian aid to the Pacific top five countries 2013-17<sup>37</sup> *Figures are in \$USD.*



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## Comparing key donors: humanitarian aid to the Pacific 2013-17<sup>38</sup> *Figures are in \$USD.*



# LEVERAGING DISRUPTION FOR HUMANITARIAN REFORM

## How China can lend momentum towards key humanitarian reform initiatives

With its different approach to humanitarian aid, China has the potential to play a disruptive role in the international humanitarian system. This could create both challenges and opportunities for engagement on humanitarian reform initiatives.

Disruption is not always welcome; different ways of operating can challenge long-agreed standards and hinder communication and coordination, risking duplication and delays. However, it also encourages traditional actors to critically interrogate established ways of working.

This section identifies elements of China's humanitarian aid that could create momentum towards reform objectives. It focuses on three reform opportunities: localisation, bridging the humanitarian-development divide, and diversifying resources.<sup>39</sup>

**A caveat:** The intent behind China's international humanitarian practice is not clearly narrated. Academics and practitioners suggest that China's intent is not as strategic as some assume (at least, not yet).<sup>40</sup> It is, however, possible to learn from the impact of practice regardless of the intent behind it.

## LOCALISATION

The international humanitarian system has agreed to make principled humanitarian action as local as possible, and as international as necessary, reinforcing national capacities.<sup>41</sup>

While the international humanitarian system grapples with localising an entrenched, internationally dominated power structure and inflexible UN mandates, the Chinese

Government already supports the primacy of the host government in ways far beyond the practice of traditional actors. China provides over half of its humanitarian funding bilaterally.<sup>42</sup> Chinese actors also choose to coordinate directly with the national government or Chinese diaspora, often opting out of international coordination mechanisms not run by the national government.<sup>43</sup> This approach draws on China's South-South development partner identity.<sup>44</sup> While it may not be the embodiment of localisation envisioned by reform initiatives, it can strengthen responsiveness<sup>45</sup> and the power of national governments over humanitarian aid decisions.

China has contributed more than half of its reported humanitarian funding to 26 governments over the past 10 years, with the largest recipients being Ethiopia, Kenya and Pakistan.<sup>46</sup>

## Overview of China's bilateral aid to the Asia Pacific region 2009-2018<sup>47</sup>



to **26 GOVERNMENTS** over the past **10 years**



the **LARGEST** recipients being the Governments of



**Ethiopia**



**Kenya**



**Somalia**



**ASIA PACIFIC**  
recipients include:

- |            |                  |             |
|------------|------------------|-------------|
| Bangladesh | Mongolia         | Philippines |
| Cambodia   | Myanmar          | Samoa       |
| Fiji       | New Zealand      | Thailand    |
| Japan      | Pakistan         | Vanuatu     |
| Kyrgyzstan | Papua New Guinea |             |

## Localisation and the Chinese diaspora

The Chinese diaspora, local to their country of residence, provides a strong network for incoming Chinese aid actors, including NGOs. There is little money involved in the diaspora's humanitarian assistance, with much of the support – such as transportation, translation, lending of machinery – provided in kind. Chinese NGOs use the local diaspora to source what they need in country and as a risk control mechanism. The diaspora has a strong incentive to ensure that aid is perceived well by the local community, because they may be considered responsible if there are problems with Chinese aid.<sup>48</sup>



### OPPORTUNITIES:

- Learn from the success or otherwise of direct bilateral grants in supporting localisation
- Leverage China's practice to nationalise coordination mechanisms and to strengthen regional coordination mechanisms
- Learn from Chinese risk control mechanisms and test their effectiveness at ensuring standards and safeguards such as accountability to affected populations and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>49</sup>



### CHALLENGES

- China tends to localise to the level of the government, but not beyond. This raises questions about the relevance and quality of humanitarian aid that is not based on community consultation, and can conflict with humanitarian principles if the national government does not act in the best interest of affected populations<sup>50</sup>
- China tends to draw on its own expertise rather than build local capacity
- Coordinating bilaterally and separately from other major donors has resulted in duplication of in-kind goods in at least one crisis response.<sup>51</sup>

## STRENGTHENING THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

The international humanitarian system has agreed to work collaboratively across humanitarian and development aid on the basis of comparative advantage, in order to reduce humanitarian need and improve the effectiveness of international action.<sup>52</sup>

China's policy prioritises the importance of development to reduce humanitarian needs and displays a "strong preference for tying humanitarian assistance to long-term development".<sup>53</sup> It has been active globally for some time on DRR, and hosted the 2019 Silk-Road DRR and Sustainable Development Conference in Beijing.<sup>54</sup> The divide between humanitarian and development aid, which

the international system is trying so hard to repair, never happened in China.<sup>55</sup> It considers humanitarian aid geographically as part of its development objectives.

China's infrastructure projects, as part of its development aid in the Pacific, have supported the delivery of humanitarian assistance to remote areas of small islands previously unreachable by road. They have also linked communities and improved access to markets during and after crises. In the aftermath of Cyclone Pam in 2015, China's development presence allowed it to divert equipment from building roads on Tanna Island to help with the recovery.<sup>56</sup>



## OPPORTUNITIES:

- Identify and learn from the ways in which China's practice strengthens the humanitarian–development nexus and DRR
- Share lessons from traditional donors with the Chinese Government as it further develops its humanitarian structures, to help it avoid the pitfalls of establishing humanitarian and development aid silos<sup>57</sup>
- Explore China's ability to provide quick financing for early recovery and support visible ways of building post-disaster legitimacy for governments with local populations.<sup>58</sup>

## CHALLENGES:

- China's policy as it relates to the humanitarian-development nexus is less apparent in practice. Identify where and how this policy has been operationalised, and by which government ministries
- Explore how to work with China to strengthen the humanitarian–development nexus
- Coordinate with China to leverage its approach to better meet humanitarian need.

## DIVERSIFY RESOURCES AND INCREASE EFFICIENCY

As identified in the Agenda for Humanity, the international humanitarian system needs to diversify and increase its resources and galvanise new partnerships that bring additional capabilities.<sup>59</sup> China has the capacity to assist with additional resources and capabilities.

As outlined in the first section of this paper, the Chinese Government funds crises differently to the majority of traditional donors, in terms of:

- ▶ Geography – prioritising South–South Cooperation and Peripheral Diplomacy
- ▶ Type of crisis – prioritising natural disasters
- ▶ Modality – providing most aid directly to host governments
- ▶ Predictability – its funding is more ad hoc and less predictable than more traditional donors.

**“China has a parallel aid system that channels money to mostly friendly governments”<sup>60</sup> — NY Times 2016**

While the Chinese approach has resulted in criticisms that its humanitarian aid is preferential and not based on need,<sup>61</sup> it does mean that more funding is being provided to humanitarian response in locations neglected by traditional donors. This must result in gaps in humanitarian response being filled by Chinese aid – although it remains unclear which gaps, and whether aid is being duplicated.

China also offers diverse expertise and capability, drawing on extensive domestic experience, which is highly valued by nations experiencing catastrophic emergencies. It is particularly known for:

- ▶ Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) expertise<sup>62</sup> and Certified Emergency Medical Teams<sup>63</sup>
- ▶ Rapid response – for example, China was the first international team on the ground to respond to the Nepal earthquake in 2015<sup>64</sup>
- ▶ An extensive private sector with large capacity to assist, including with equipment<sup>65</sup>
- ▶ An NGO sector increasingly interested in supporting international humanitarian action.

This diverse availability and application of resources offers both opportunities and challenges to traditional actors:

## OPPORTUNITIES:

- 📈 Encourage access to China's expertise, particularly on USAR and drawing on its domestic disaster response
- 📈 China's relatively small amount of funding to humanitarian crises, at approximately 1.7%<sup>66</sup> of China's aid budget, suggests the potential to increase humanitarian funding<sup>67</sup>
- 📈 Learn from, build relationships and strengthen shared understanding with Chinese actors who are keen to engage, such as USAR teams and NGOs.

## CHALLENGES:

- ☁ Increased diversification of funding and resources, particularly in kind, may be difficult to coordinate and therefore not contribute to increased efficiency in humanitarian aid
- ☁ It may be difficult to support China to build on traditional humanitarian actors' experience, particularly regarding in kind assistance
- ☁ With China's relatively small amounts of ad hoc funding and separate coordination mechanisms, it may be difficult to work with China to strengthen the performance of the humanitarian system.

### Urban Search and Rescue: an example of what is possible

China is known for its strong Urban Search and Rescue expertise and is well regarded for its contribution to international crises and exercises.<sup>68</sup>

Urban Search and Rescue teams from Australia and China have worked together in exercises and regional meetings run by INSARAG (the United Nations group that strengthens the effectiveness and coordination of Urban Search and Rescue). These have proved valuable in building relationships and establishing mutual understanding in advance of crisis response.<sup>69</sup> Differences in approaches and values have been identified and managed and are less likely to hamper response in future.<sup>70</sup>

In the context of geopolitical tensions between China and traditional humanitarian actors in the Asia-Pacific region, an Australian USAR team member described the experience of engaging with China on USAR as "powerful, because you are on common humanitarian ground ... the geopolitical tensions are not apparent".<sup>71</sup>

# LOOKING FORWARD: HOW CAN CHINESE AND TRADITIONAL ACTORS ENGAGE ON HUMANITARIAN ACTION?

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Chinese and traditional approaches to humanitarian aid differ. Rather than attempting to integrate them, traditional actors can learn from and leverage China's approach to promote humanitarian reform and better meet the needs of affected populations. This requires improved understanding and strategic engagement.

For China, increased engagement provides opportunities to showcase how its unique allocation of aid has filled important gaps in assistance, to demonstrate leadership in good practice, and to help national governments

influence the international system to strengthen localisation and the humanitarian-development nexus.

For traditional actors, increased engagement enables better coordination to minimise duplication and meet the most critical needs, and to maximise the unique learning opportunities available to improve practice.

This section outlines tangible examples and inspiration for how to constructively engage: coordinate, partner and learn.

## 1. COORDINATE

One of the most challenging imperatives is to strengthen coordination in response to disasters, particularly if China increases its engagement in international humanitarian response. In advance of a crisis, developing people-to-people relationships, a shared understanding of each other's approach, and agreeing on efficient mechanisms to share information will help. This requires responding to China's outreach and encouraging any efforts to increase mutual understanding.

During a response, it is important to allocate time to reach out to China and the host government to share information on each other's contributions and offer opportunities to engage. Traditional actors could highlight financing and other gaps in the response and recovery that they are unable to fill and which may align with China's priorities.

Aspects of China's approach to coordination may strengthen national ownership of humanitarian response. Traditional actors can work with China to integrate the best elements of its approach to help to progress localisation objectives on coordination.



### AVENUES FOR INCREASED COORDINATION:

- ✧ China and traditional donors could include humanitarian aid in their bilateral talks
- ✧ Together with umbrella networks like ICVA, plan for coordination with Chinese civil society groups which intend to respond internationally
- ✧ Continue to collaborate on disaster exercises in preparedness, maintain invitations to coordination mechanisms, and reach out to China during response
- ✧ Governments may seek to strengthen coordination through regional mechanisms: for example, Australia and other ASEAN members could expand their engagement with ASEAN on USAR.<sup>72</sup>

## The International Council for Voluntary Agencies

As a global network of NGOs supporting principled and effective humanitarian action, ICVA is helping international humanitarian actors and NGOs in China to better understand each other and to develop connections. It does this by convening meetings at which NGOs exchange experiences and agree to collaborate, facilitating increased Chinese NGO access to multilateral partners and donors and supporting them to engage in the international humanitarian system. ICVA also produces briefing papers and facilitates diverse learning opportunities. ICVA welcomes outreach from Chinese NGOs and international partners seeking to strengthen their engagement.

## 2. LEARNING TO IMPROVE PRACTICE

Traditional and Chinese humanitarian actors have significant experience and knowledge to share. There is much to learn from China's extensive domestic emergency management and USAR expertise. There is also much to learn from the international sector, particularly in relation to the quality and effectiveness of international humanitarian aid.

To progress humanitarian reform, traditional actors could learn from China's practice on localisation, particularly the success or otherwise of direct funding to governments, and seek to understand more about China's policy and practice to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus. This could begin with research. Jointly planning to pilot new approaches developed from research would maximise the potential to progress reform in practice.

Operational actors, including Chinese NGOs and USAR teams, are open to collaborating and sharing learning with other international actors.<sup>73</sup> Traditional actors can learn from how the Chinese diaspora facilitates risk management

and share their research and experience of how to ensure quality, such as via the Chinese translation of the Sphere Standards.<sup>74</sup> There is also opportunity to build on the experiences of existing partnerships between traditional and Chinese humanitarian actors – what has worked, and what will help similar partnerships in the future.



### AVENUES FOR ENGAGEMENT:

- 🔄 Academia and universities, such as the Beijing Normal University
- 🔄 The UN Association of China and civil society networks such as ICVA
- 🔄 Learning Centres, such as the WFP Centre of Excellence in China (see text box)
- 🔄 USAR training offered by China<sup>75</sup>
- 🔄 An NGO twinning approach, such as the EU-China NGO twinning program.<sup>76</sup>



## Emerging practices for learning

### *Humanitarian and Sustainable Development Initiative*

The Humanitarian and Sustainable Development Initiative (HDI), hosted by the ICRG at Beijing Normal University, is a training initiative which aims to build the capacities of students, academics and practitioners to support the emerging humanitarian and development sector in China. HDI provides knowledge management, research, education and pilot deployment services in collaboration with local, national and international partners including UN, government agencies, NGOs, think tanks, private sector and academia.

### *World Food Programme Centre of Excellence in China*

Established in 2016, the World Food Programme (WFP) Centre of Excellence seeks to promote South-South cooperation. The Centre facilitates policy dialogue and research, technical training, deployment, capacity strengthening and partnership development. WFP and the Ministry of Emergency Management have also signed an MOU to collaborate on strengthening emergency preparedness and response capacity.<sup>77</sup>

## 3. PARTNER

Various opportunities exist to collaborate during humanitarian response and through USAR and disaster response exercises. Traditional actors who have partnered with China in the past have found that it has improved mutual understanding, built relationships and facilitated the sharing of best practice approaches on both sides.<sup>78</sup>



### PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:

-  Chinese and traditional humanitarian civil society actors can collaborate to deliver humanitarian assistance together (see text box)
-  Trilateral humanitarian aid delivery: Chinese and traditional donors could partner with host countries to deliver humanitarian response, building on existing trilateral aid projects such as the Australia–China–Papua New Guinea malaria control project<sup>79</sup>
-  Joint monitoring and evaluation; donors and civil society could initiate joint evaluations of each other's projects.

### Existing partnerships

#### *International Committee of the Red Cross Framework Agreement with China Chamber of Commerce*

In 2019, the ICRC developed an agreement with the China Chamber of Commerce of Metals, Minerals & Chemicals Importers & Exporters and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. The partners are collaborating on supporting Chinese companies operating in complex environments to address security and human rights challenges, support engagement with host governments and actors, and promote good corporate practices.<sup>80</sup>

#### *Operational partnerships*

Chinese foundations and aid organisations worked alongside major international aid organisations in the Nepal earthquake response. The One Foundation had an existing partnership with Save the Children, the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation worked with Mercy Corps, and the Amity Foundation responded as a member of the global ACT Alliance. The Lingshan Charitable Foundation, a Buddhist faith-based organisation, partnered with monks in northern Nepal to provide community-level relief.<sup>81</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 Zhang, D. and Smith, G. (2017) 'China's foreign aid system: structure, agencies and identities', *Third World Quarterly* 38:10, 2330-46
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