American Red Cross

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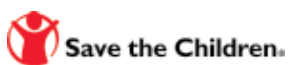Save the Children

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NGO Impact Initiative:

An Assessment by the International Humanitarian NGO Community

October 2006

NGO Impact Initiative

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Foreword

Foreword by the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery

Following the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster of December 26, 2004, many of us pledged that the global effort to rebuild the stricken communities, spanning an arc from the east coast of Somalia to Indonesia and Thailand, would set new standards of accountability and transparency.

The world's response to the devastation wrought by the tsunami was extraordinary: private and public donors committed over $13 billion to tsunami recovery, representing the largest-ever mobilization of donor funds for an international emergency effort. Of that total, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the Red Cross movement together received over $5 billion in pledges from private sources. This enabled NGOs to play a critical role in helping to ensure there were temporary shelters and schools very early on in the relief effort and, most importantly, that starvation and widespread disease were avoided.

This remarkable increase in funding signifies a newfound role for NGOs – as donors – and has brought with it additional responsibilities, including a need for self-reflection. I have been singularly impressed with how forward-leaning NGOs have been in their willingness to be transparent and accountable about their tsunami recovery efforts. They have demonstrated a desire to learn from their own successes and problems, and it was for this reason that I turned to members of the international NGO community in early 2006 and asked them to review critical, recurring issues in their performance.

This synthesis report – and the corresponding subject area reports – is the culmination of that six-month intensive review, which I launched in April 2006 at InterAction's Annual Forum. I asked leading U.S. NGOs, working in close collaboration with their European, Australian, and Asian counterparts, to look at five critical challenges that international NGOs regularly face in recovery operations, which have been brought into stark relief during the post-tsunami effort: accountability to beneficiaries; enhancing efforts at local capacity building; professionalism; coordination; and human rights and disaster recovery.

While the review draws from the experience of the tsunami, the subject areas are broadly applicable beyond this disaster, and this synthesis report, as well as the underlying reports, include key recommendations for improving NGO practice generally and advancing humanitarian reform efforts. The recommendations are designed to supplement and amplify work that is already being done on each of these issues in a wide variety of forums.

The NGOs involved in this initiative held numerous consultations with colleagues in New York, Washington, London, Geneva, Colombo, Banda Aceh, and Chennai. I hope these consultations represent only the start of a continuing dialogue on the important themes and recommendations that have emerged from this initiative. Only by working together, collectively and across oceans,

will we able to translate the important reform proposals reflected in this and other recent efforts into meaningful action on implementation.

I am pleased to note that the NGOs involved in the initiative have committed to follow-on action on three broad and critical objectives that emerged from this process: building better partnerships for recovery; quality assurance; and engaging with donors and the public in a call for informed and responsible giving. This third area of activity is particularly important, as donor support for the recommendations that have emerged from this study will be critical to overall success. I hope future work in each of these areas will result in concrete progress, and I look forward to seeing the public updates on activities toward meeting these objectives.

This dedicated, intensive process at self-evaluation has the potential to make a real difference in our larger goals of placing communities on a better development path, empowering communities to better withstand future disasters, and using the lessons learned today to ensure better responses in the future.

This would be the best and most honorable was to pay tribute to the victims and survivors of the 2004 tsunami.

William Jefferson Clinton

Preface

This Synthesis Report of the NGO Impact Initiative is the outcome of an international, collaborative process. In April 2006, nine U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) accepted the challenge of former U.S. President Bill Clinton, in his capacity as UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, to examine their own performance in five key areas. The initiative soon became broadened to include partners from around the globe, and the U.S.-based NGOs reached out to European, Australian, and Asian counterparts. In addition to major consultations in three of the tsunami-affected countries, as well as discussions in London and Geneva, there were countless discussions with individuals and organizations from around the world to ensure a broad degree of dialogue and buy-in.

While the initiative complements an array of excellent tsunami response evaluation and NGO reform efforts and reinforces many of their findings, it has provided a unique opportunity for candid and critical self-reflection. Importantly, it has been characterized by an open and frank process through which partners from around the world could openly address critical challenges they all face. In deciding to embark on this initiative, the convening NGOs were motivated not only by an interest in strengthening their own organizations but also in improving overall NGO practice, including those of less experienced NGOs that played an unusually large role in the tsunami response. In this regard, given that the subject areas are of much broader application than tsunami recovery, the reviews contain both recommendations for enhancements in current tsunami operations and also comprehensive suggestions for advancing the entire sector's reform efforts.

Two NGOs managed each thematic area – accountability to affected populations; coordination; enhancing local capacity; human rights and recovery; and NGO professionalism – and most organized themselves into working groups, reaching out to a broader interested constituency. This Steering Committee was chaired by Sam Worthington. The Steering Committee included representatives from American Red Cross, Care-U.S., International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Plan-USA, Refugees International, Save the Children-U.S., and World Vision-U.S. The UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery (OSE) played an instrumental role in steering the process to its conclusion. Each thematic area involved in-depth analysis of work that is already being done on each of these issues in a wide variety of forums as well as extensive field consultations with local civil society and government officials in Banda Aceh, Sri Lanka and Chennai – all with the goal of translating reform proposals into meaningful action on implementation.

The process and the reports were richly informed and invaluably improved by the close participation of a Consultative Committee. From the outset, President Clinton and the project's Steering Committee believed that the initiative had to be international in scope, with recommendations that apply broadly to international NGOs operating worldwide. The five thematic areas reflected the participation of expert and relevant partners. The Steering

Committee actively solicited input and feedback in development of the five thematic reports from several NGO consortia (InterAction, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies [ICVA], the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response [SCHR], VOICE, the Disasters Emergency Committee [DEC], the Australian Council for International Development [ACFID]), associated initiatives on quality and accountability (the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership-International [HAP], the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action [ALNAP], SPHERE) and others (the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition [TEC], All India Disaster Mitigation Institute [AIDMI], and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative).

The project findings and recommendations represent the collective view of members of the Steering Group, who managed the editorial process, as well as perspectives provided by all of the other the participating NGOs, consortia, and networks. And while every effort was made to ensure that the recommendations reflect a broad consensus among those involved in this project, it should not be assumed that any particular participating organization subscribes to all the specific recommendations and commitments.

The five thematic reports, together with this Synthesis Report, are being published as a set.

The Synthesis Report presents a summary of the analysis and recommendations contained in the five thematic reports. It also outlines three broad and critical objectives that have emerged from the five areas: building better partnerships for recovery; quality assurance; and engaging with donors and the public in a call for informed and responsible giving. Under each objective, there are specific recommendations for ongoing and future work and a stated commitment to pursue implementation of these recommendations. We urge all those involved in this initiative, and the broader humanitarian and INGO community, to seriously consider the recommendations contained in this report and commit to move them forward.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge and thank all those who gave generously of their time and contributed invaluable input and direction to the initiative. In particular, we are deeply grateful to the Consultative Committee members for their time, availability, and readiness to contribute, to the government officials and UN teams in Aceh, Sri Lanka and India who supported our efforts, and to the many who participated in the field consultations. We also congratulate the NGOs that accepted President Clinton's challenge to undertake a meaningful review of their own work, and exceeded expectations in terms of a commitment to serious reform.

Eric Schwartz
Deputy UN Special Envoy
for Tsunami Recovery

Samuel Worthington
Chair, Steering Committee, NGO Impact
Initiative and President and CEO, InterAction

NGO Impact Initiative

I. Project Participants

Steering Committee Members

Sam Worthington, President and CEO, InterAction; President and CEO, Plan USA through September 2006; Committee Chair

Nazaré Albuquerque, Advisor for NGOs & Civil Society, UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery

George Biddle, Senior Vice President, International Rescue Committee

Joel Charny, Vice-President for Policy, Refugees International

Sheba Crocker, Deputy Chief of Staff, UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery

George Devendorf, Director of Public Affairs Mercy Corps

Rigoberto Giron, Director, Emergency & Humanitarian Assistance Unit, CARE

Christopher Herink, Partnership Coordinator, Tsunami Recovery Program, American Red Cross (ARC)

Robert Laprade, Senior Program Advisor, Tsunami Recovery Program, ARC

Nancy Lindborg, President, Mercy Corps

Paul M. Majarowitz, Senior Program Officer, Mercy Corps

Cara Jean O'Hare, Research/Special Projects Manager, Plan USA

Mary Pack, Vice President, International Medical Corps

Rein Paulsen, Senior Director, Emergency Response and Disaster Mitigation, World Vision US

Virginia Vaughn, Consultant, CARE USA

Rudolph Von Bernuth, Vice President & Managing Director, Save the Children

George Ward, Senior Vice President, International Programs Group, World Vision US

Organizational Affiliations of Consultative Committee Participants

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), CARE International, Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP), InterAction, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Office of the Representative of the Secretary General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Oxfam GB, The Sphere Project, Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE)

Consultant to Chair of Steering Committee

Naomi Rush Olson, Editor, Thematic Reports

Office of the Special Envoy Staff

Eric Schwartz, Deputy Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery
Nazaré Albuquerque, Advisor for NGOs & Civil Society
Robert Piper, Chief of Staff
Sheba Crocker, Deputy Chief of Staff
Alison Rose, Programme Analyst

Representatives of Convening Organizations

Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group

For the American Red Cross:
    Robert Laprade, Senior Program Advisor, Tsunami Recovery Program
    Christopher Herink, Partnership Coordinator, Tsunami Recovery Program
For Mercy Corps:
    Nancy Lindborg, President
    George Devendorf, Director of Public Affairs
    Paul Majarowitz, Senior Program Officer for Indonesia and Sri Lanka

Coordination Working Group

For the International Medical Corps:
    Mary Pack, Vice President
For Save the Children:
    Rudolph Von Bernuth, Vice-President & Managing Director
    Frosina Panovska, Emergency Specialist

Enhancing Local Capacity Working Group

For the International Rescue Committee:
    George Biddle, Senior Vice-President
    Liz McBride, Director, Post Conflict Development Initiative
    Hervé de Baillenx, Director, IRC-Belgium
For the International Medical Corps:
    Mary Pack, Vice President

Human Rights Working Group

For CARE:
    Rigoberto Giron, Director, Emergency & Humanitarian Assistance Unit
    Virginia Vaughn, Consultant

For Refugees International:
>   Joel Charny, Vice-President for Policy

Professionalism Working Group

For Plan USA:
>   Sam Worthington, President and CEO, Interaction
>>   President and CEO, Plan USA through September 2006
>   Cara O'Hare, Research/Special Projects Manager
>   Frank Manfredi, Program Development Officer for Asia

For World Vision US:
>   George Ward, Senior Vice President, International Programs
>   Rein Paulsen, Senior Director, Emergency Response and Disaster Mitigation,
>>   International Programs Group
>   Wynn Flaten, Program/Technical Specialist, Tsunami Response
>   Rachel Brumbaugh, Program Officer, Asia Tsunami & Pakistan Earthquake,
>>   Eurasia Integrated Programs Team, International Programs Group

Consultation Participants

London, England, July 11, 2006

Action Aid, Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Christian Aid, Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), Help the Aged International, Homeless International, Islamic Relief, Merlin, Muslim Aid, People in Aid, Plan International, Plan UK, Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Plan USA, Save the Children UK, Tearfund, Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), and World Vision UK.

Geneva, Switzerland, July 12, 2006

Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF), the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), CARE International, CONCERN, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International (HAP), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), InterAction, International Medical Corps (IMC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Médecins du Monde (MSF), Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Plan USA, Save the Children UK and US, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), SPHERE, Voluntary Organizations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE), the World Council of Churches (WCC), World Vision Australia, and World Vision International (WVI).

Banda Aceh, Indonesia, July 17-18, 2006

Aceh Bangkit, Aceh Information Tekhnologi Development, Aceh Institute, ADF, AJMI, American Red Cross (ARC), ASHO, Bina Swadaya, British Red Cross, CARDI, CARE, CRS, ELSAKA, Flower Aceh, Forsikal, Forum LSM, Head of PHC, ICW, IFRC, Ikatan Bidan Indonesia (IBI), IMC, IMPACT, Indonesian Red Cross (Palang

Merah Indonesia), IRC, Islamic Relief, JKMA Aceh, KKTGA, Koalisi NGO-HAM, KONTAC, Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (LBH), Lembaga Posko Kemanusiaan, LKM Ebenheizer, Mataraja, Mental Health Services, Mercy Corps, MISPI, Mitra Perempuan Sejati Indonesia (MISTI), Muslim Aid, PKM Sumut, Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Plan UK and USA, Project Hope, Provincial Health Office, The Reconstruction Agency for Aceh and Nias (BRR), RPuK, Save the Children, SIA, Solidaritas Perempuan, SORAK, SuLOH, United Nations agencies, UPLINK, WALHI, WVI, Yah Dian Desa, Yah Ekowisata Aceh (YEA), YAPPIKA, Yay. Satunama, Yay.Holiana'a, Yay.Peduli Sabang, Yayasan Leuser International, YPK.

Colombo, Sri Lanka, August 24-25, 2006

Action Contre La Faim (ACF), ARC, Basic Needs, CARE, International, CRS, Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), Christian Aid, Community Trust Fund, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Human Rights Commission of Sri Lank, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), INFORM, Institute of Human Rights, IMC, Islamic Relief, LEADS, Mercy Corps, Muslim Aid, North West Medical, Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Oxfam, Plan USA, Practical Action, Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA), Red R, Refugees International, Save the Children, Sri Lanka Red Cross, Tear Fund Foundation, Transparency International, United Nations agencies, Women and Media Collective, World Vision Lanka, Zoa Refugee Care.

Chennai, India, August 27, 2006

AIDMI, BLESS, Care India, CCD, Dhan Foundation, Discipleship Centre, EFICOR, EHA, HUMAN, IAS, Government of Tamil Nadu, ICVA, INTUC, IUCN, Office of Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Oxfam India, Plan International (India), Plan USA, PREPARE, Save the Children, TNTRC, TOFARM, Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme, United Nations agencies, World Vision India.

Geneva, Switzerland, September 25, 2006

American Red Cross, Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), ALNAP, AIDMI, CARE International, CARE USA, the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, HAP, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ICVA, IMC, InterAction, IFRC, IRC, Mercy Corps, Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Plan USA, Oxfam Australia, Office of the Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees International, SCHR, the SPHERE Project, TEC, and VOICE.

Acronyms

ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
AIDMI	All India Disaster Mitigation Institute
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
ALPS	Action Aid's Accountability, Learning and Planning System
ARC	American Red Cross
BRR	Aceh and Nias Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Board
CAFOD	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CCIC	Canadian Council for International Cooperation
CHA	Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies (Sri Lanka)
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DG	Directorate General
ECB	Emergency Capacity Building Project
ECHO	Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission
EU	European Union
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
GAP	Global Accountability Project
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International
IANGO	International NGO Accountability Charter
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross
IMC	International Medical Corps
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISO	International Organization of Standardization
LNGO	Local Non-Governmental Organization
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development
MDM	Médecins Du Monde
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OSE	Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Coalition
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Fund for Children
VENRO	Association of German Development Non-governmental Organizations
VOICE	Voluntary Organizations In Cooperation in Emergencies
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WVI	World Vision International

Executive Summary

In April 2006, the UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, former U.S. President Bill Clinton, presented the humanitarian community with a challenge – and an opportunity. With the intention to improve NGO global relief and recovery, President Clinton launched a six-month intensive review by U.S. and international NGOs of their activities in tsunami recovery in five critically important areas: accountability to affected populations; coordination; enhancing local capacity; human rights and disaster recovery; and NGO professionalism. Working groups in each area led the respective reviews, which consisted of in-depth analysis and consultations with partners in the field and at the headquarters level, in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Geneva, London, New York, and Washington DC. This report represents the synthesis of the consultative process and the analysis and findings contained in the five working group papers. Informed by the experience of tsunami recovery, the analysis is most relevant to natural disaster response, though much of the analysis and many of the recommendations are also applicable to NGO response to man-made emergencies.

While the five papers contain numerous important findings and recommendations, this report synthesizes the key analysis and recommendations. It also draws out three overarching themes from the five working group papers – building better partnerships for sustainable recovery; quality assurance; and a call for informed and responsible giving – and articulates commitments to carry forward key recommendations in these three areas.

Progress Achieved by the INGO Community

International NGOs (INGOs) already incorporate many of the objectives described under these three areas as part of their ongoing work, and they have made significant progress in recent years in improving their policies and practices in these key areas. For example, in recent years, INGOs have developed guidelines to strengthen local capacity and ensure accountability to vulnerable populations receiving humanitarian and development assistance, and have begun to incorporate standards, such as the NGO/Red Cross Code of Conduct and the SPHERE standards, into their work. They have sought to promote quality management and recruitment and retention of highly skilled and motivated personnel through a range of professional standard-setting initiatives over the past several years. And they have undertaken concerted public education efforts to build a constituency for foreign assistance and educate the public and the media about the components and nature of effective and sustainable disaster preparedness and response. INGOs' progress in these areas is also well reflected in the tsunami affected region, where INGOs have assisted in constructing tens of thousands of temporary shelters and permanent homes and creating livelihood programs that have put tens of thousands back to work, and supported microcredit and other programs designed to empower local communities.

Thus, the commitments made as part of this initiative represent a renewed call to action on the part of organizations that are already leading the way in terms of ensuring their own work best

supports local communities, meets the highest standards, and reflects a close partnership with institutional and private donors throughout the world.

Key Findings and Commitments

1. Building Better Partnerships for Sustainable Recovery

INGOs should accelerate and expand efforts to recognize and promote the leadership of local communities, local aid groups, and, where appropriate, affected governments in recovery from major disasters; they should also make the strengthening of local capacity in recovery from an emergency a priority equal to that of service delivery.

Commitment: We will 1) increase investments in local capacity building and report systematically on such activities; 2) undertake audits to measure INGO accountability to local populations; 3) develop and articulate strategies for protecting and promoting human rights in emergency response programs; and 4) otherwise enhance capacity to collaborate and coordinate with local communities. We will report publicly over the course of the next year on our efforts to achieve these objectives.

2. An NGO Quality Assurance Initiative

INGOs should promote optimal standards of professional conduct in their humanitarian response.

Commitment: Building on existing guidelines and standards, we will convene INGO agencies, consortia, and networks to promote a common agreement on professional standards to ensure quality management, successful service delivery, and effective engagement with local communities. INGOs should draw on existing quality assurance initiatives to develop a mechanism to promote and verify optimal standards of performance by INGOs. We will report publicly over the course of the next year on our efforts to meet these objectives.

3. A Call for Informed and Responsible Giving

Donors should support actions that reflect best humanitarian and development practices, recognizing that recovery is a long-term process. INGOs should increase their efforts to educate the public and the media on the components and nature of effective and sustainable disaster preparedness and response.

Commitment: We will undertake joint and concerted efforts to raise awareness among institutional donors and the general public on the key recommendations of the NGO Impact Initiative and the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. We will report publicly over the course of the next year on our efforts to meet this objective.

NGO Impact Initiative

The response to the tsunami in 2004 by the public, the humanitarian community, governments, and multilateral institutions was unprecedented, as was the event itself, which saw staggering loss of life and destruction. But the disaster's devastating impact was matched by the extraordinary nature of the world's response, as billions of dollars in assistance quickly poured in, helping ensure an immediate and effective response that stemmed the loss of life, averted outbreak of disease, and enabled rapid construction of temporary housing, schools, and medical clinics.

Holding over $5 billion, more than a third of the money pledged, NGOs have had a significant place in this massive recovery effort. Sitting at the forefront of relief and recovery, they have become both donors and implementers. This has brought them new roles, responsibilities, and challenges, which include the need to assess progress, improve quality, and enhance transparency and accountability.

In response to this reality, at the 2006 annual InterAction Forum, as UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, former U.S. President Bill Clinton launched a six-month, intensive review by international NGOs (INGOs) to make NGO global relief and recovery efforts more effective across five areas: accountability to affected populations; coordination; enhancing local capacity; human rights and recovery; and NGO professionalism. Drawing on lessons learned during the massive tsunami recovery effort, the review focused on these challenges, all of which were brought into starker relief in the context of tsunami recovery but also represent systemic challenges INGOs face in major disaster recovery. In each of these five thematic areas, working groups developed a concept paper, outlining the main topics for investigation as well as a series of questions to guide the review. These papers were then reviewed at a series of broad consultations in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, in which international and local NGOs, international organizations, and governments participated, and in consultations with INGOs, consortia, and networks in Geneva and London.

The process culminated in a series of short reports and recommendations; this synthesis report draws from those, summarizing and presenting key findings. Although the review drew from the tsunami experience, because the subject areas reach beyond that particular context, the reports include broader recommendations for improving INGO practice and advancing humanitarian reform efforts. Informed by the experience of tsunami recovery, the analysis is most relevant to natural disaster response, though much of the analysis and many of the recommendations are also applicable to NGO response to man-made emergencies. The recommendations supplement and amplify work already being conducted on each of these issues in a wide variety of forums – with the goal of translating reform proposals into meaningful action on implementation.

> ### The Scale of the Disaster and Response
>
> **The Event**: On December 26, 2004, an earthquake off the coast of Indonesia resulted in tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The earthquake released stored energy equivalent to over more than 23,000 Hiroshima bombs. The waves reached speeds of 500 kilometers/hour and were 20 meters high at landfall in parts of Aceh. India, Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Thailand were the most severely affected countries.
>
> **The Scale of Destruction**: An estimated 229,000 people were killed or remain reported as missing in fourteen countries across two continents, with the last two fatalities being swept out to sea in South Africa, more than twelve hours after the earthquake. Long term recovery needs were originally estimated at close at to $10 billion. In Aceh, 141,000 houses were destroyed, and livelihoods of over 600,000 people were lost. In Sri Lanka, over 100,000 houses were destroyed or damaged, and in Maldives, over 8,000 houses were destroyed.
>
> **The Scale of the Response**: Over $13 billion was donated to immediate relief and recovery, with NGOs receiving over $5 billion. The scale of the generous public response was unprecedented, not only in the amount of money raised but also in the proportion of funding from the public, and the speed with which money was pledged or donated.
>
> *Sources: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery*

Progress Achieved and Challenges Ahead: Summary of Key Findings and Analysis

The following discussion is a synthesis of the key findings and analysis contained in the working papers prepared as part of the NGO Impact Initiative. Each working paper concludes with a set of detailed recommendations, and a summary of those recommendations is included below, following these thematic discussions.

Accountability to Affected Populations

In recent decades, INGOs have increasingly recognized the need to be accountable to the populations that they are assisting, and they have developed guidelines to ensure accountability to those receiving humanitarian and development assistance. Accountability implies that affected populations must be involved in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of a humanitarian response. In specific terms, accountability can be achieved through four complementary imperatives: transparency, participation, evaluation, and complaints and response mechanisms. In the tsunami recovery effort, many INGOs have prioritized these areas.

In a transparent recovery process, affected populations should have easy access to information, which enables them to participate in and challenge programs that affect their lives. One proven, effective way to provide information is through publicly accessible bulletin boards with detailed project plans, budgets, or beneficiary lists, and there are many examples of INGOs utilizing such

bulletin boards in tsunami recovery. Access to information, in turn, paves the way for participation, which is the process through which stakeholders play an active role in decision-making processes and the activities that affect them. Examples from the tsunami response included use of focus groups, development of women's committees, engaging with children, inter-communal citizens' and professional groups, and stakeholder representatives at district level.

While transparency and participation can enable affected populations to drive and design recovery from the outset, evaluation and complaints mechanisms allow them to fine tune recovery programs, alerting INGOs to shortcomings in project design or delivery. Evaluation, which involves the monitoring and reviewing of progress and results, can take place through feedback meetings or surveys. As part of the Listening Project in Aceh, teams met with over 300 people to discuss local views on tsunami recovery projects. Finally, complaints and response mechanisms allow stakeholders to register complaints against decisions, actions, or abuse and ensure that these are properly reviewed and acted on. Some examples from tsunami recovery are complaints boxes in IDP camps and local complaints evaluation committees.

While some agencies had effective accountability mechanisms in place, the experience of tsunami recovery demonstrates that more must be done to translate evolving standards into a new framework that recognizes the leadership role of local communities in recovery from disasters. In addition, there have been barriers to accountability in tsunami recovery, some of which arose from its unique scale and complexity. As has been noted in many reviews of the tsunami response, the unprecedented generosity of the wide range of donors lowered barriers to entry into humanitarian response for many first-time players who lacked experience in overseas aid delivery, and the vastly increased number of agencies made accountability to affected populations more difficult. Other systemic issues have likewise complicated efforts to ensure accountability, including the lack of institutional commitment, insufficient funding for accountability measures, and pressure to deliver results quickly.

Coordination

Coordination is defined not so much by what it is but by what it yields: a recovery effort that meets needs and avoids wasted resources and the outcome of which is the fair and impartial delivery of aid. Activities that help improve coordination include development of common strategies; joint assessments of situations and needs; broad sharing of key information to target program response; convening coordination forums; mobilization and strategic allocation of resources; addressing common problems; and sharing coordination mechanisms and tools.

While coordination is commonly cited as one of the most important factors guiding an effective recovery effort, in the tsunami context, many studies, donors, and humanitarian relief workers have identified lack of coordination as a major – if not the most critical – factor that contributed to problems, including critical gaps in service delivery and duplication of efforts. Perhaps the biggest shortcoming was the lack of adequate and representative coordination between INGOs and local NGOs. Other challenges included the marginalization of local NGOs and inadequate information sharing. INGOs and local NGOs voiced a need for more effective NGO representation in umbrella organizations and in UN coordination mechanisms to ensure

information sharing and adherence to common standards. They also voiced concerns that poorly organized and ineffectual coordination meetings often actually impair coordination.

Nonetheless, the tsunami recovery has also seen some important coordination innovations. For example, the coordination capacities of the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies in Sri Lanka were expanded. Communities also formed committees to coordinate and interact with aid agencies, and, in Sri Lanka, a group of INGOs cooperated with the government in developing a policy on transitional housing.

There are a number of steps that stakeholders can take to improve coordination, even before a disaster hits. Hence, NGO leaders should encourage information sharing at all levels – both within a particular organization and among organizations – and develop joint preparedness protocols, to increase organizational learning and coordination. UN bodies and governments can also facilitate NGO coordination at an earlier stage, for example by establishing joint criteria and reporting instruments for operations. Donors also have an important role in encouraging coordination by channeling funds through certain agencies, promoting shared needs assessment, and encouraging joint strategies such as the Common Humanitarian Action Plans.

Once a disaster occurs, there are a number of other areas where these stakeholders can improve coordination, including through the needs assessment process, which should be as inclusive as possible, and through shared data collection and analysis. Following the tsunami, many organizations collected their own data, which was not shared with other agencies or local communities. Coordination meetings can play an important role in terms of information sharing, but to be successful, INGOs must participate in these meetings at a senior level, and should agree on joint representation to eliminate overlap and unwieldy numbers at meetings. In addition, one key shortfall of coordination meetings is that they tend to marginalize local NGOs, often as a result of language barriers. To be most effective, coordination meetings should be forums for active strategic planning and decision-making, should prioritize discussion in or translation facilitation of local languages, and should be followed up through dedicated commitment by senior NGO representatives.

Enhancing Local Capacity

Like accountability to affected populations, efforts to enhance local capacity aim to ensure that affected populations are not viewed as passive receivers of aid but rather as drivers of their own recovery. And just as humanitarian INGOs have increasingly recognized the importance of accountability to affected populations, they have also acknowledged that affected populations manage their own recovery, and that INGOs can play a key role in strengthening local capacity to do so. INGOs have launched several initiatives focused on the need to enhance local capacity, such as the SPHERE standards and the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB), but the efforts in this area during tsunami recovery fell short.

During the field consultations conducted for this project, participants highlighted several factors that undermined the broadly shared objective of capacity building. Like accountability to affected populations, INGOs and donors often view building local capacity as secondary to service delivery. INGOs are often also reluctant to engage with local governments and foster links between populations and governments, where appropriate, which poses a significant barrier

to building local capacity. Pressures from the media, donors, and headquarters also placed heavy emphasis on service delivery. Nonetheless, all stakeholders need to reorient their thinking, so that strengthening local capacity in recovery from an emergency becomes a priority equal to that of service delivery. And in the field consultations conducted for this initiative, participants called for systematic involvement of INGOs with local government, where appropriate, and cited as best practice those programs in which INGOs, local NGOs, and local governments worked together.

Various practical issues also tend to affect INGOs' ability to build local capacity. The capacities of local agencies and institutions are weakened when INGOs and other organizations lure qualified staff away from national agencies with higher salaries – a common occurrence in all disaster recovery operations. There is thus a need to level the playing field by setting national staff salaries at a level to moderate the brain drain to international agencies. INGOs also often hire away English-speaking staff from local agencies. This both weakens local capacity and impedes interaction and cooperation between local NGOs and international agencies, as it deprives the former of their English-speaking staff, who could represent them at UN coordination meetings and to the international media, and generally represent and advocate for local communities.

Failure to adequately prioritize or carry out local capacity strengthening both limits recovery's effectiveness and has further serious negative implications, some of which were evident in tsunami response. It can result in vulnerable communities becoming further marginalized; it may mean that projects based on flawed assumptions are not corrected; and ultimately, it can mean that communities do not take ownership of recovery programs.

Human Rights and Disaster Recovery

In recent years, human rights discourse has begun to have an important place in international development circles, including among humanitarian agencies, many of which use a rights-based focus for long-term programming. Human rights can embrace civil and political rights as well as social, economic, and cultural rights, many of which will have immediate relevance in a post-disaster setting, as issues of land rights, women's rights, right to the equal access to humanitarian assistance, and children's rights often arise.

At its core, a rights-based approach (RBA) attempts to protect, promote, or advocate for human rights in the context of assistance programming. Importantly, though, it also assumes that local governments, the humanitarian assistance community, and affected populations have duties and responsibilities regarding these rights. Finally, RBA implies a shift from viewing vulnerability as a mere consequence of disaster to identifying and exposing root causes of vulnerabilities.

Basing disaster response on a RBA requires a fundamental reorientation in relationships among stakeholders. Traditional humanitarian service delivery consists of a one-way relationship between an agency as service provider and the beneficiary as passive recipient. Because rights are relational and imply duties, however, relationships between stakeholders – host governments, disaster affected populations, and the humanitarian assistance community – are much more complex and multi-dimensional.

Thus, RBA emphasizes INGO accountability to the host government, which implies a range of responsibilities, from a basic knowledge of the political environment to efforts to enable governments to fulfill their duties. Moreover, it also implies that just as INGOs can scrutinize state practices and policies, governments have a right to scrutinize INGO activities and hold them accountable to accepted standards and principles.

Duties toward disaster-affected populations include, at a minimum, public access to information through measures such as bulletin boards or publicly accessible information centers, which have been employed in tsunami recovery. But RBA implies going beyond just the provision of information to ensuring that affected populations can act on this information and have the voice to exercise their rights. RBA therefore also focuses on the relationship between affected populations and their government. Some INGO activities have attempted to build these relationships by forging links between community organizations and government officials, such as through the Human Rights Commission in Sri Lanka. Oxfam negotiates with local officials to ensure that they deliver necessary infrastructure for shelter sites.

The rights based approach also requires a more complex view of needs assessments. Rather than simply quantifying needs arising from a disaster – such as damaged boats or houses – an RBA-based needs assessment looks at structural causes of vulnerability, emphasizing individuals' and groups' position in societies. In the tsunami context, employing such an approach would have provided a broader definition of tsunami-affected people from the outset, which could have had implications in terms of equity in aid provision to tsunami and conflict affected populations. In India, CARE has developed a Social Equity Audit, which examines the processes of social exclusion and discrimination in tsunami recovery. Other agencies applied RBA around specific areas, such as Plan Aceh's work to provide children a voice in IDP camps.

NGO Professionalism

The concept of professionalism has several dimensions. On the one hand, it focuses on institutional capacity to deliver services. On the other hand, it looks at governance and management structures, systems, and policies that an NGO should have in place to ensure that it operates transparently and effectively. Finally, it centers on the professional skills and competencies of staff.

There are several best practices in places in regards to NGO professionalism. These include InterAction's work on NGO standards, third-party certification, and self-regulation and other standards-based national platforms such as those in Australia and the Philippines. There are also many codes of conduct already in existence, such as those developed by Action Aid, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP), People in Aid, SPHERE, VENRO, and the *International NGO Accountability Charter* (IANGO). Finally, there are also compliance and certification models already in use.

As described in this initiative's report on professionalism, the three broad dimensions of professionalism imply a distinct set of tools and characteristics – core professional operating standards – that help define a professional and competent NGO. These include, *inter alia*, a clearly articulated mission statement with a commitment to human rights and humanitarian law; a governance structure independent of management; financial controls; employee policies that

define roles, responsibilities, and rights; a commitment to non-discrimination; and systems and procedures for strategic planning. While this is not a checklist that will guarantee good performance, such practices do increase the likelihood that an INGO will operate responsibly and effectively. Established NGOs and consortia should assist newer NGOs in meeting these evolving professional standards. Moreover, such practices, clearly and transparently articulated, also provide certain measures against which affected populations can assess the professionalism of INGOs and hold them accountable.

But is it not enough to simply have such practices in place. Compliance review, verification, and certification are necessary, but it remains an undecided question as to who should have the authority to monitor such compliance. Opinions differ as to whether responsibility should lie with governments, the UN, peer reviews, an NGO professional association, or through some other means. The INGOs involved in this initiative suggest the importance of INGO agencies, consortia, and networks agreeing on a mechanism to promote and verify optimal standards of performance by INGOs, which would draw on existing quality assurance initiatives. Such a mechanism would facilitate a number of important tasks, such as elaborating a common set of standards, providing assistance to INGOs in achieving these, overseeing compliance, and receiving and addressing complaints regarding INGOs.

Summary Recommendations

The following recommendations in the areas of accountability to affected populations, coordination, enhancing local capacity, human rights and recovery, and NGO professionalism are drawn from the working papers prepared as part of this initiative. Common to all these recommendations is the reality that most will be difficult to achieve without the financial and political support of donors, both institutional and private. Thus this section ends with recommendations for a call for informed and responsible giving, which lays out recommendations that make this critical link.

Accountability to Affected Populations: INGOs should consistently embrace organizational practice that promotes accountability to local communities. INGOs should conduct "accountability audits" based on established standards (such as those of HAP). These audits should examine how organizational policies and practices promote transparency, enable participation and evaluation, and include complaint-and-response mechanisms for affected populations. They should be conducted internally, by peer organizations, or by external evaluators, and should be publicly available. INGOs should also promote accountability to affected populations at the field level, by ensuring that INGO project budgets include line items for funding to promote accountability to affected populations and by actively working to increase the use of existing quality and accountability initiatives, such as SPHERE, HAP, and the Emergency Capacity Building Project, at field level.

Coordination as a Core Responsibility: INGOs must prioritize coordination as a duty and functional requirement in humanitarian response. The emphasis should be on timely sharing of information, negotiating clear roles among specific humanitarian actors, and developing common policy approaches in key sectors. INGOs should fund initiatives to coordinate data collection and analysis, and develop rapid response assessment protocols and information sharing platforms to better identify and address gaps in assessments. In all major disaster

recovery operations, INGOs should assign project personnel to assess, develop, and participate in local and UN coordination mechanisms, building on indigenous forums wherever possible, and facilitating better inter-NGO cooperation.

Enhancing Local Capacity: INGOs must affirm that communities drive their own recovery and that INGO projects will be most successful when their design reflects communities' priorities and decision-making. INGOs should support projects, such as the owner-built housing programs in the tsunami affected region, which advance control and ownership by affected people.

INGOs should allocate a new or increased percentage of their global budgets to initiatives focused on increasing the ability of local communities, community based organizations NGOs, and governments, where appropriate, to prevent and respond to major disasters. INGOs should institute, as a matter of policy, capacity building frameworks from the onset of any new emergency and should work to build institutional skill bases. INGO annual reports should indicate steps underway to build a local institutional skill base, both internally and with local partners, also indicating the percentage of the budget that is allocated to these efforts. To strengthen both INGOs and their local counterparts, INGOs should seek to second experienced staff to local NGOs and government entities, where appropriate, and should also seek to implement a study on the effects of skewed salary scales between international and local organizations.

Human Rights and Disaster Recovery: INGOs must enhance their expertise, information-sharing, education, and policy implementation on a rights-based approach to recovery. INGOs should develop and articulate strategies for protecting and promoting human rights in their emergency response programs, and develop indicators to measure the process and outcomes of implementing a human rights framework. We encourage, at the onset of each large-scale emergency response, the establishment of a task force on human rights and recovery, which should include human rights experts from humanitarian, development, and human rights NGOs, to promote best practices among organizations involved in recovery.

NGO Professionalism:

Quality Management: INGOs should have in place the following good management practices:

- A clearly articulated and understandable mission statement that has – at its core – a commitment to established principles of international humanitarian and human rights law and the primacy of affected populations in recovery;

- A governance structure independent of the day-to-day management structure (board) that provides checks and balances oversight;

- Financial controls that may, for example, require regular and independent audits;

- Employee policies that clearly define their roles, responsibilities and rights, as well as grievance procedures that protect whistleblowers, both at headquarters and in the field;

- A clear and unequivocal statement of commitment to non-discrimination at point of service;

- A formal policy to work through and in concert with affected populations and their communities, as well as to transfer and develop local capacity;

- Systems and procedures for strategic planning, as well as for ongoing program design, monitoring and evaluation, and results reporting that engages with affected populations from the outset;

- Systems and procedures for annual public reporting on its work.

Transforming Quality Management Practices: Building on existing guidelines and standards, INGO agencies, consortia, and networks should promote a common agreement on professional standards to ensure quality management, successful service delivery, and effective engagement with local communities. INGOs should draw on existing quality assurance initiatives to develop a mechanism to promote and verify optimal standards of performance by INGOs, which should focus on:

- Reaching consensus on a set of core standards;

- Providing technical assistance and training to humanitarian NGOs in meeting these standards;

- Monitoring NGO compliance with the standards;

- Fostering the training and credentialing of humanitarian staff;

- Providing a means to receive and address complaints and grievances about humanitarian NGO activity;

- Identifying training and education opportunities that will help to ensure qualification of NGO staff across a range of essential tasks; and

- Developing an NGO-managed process for verification and certification of NGO compliance with the standards.

Professional Staffing: INGO agencies, consortia, and networks should identify specific tasks and functions in relief operations that ought to be staffed by trained or certified personnel. INGO agencies and networks should work with professional associations in areas such as health care, engineering and security, to ensure that they include in their standards for professional conduct appropriate guidelines and requirements for overseas humanitarian assistance and development work.

A Call for Informed and Responsible Giving:

Institutional Donors: Institutional donors must be more willing to support, as a matter of policy and financially, INGO programs that have proven effective in both responding to crises and facilitating longer term sustainable recovery, such as programs focused on disaster preparedness and risk reduction; professionalism and staff qualification; coordination; capacity strengthening; accountability to affected populations; and protection and promotion of human rights. Consistent with the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, donors must offer more flexible funding for these activities and must be prepared to measure outcomes beyond the short-term provision of services in the aftermath of disasters. To ensure equity among survivors in affected countries and between people in different countries, government and private sector donors must be more prepared to authorize the reallocation of resources based on need.

The NGO Community: NGOs must increase their efforts to educate the public and the media about the components and nature of effective and sustainable disaster preparedness and response. The tsunami recovery experience demonstrates the importance of education to promote: 1) an appreciation that recovery from a disaster on the scale of the tsunami is a matter of years, not weeks or months; 2) an understanding of the critical importance of significant investments in disaster preparedness; 3) the need for funding flexibility, so that monies may be used for strategic preparatory activities as well as when immediate circumstances dictate.

Conclusion

While the working groups examined five different areas, several common themes and conclusions came out of consultations and analysis. Broadly, these themes fall in three categories: the need to build better partnerships for sustainable recovery; the need to promote the highest standards of quality management and professionalism; and the need for informed and responsible giving.

Building better partnerships for sustainable recovery covers a range of specific issues and questions looked at as part of this initiative, from local capacity building and accountability to human rights and coordination. A consistent theme throughout all of the consultations was that INGOs should reorient their provision of humanitarian assistance to make the strengthening of local capacity in recovery from an emergency a priority equal to that of service delivery. The aim here is to empower affected populations, recognizing their central and active role in their own recovery. Doing this will require a shift on many levels: INGOs should engage with a range of local institutions, including not only affected populations but also local NGOs and local governments, where appropriate; increase their knowledge about the context in which they operate, including local laws, policies, and norms; examine the disaster with its broader context, looking both at preexisting patterns of vulnerability and marginalization as well as how the disaster may have exacerbated those patterns; and work to improve coordination between international and local NGOs. All of these changes imply the need to build better partnerships – with local NGOs, governments, affected populations, and other organizations – in order to ensure recovery is sustainable over time.

Many of these issues also impact the question of promoting quality management and professional standards. Promotion of such standards will further enhance INGO ability, both at

headquarters and in the field, to advance policies and practices that will improve management of and programming across the range of challenges identified by this initiative. The research and consultations relating to all five working groups pointed to the issues that arose because of the sheer number of INGOs active in tsunami recovery. The high levels of funding donated for recovery allowed less experienced organizations to enter the field. In all of the reviews, participants commented that INGOs already present in the affected region before the disaster had better relationships with local communities and organizations, knew more about local context, and thus were better positioned to deliver more effective and sustainable aid. If even a small minority of INGOs fails to meet their stated missions – or worse, do harm to the local communities in which they work – these failures can affect the entire INGO sector and erode public trust in the INGO community more broadly.

INGO consortia and networks have agreed over the past decade to a range of guidelines and standards to improve quality and professionalism of NGO programming and management, yet many more leading NGOs need to engage with and enhance the efforts of these existing quality assurance initiatives to develop and roll out a globally recognized quality assurance standard. At the same time, reaching agreement on core standards will not be sufficient without an agreed process to verify optimal standards of performance by NGOs. Heightened acceptance and implementation of quality management practices, moreover, will help militate against too many NGOs, some of them lacking adequate expertise or stretching their mandates, entering into any given major recovery operation.

The third key theme that runs throughout the research, consultations, and analysis in these studies is the fundamental role the media, donors, and the public play in enabling INGOs to meet the objectives identified in this initiative. All the thematic studies addressed in some form the effects of the intense focus from the media, donors, and the public. While such focus was instrumental to the unprecedented generosity in funding tsunami recovery, it also brought some challenges, such as pressures to act quickly and to focus mainly on service delivery. This meant some equally important aspects of humanitarian assistance, such as accountability to affected populations, the need to prioritize coordination, strengthening local capacity, and basing recovery on a human-rights approach, were sidelined. Unrealistic expectations of rapid results characterized the public response to the tsunami relief effort, and both government and private donors remain reluctant to fund critical long-term initiatives such as disaster preparedness, training, and promotion of human rights. Both INGOs and donors have a role to play in terms of enhancing the kind of informed and responsible giving that can better ensure that critical aspects of recovery are not pushed aside in the pressure to act quickly.

INGO reform efforts of recent years have focused on the three areas discussed above – building better partnerships for sustainable recovery; promoting optimal standards of professional conduct; and helping ensure informed and responsible giving – and the INGO agencies, consortia, and networks involved in this initiative have made significant progress in all three areas. Through this initiative, they have made a renewed call to action, informed particularly by their experiences in post-tsunami recovery. Importantly, they have made firm commitments, designed to ensure that their recommendations are translated into action, and that there is public reporting on efforts to meet the objectives described in these reports.

In terms of building better partnerships for sustainable recovery, the INGOs engaged in this initiative agreed that INGOs should accelerate and expand efforts to recognize and promote the leadership of local communities, local aid groups, and, where appropriate, affected governments in recovery from major disasters; and that INGOs should make the strengthening of local capacity in recovery from an emergency a priority equal to that of service delivery. There is a commitment to increase investments in local capacity building and report systematically on such activities; undertake audits to measure INGO accountability to local populations; develop and articulate strategies for protecting and promoting human rights in emergency response programs; and otherwise enhance capacity to collaborate and coordinate with local communities. There is also commitment to report publicly over the course of the next year on efforts to achieve these objectives.

In terms of an NGO quality assurance initiative, there was agreement that INGOs should promote optimal standards of professional conduct in their humanitarian response. There is a commitment that INGO agencies, consortia, and networks should promote a common agreement on professional standards to ensure quality management, successful service delivery, and effective engagement with local communities, building on existing guidelines and standards. INGOs should draw on existing quality assurance initiatives to develop a mechanism to promote and verify optimal standards of performance by INGOs, and report publicly over the course of the next year on efforts to meet these objectives.

Finally, the INGOs agreed on the need for a call for informed and responsible giving, according to which donors should support actions that reflect best humanitarian and development practices, recognizing that recovery is a long-term process, while INGOs should increase their efforts to educate the public and the media on the components and nature of effective and sustainable disaster preparedness and response. There is a commitment to undertake joint and concerted efforts to raise awareness among institutional donors and the general public on the key recommendations of the NGO Impact Initiative and the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship, and to report publicly over the course of the next year on efforts to meet this objective.

Accountability to Affected Populations

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Accountability Working Group was convened for the NGO Impact Initiative by the American Red Cross (Robert Laprade and Christopher Herink) and Mercy Corps (Nancy Lindborg, George Devendorf and Paul Majorowitz). Sara Davidson (Consultant) was the lead author.

I. Background

Accountability has been defined as 'the processes through which an organization makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities.'[1] This short document looks at how international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) included local communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the response to the tsunami of 2004.

Since 1994, NGOs have increasingly recognised a duty of accountability to the victims and survivors of man-made and natural disasters. The 1994 *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* established accountability to affected populations as a right – at least in theory – and a key component of principled and effective humanitarian assistance.

The duty of accountability to affected populations is acknowledged in numerous national and international NGO self-regulatory initiatives, including those of the Sphere Project and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership-International (HAP).[2] In 2003, 11 donor governments endorsed *Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship* that request beneficiary involvement 'to the greatest possible extent' in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.[3] Earlier this year, 11 international advocacy NGOs signed a new *Accountability Charter*.[4]

Accountability to intended beneficiaries has received further support from initiatives that have developed practice and tools. These include:

- The Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance (ALNAP)

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[1] Blagescu, M; L. de Las Casas, and R. Lloyd. 2005. *Pathways to Accountability: A Short Guide to the GAP Framework.* One World Trust. Additional definitions are offered below.

[2] See http://www.allavida.org/alliance/0512-NGOchart2.pdf

[3] www.reliefweb.int/ghd/Stockholm%20-%20GHD%20Principles%20and%20IP.doc

4www.greenpeace.org/australia/resources/reports/general/international-non-governmental-2

- Do No Harm

- The Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project

- The Global Accountability Project (GAP)

- Mango

- People in Aid

See Annex 1 of this paper for more information about these initiatives.

Yet although international NGOs and their donors have invested heavily in such initiatives, accountability to disaster victims remains a significant challenge. Self-regulatory initiatives have lacked teeth. With notable exceptions, most standards have remained high-level principles without compliance mechanisms, third-party certification, or a critical mass of institutions able or willing to put them into practice.[5] Time after time, evaluations have found that, while those more powerful are heeded, the men, women and children affected by emergencies often remain without a voice in humanitarian response. In the worst cases, this has increased their vulnerability to violence and gender-based exploitation.[6]

The findings and recommendations highlighted below draw on the work and experience of agencies in the field after the tsunamis. Consultations and roundtables invited input from senior managers, accountability advisers and people affected by the tsunami in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India. The project also draws upon extensive research, including evaluations by the Disasters Emergency Committee, the Fritz Institute, The Listening Project, Transparency International, the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) and the work of over 50 government and non-government agencies, academic institutions and inter-agency initiatives. In recognition of the extensive work already accomplished by leading quality and accountability initiatives, this short report does not seek to reproduce or describe in depth the specific standards, tools and operational guidelines offered by those consortia. For further information, readers are directed to the initiatives listed in Annex 1 and to the publications included in Annex 2.

This report aims to support international NGOs in 'building back better' where accountability to people affected by disasters is concerned. First, it identifies some examples of accountability in practice during the tsunami response. Next, it seeks to identify some barriers to accountability for international humanitarian agencies. It concludes with three key recommendations for the international NGO sector.

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5 Exceptions include AusAid, Child Sponsorship Accreditation Project (US), Maryland Council of Non-Profit Organizations (US), the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, and People In Aid.
[6] E.g. Save the Children UK. May 2006. *From Camp to Community: Liberia Study on Exploitation of Children*

II. Accountability in Action during the Tsunami Response

During consultation in the field, staff of national and international agencies in Indonesia and Sri Lanka described activities that exemplified experience, technical expertise and innovation in accountability to tsunami-affected people.

This report draws on the work of agencies both new and established in these countries and on the perspective of local NGOs. Those agencies working in affected regions before the tsunami hit, benefited from having been 'on the ground.' This gave them access to communities and offices with which they had worked previously. As they saw it, they had begun to lay the foundations for accountability long before disaster arrived by building knowledge of local languages and understanding of social and government structures.[7] On the other hand, NGOs more recently arrived in affected regions, and sometimes supported by private funders themselves new to humanitarian response, saw in the tsunami response opportunities for innovation. One of our field informants in Aceh cited "cash for work" and efforts to rebuild local tourism capacity as examples of such innovation.

Inter-agency initiatives such as the Sphere Project, HAP, the ECB Project and Mango provided some NGOs with accountability tools. HAP partly funded an accountability position with one agency in Aceh. NGOs' own quality and accountability advisers and mechanisms such as "complaints and response" procedures are indicators that these accountability initiatives are influencing the sector.

The Indonesian Government's Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Board (BRR) in Aceh, and Sri Lanka's Human Rights Commission also had in place beneficiary accountability mechanisms. These included complaints forms in local newspapers or on the web, and information centres with a complaints and response function. Participants in the roundtable we held in India, and people we interviewed in Indonesia and Sri Lanka endorsed the view that NGOs should support established government accountability mechanisms wherever possible, in order to strengthen local leadership, participation and governance, both during a disaster response and after international NGOs depart.

Presented below are some examples of accountability in action – of how international NGOs involved affected people in planning, implementing and evaluating tsunami response operations. We arrange these discussions in accordance with the four 'dimensions of accountability' according to the GAP:

- Transparency
- Participation
- Evaluation
- Complaints and response mechanisms.[8]

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[7] Oxfam International. December 2005. *Tsunami Accountability Report*; Field interview Sri Lanka
[8] Definition in Blagescu et al. op. cit.

Transparency[9]

Transparency is the provision of accessible and timely information to stakeholders and the opening of organizational procedures, structures and processes to their assessment.

Interviewees described the importance of providing people affected by the tsunami with information about their agency, the work it did, beneficiary entitlements and feedback.

Examples included face-to-face information from project staff or specialist information officers in some agencies. Other examples included bulletin boards in villages or at local government offices, public meetings and inter-agency meetings, advertisements in local newspapers or sponsored radio programs. Information at the start — or end — of a program was fundamental. It gave affected people the potential to participate and challenge.

An approach to transparency from Sri Lanka
In Ampara, soon after the tsunami, we created a program committee. We held a big public meeting, and asked people to identify 15 volunteers to support the work. We did the needs analysis with these volunteers. For transparency, we put up the beneficiaries' list on a public notice board with the criteria used to select them. We gave the community one week to look at the list and raise complaints. In Batticaloa, we did the same thing. [In another case] after selection of beneficiaries we tallied the list with the Fisheries Department and got them to put it on a notice board. We are bringing out a 4-page leaflet [about our work] so people know. *–Field Interview, Sri Lanka*

Participation[10]

Participation is the process through which an organization enables key stakeholders to play an active role in the decision-making process and activities which affect them.

Examples from the tsunami response included use of focus groups; development of women's committees; inter-communal citizens' and professional groups and stakeholder representatives at district level. These provided input and feedback into programs and projects.

NGOs were seen as a primary source of assistance in some areas affected both by conflict and tsunami. In conflict areas, some government agencies and private contractors feared to work, and NGO staff themselves did so at considerable personal risk. These NGOs aided participation by those vulnerable to war and poverty and contributed to equitable and inclusive provision in divided communities.

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[9] Definition in Blagescu et al. op. cit.
[10] ibid.

Long-term presence makes it easier to mount an inclusive response

One agency that had been working with community-based organizations in affected areas found that its work over many years had influenced how displaced people responded to the tsunami. In camps for the displaced, groups set about establishing structures and processes based on an inclusive model that deliberately sought to target the most vulnerable. In several cases, this meant addressing issues such as:

- Child protection

- Ensuring women's needs were met

- Equitable distribution of relief goods both between and across camps.

[Beneficiaries and local partner agencies] were able ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized were addressed and that relief reached all without discrimination.

Source: Roche, C., N. Kasynathan, and P. Gowthaman. 2005 "Bottom-up Accountability and the Tsunami."

Evaluation[11]

Evaluation here refers to the processes through which an organization, with involvement from key stakeholders, monitors and reviews its progress and results against goals and objectives; feeds learning from this back into the organization on an ongoing basis; and reports on the results of the process.

During the tsunami response, beneficiaries were involved in formal and informal monitoring and progress reviews, using for example:

- Feedback meetings
- Citizens' Action Groups
- Surveys among beneficiaries in the field

In one agency, informal feedback led to a change of local partner after beneficiaries in Sri Lanka questioned timeliness and quality of work (Field interview, Sri Lanka). In Aceh, an ongoing program of participatory evaluation, supported by consultants, informed the design of future projects (see below).

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[11] Blagescu et al. op. cit.

Involving People Affected by the Disaster in Evaluation

Our Cash for Work initiative had three goals:

- To provide cash to individuals and families for immediate needs;

- To clear essential infrastructure, such as roads, and prepare villages for return; and

- To provide individuals and families who lost livelihoods and family members with productive and constructive work.

Preliminary analysis of 714 surveys administered to approximately 10% of program beneficiaries suggests that 81% of respondents had no source of income apart from their Cash for Work payment. Ninety-two per cent said that this income helped them return to their villages. This information will help us to target its livelihood programs assistance. Results will be analyzed by the Johns Hopkins Center for Refugee and Disaster Response, published, and distributed to interested parties.

Source: Mercy Corps. June 2005. Aceh Village Clean-up, Final Report.

Evaluation and Reporting in Aceh

Three international NGOs took part in the Listening Project in Aceh. Seven teams each comprising one Indonesian and one international, visited three areas of Aceh.

A team would arrive in a village and strike up a conversation with whomever was available and willing to talk. Team members told people that, as individuals engaged in international assistance work, they were interested to hear from them how they saw these efforts. The teams listened to over three hundred people, including older people and youth; officials and citizens; men and women; people in urban and rural areas; direct tsunami and/or conflict victims and people not directly affected; people who had received a great deal of assistance and people who had not; people who held leadership positions and those who felt marginalized.

The report was shared via the agencies and local networks that participated, and translated into Indonesian to be shared with local counterparts. A similar exercise has now been conducted in Bosnia.

Source: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. November 2005. Report of Listening Project, Aceh, Indonesia.

Complaints and response mechanisms[12]

These are mechanisms through which an organization enables its stakeholders to address complaints against its decisions and actions and through which it ensures that these complaints are properly reviewed and acted upon.

Transparency, participation and evaluation measures increase opportunities for feedback and accountability. But even the best-managed NGOs need channels through which beneficiaries, field staff and other stakeholders can voice concerns and receive an appropriate response.[13] And, while accountability in any sector is easier to value than to cost, a complaints mechanism may more readily be analysed in terms of direct cost and benefit.[14] Examples of complaints and response mechanisms employed during the tsunami response included:

- Complaints boxes in IDP camps
- The formation of a local complaints evaluation committee
- Support for inter-agency mechanisms at local and district level

Development proceeded despite significant challenges in conflict-affected areas or for particularly vulnerable groups. The following examples are from Sri Lanka.

A Joint Complaints Evaluation Committee

An evaluator found that at the start of one project, beneficiaries could not make complaints, in part because rigorous office security made it hard for them to access staff there. However, program staff noted the need for such a mechanism. A 'Complaints Evaluation Committee' was set up with input and cooperation from the local Divisional Secretariat. The committee included representatives of the local mosque, the Divisional Secretary and the agency itself.

Source: Lee, A. C. K. Real Time Evaluation of Medair's 'Tsunami Emergency Response' Program in Sri Lanka Field Visit May 29 – June 9, 2005.

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[12] Blagescu et al. op. cit.

[13] ibid.

[14] Involve. 2005. *TheTrue Cost of Public Participation.*; see the case of Medair in ECB Project. May 2006. *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies, the 'Good Enough' Guide*, (draft).

Gender Watch: Taking Action on Complaints by Women

A local women's organization formed Gender Watch, and involved local and international non-government organizations. Gender Watch enables women to report domestic violence, sexual harassment and problems with discrimination. The organizers document violations in camps for displaced people and distribute information to international agencies and the government. Their interventions have had results:

- Suspension of a government officer

- Protection for five orphaned children

- Providing women with access to oral contraceptives

- Facilitating access to police after domestic violence

- Provision of temporary shelters for single women who had been excluded because they lacked papers

- Registering women for ration cards

Source: Roche et al. op cit.

III. Barriers to Accountability in the Tsunami Response

Some of the barriers to accountability, such as lack of coordination between agencies or professional training for field staff, are discussed at length within companion reports prepared for this initiative.[15]

No common framework on accountability

One of the challenges for international NGOs is that they continue to lack a common framework and 'language' of accountability — as indicated by the different definitions in the box below. The absence of a common framework was not an insuperable barrier, as the examples above show. However, it makes sectoral action, learning and the work of individual agencies harder. For example, individual NGOs were deterred from 'poking their heads above the parapet' and transparently describing challenges faced and lessons learned during the response for fear of unfair criticism. One result in Aceh and Sri Lanka was blanket condemnation of apparently 'unaccountable NGOs' in the local press.

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[15] See for example, the other thematic reviews by this project, on: Coordination; Human Rights and Tsunami Recovery; and NGO Professionalism.

Some Definitions of Accountability

Accountability is the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognised authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions.
– *Edwards & Hulme, 1995, quoted in ALNAP* [16]

Making sure the men, women and children affected really do have a say in planning, implementing and judging our response to their emergency.
- *ECB Project*

The processes through which an organization makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities. *-GAP*

Accountability is the means by which power is used responsibly. *- HAP*

'Accountability' means explaining what you have done and taking responsibility for the results of your actions. This includes explaining how you have used funds. *- Mango*

Local visibility for quality and accountability initiatives developed by and for international NGOs, such as HAP and the Sphere Project remained low. Higher profile and more technical outreach in the field could support learning and transparency. It could also aid understanding of the different approaches to accountability and work towards common or equivalent frameworks.

Money: The driving force

Lack of funding is frequently cited as a reason why the humanitarian sector has not done more to integrate accountability to beneficiaries into previous emergency responses. After the 2004 tsunami, funds were available rapidly and on an unprecedented scale. Despite this, few informants perceived a *systemic* accountability 'dividend.' On the contrary, many argued that generous public funding had discouraged humanitarian actors from prioritizing accountability to affected populations during the tsunami response. In the eyes of some informants, including local NGOs, intense media attention had led to international NGOs simplifying funding messages. This left NGOs tied to projects based around highly visible forms of assistance such as houses and boats, which were most easily presented to 'northern' donor publics. Such projects were, they believed, driven more by fundraising opportunities than by humanitarian imperative and the needs identified by beneficiaries (Field interview, Sri Lanka).

> *Tsunami response was about the need to give not the need to receive.* – Field interview, Aceh

> *People are generous [but] NGOs forget that it's so much to do with people not tents. . . . NGOs were pulled into a competition for photo-opportunities.* – Field interview, Sri Lanka

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[16] ALNAP. 2005. *Assessing the Quality of Humanitarian Evaluations: the ALNAP Quality Proforma*

Two local NGOs reported that they had turned down funding but that others, overwhelmed, had closed (Field interview, Sri Lanka). The largest and most experienced NGOs struggled to absorb additional funding and expand their field teams in order to deliver programs on an unprecedented scale, work outside their areas of recognised expertise, or both.

> *We went from a zero presence to 800-900 staff in Aceh. We are running a marathon and tying our shoes at the same time.* — Field interview, Aceh

> *Housing? We shouldn't have done it. But we raised money for it.* — Field interview, Sri Lanka

"Too many agencies"

As in other emergencies, initial response to the tsunami was overwhelmingly local. Private individuals and the local community, supported by government, NGOs, religious organizations and the military provided the first assistance. [17] The unprecedented generosity of donor publics lowered barriers to entry into humanitarian response for first time players — public and private organizations with no previous experience of overseas aid.

> *New agencies came in with a good heart but no experience. – Field interview, Sri Lanka*

The broad-based response was seen as effective immediately after the tsunami. It brought rapid and impartial attention to immediate relief needs, including those in conflict-affected communities. In Aceh, one effect of the response was a contribution to peace, though in Sri Lanka, areas affected both by conflict and tsunami are once again at war.

International NGOs sometimes competed for brand, beneficiaries and personnel with both local and international counterparts. Some agencies 'undercut' one another, offering grants in a village where another offered loans, or paid above the going rate in cash-based programs (Field interview, Sri Lanka).

Competition for beneficiaries, while inefficient and drawing criticism in interviews and evaluations could be to beneficiaries' advantage. With so many suppliers of similar goods and services, individuals and whole communities could 'shop around.'

> *If I am not happy with [this agency] I go to another. – Field interview, Aceh*

> *People want delivery. While we were building consensus, [the other agency] was building the road. We were discussing it with the community and local authorities then [the other agency] came and built it in a couple of days. The community liked it. – Field interview, Sri Lanka*

There were numerous stories of individuals in receipt of multiple boats, houses and grants from government and non-government agencies whether through opportunism or corruption.[18]

For many beneficiaries, however, 'shopping around' followed not only tragedy and loss but a perception of promises broken. Duplication in one area or program meant inequity and

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[17] Fritz Institute. 2005. *Perceptions of Effectiveness, Rescue, Relief and Rehabilitation in Tsunami-Affected Indonesia Sri Lanka and India.*

[18] Alailima, P. J. July 2006. *The Tsunami Reconstruction Response: Sri Lanka.* Transparency International Sri Lanka.

deprivation in another where agencies were few and where less powerful individuals and groups were unable to pay bribes or enforce legitimate claims.

"Not enough time"

While some saw accountability to affected populations as a means to save time and money, others saw accountability as an unreasonable expectation, given the pressure to respond quickly in an emergency environment. Staff saw few incentives for themselves or their organizations or donors. Yet informants also described errors and omissions by agencies working at speed. Such mistakes jeopardised the credibility of NGOs and were seen as threatening the sustainability of already fragile eco-systems and the interests of future generations.

> *[One agency] was supposed to bring drinking water. They delivered plastic tanks but never filled them and then left. They ripped off this village. – Field interview, Sri Lanka*

> *Most of the organizations here before the tsunami used participatory methodology. The newly arrived organizations have done something urgent and left. For example, 12-13,000 boats were lost and 30,000 provided. So now there is over-fishing. – Field interview, Sri Lanka*

Nevertheless, the TEC reported that affected people in Sri Lanka felt they were consulted less in late 2005 than during the initial relief phase.[19]

Some field managers thought that institutional funders, including, in some cases, their own agencies, slowed the pace of response to the detriment of accountability. Red tape or organizational mindset delayed the award of contracts, partnership funding or project changes even while pressure to implement fast remained high.

Ambitious project deadlines betrayed sometimes unrealistic expectations. Land, environmental and construction issues in earthquake-prone, coastal and conflict-affected areas required lengthy negotiations with government, contractors and community. Time was needed to rebuild lives as well as houses.[20] Zoning, procurement or the absence of beneficiary lists, none of these the sole responsibility of NGOs, caused delays. Location or lack of infrastructure sometimes left new houses empty (Field interviews, Aceh and Sri Lanka).

"Lack of institutional commitment to accountability"

Issues of time and money, discussed above, are commonly cited as barriers to field activities in emergency response. Yet examples of accountability in action after the tsunami suggest that where one agency saw a barrier another saw a possibility. What made the greatest difference in the field, in the eyes of informants, was leadership by NGOs and donors. Institutional commitment at headquarters, regional and field levels was crucial if accountability to beneficiaries was to become a reality.

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[19] Christoplos, I. July 2006. *Links between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in the Tsunami Response.* TEC
[20] Ibid.

> *Though field staff are the ones that must act accountably or otherwise to the people they serve . . . it is organizational leaders that define priorities and use of resources. – Written submission, UK*

Some interviewees regretted agency stances that, as far as accountability was concerned, did not always focus on beneficiaries. In the view of many interviewed, the sector saw its primary accountability — even its prime beneficiary — as donors or host country governments.

> *Over time there has been increasing emphasis on accountability to beneficiaries. But our hierarchy of accountability is: 1) the government; 2) donors; 3) beneficiaries. – Field interview, Sri Lanka*

> *Managers are too busy being accountable to the powerful—their donors, government authorities, the media—to have time to be accountable to the powerless. – Written submission, UK*

> *Resources are not the problem. Commitment is the problem. Stop worrying about the donor. Start worrying about the people. That's what accountability's all about. – Field interview, Aceh*

Accountability specialists and teams often covered more than one policy area or large regions with limited staff. The interest of individual managers often drove the priority placed on accountability. Program budgets did not always include provisions for accountability and, if included as an overhead cost, accountability was vulnerable to institutional cuts. Organizations typically had few opportunities to train staff and make accountability practices standard. Sharing of good practices rarely took place.[21] Often, field staff learned about accountability while in the course of implementing projects, if at all. Too few people in the field during emergencies had extensive knowledge or relevant experience.

The concerns that drive accountability – governance, social cohesion and social justice, quality, capacity building and learning, and reputation – also drive humanitarian work. [22] Yet the leadership needed to embed and respond to these concerns was not yet in place. Without it, accountability to affected populations remained a weak area both for NGOs and for institutional donors. There remained too large a gap between the policies and codes publicly endorsed and how this commitment worked in the field (Written submission, Geneva).

> *Despite the various accountability initiatives that exist, there is not yet a real commitment to accountability to beneficiaries across the humanitarian sector that goes beyond platitudes and into actual practice. – Written submission, UK*

> *The buy-in on this stuff hasn't come down. It's written into the strategic plan by people who are very clever and who have since moved on. – Field interview, Aceh*

> *In Aceh we set up a program where the sky is the limit. But we didn't build capacity and sacrificed quality. . . . All the internal challenges become challenges at field level. – Field interview, Aceh*

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[21] Exceptions included Oxfam GB's internal workshops in Sri Lanka, Aceh and India in 2006.
[22] Involve. 2005. *The True Cost of Public Participation.*(adapted)

IV. Key Recommendations

As noted at the outset, this paper does not attempt to reproduce the recommendations of tsunami evaluations nor set out detailed standards and operational steps on accountability. In endorsing the work of existing accountability initiatives that have provided such guidance, this paper does however make three general recommendations designed to help improve the performance of operational agencies where accountability to affected populations is concerned.

1. Know Where You Stand

International NGOs should conduct an accountability audit.

The Audit Should...
...cover the four dimensions of accountability: transparency, participation, evaluation and complaints and response mechanisms. It should identify: 1. The agency's own policies on accountability to beneficiaries 2. Relevant codes and guidelines it endorses, such as those drafted by the Sphere Project, HAP or ECB 3. Oversight mechanisms that scrutinise policy and practice on non-financial accountability in the field, in its executive structure and on the board 4. Human and financial resources for implementing accountability at headquarters, at field level and within projects 5. How information about relevant policies and codes adopted and performance achieved is disclosed to key stakeholders, including beneficiaries, staff, supporters and the media The draft principles and standards of HAP, Sphere's *Common Standard 1*, the GAP and the *People in Aid Code* provide valuable reference points or benchmarks. These initiatives, the ECB Project's forthcoming '*Good Enough' Guide* and Mango provide generic accountability tools for field use. Technical support to conduct the accountability 'audit' may reside within an agency, with external evaluators, auditors or consultants. Sectoral accountability initiatives and specialists in non-financial auditing in other settings may also provide technical support.

They should review systems, identify strengths and weaknesses and schedule follow-up action that enhances the organization's accountability to humanitarian beneficiaries.

The international NGO sector and institutional donors should realise their respective investments in existing accountability initiatives, particularly those listed in Annex 1 and in the *Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship*. Whether or not an agency formally endorses the accountability principles of initiatives such as Sphere or HAP, it is likely to achieve efficiencies if using materials and mechanisms developed by its peers and for the humanitarian sector.

NGO accountability can also be encouraged by the appointment of an agency accountability champion, such as a trustee or board member, to help focus institutional leadership and enhance scrutiny of accountability to the people who are central to an agency's mission and mandate. [23]

2. Secure the Money and Personnel Needed to Do the Job

Humanitarian organizations should demonstrate unequivocal commitment to accountability to people affected by emergencies by allocating adequate financial and human resources to the task. Line items in project budgets should include the personnel and funds needed to ensure accountability to beneficiaries.

Through joint advocacy – within their own organizations and with institutional donors – international NGOs should advocate for funding for accountability as an integral part of humanitarian response, for more flexible funding terms, faster contract procedures, extended timelines, and discretionary funds for relief and recovery activities. This will provide NGO staff in the field with the ability and incentive to respond quickly, effectively and inclusively and to adapt programs in response to inequity or changing realities on the ground.

3. Focus on the Field

International NGOs should, as a matter of urgency, raise the visibility and increase the presence of initiatives such as the Sphere Project, HAP and the ECB Project where they matter most – in the field. Sectoral quality and accountability initiatives represent issues of fundamental importance to humanitarian agencies, yet compete with full workloads, rapid turn-over, short corporate memories and the entry of new agencies into humanitarian assistance.

Roving advisors or regional offices could provide coaching, workshops, technical support and consulting, and could help establish a 'common' or at least an 'equivalent' language and framework for accountability. Those filling these field roles need to be ambassadors and ombudsmen as well as technical advisors. They could make standards, guidelines and tools more accessible to individual agencies and groups of agencies. Such specialists would also be well-placed to advise on accountability measures that are most effective when employed collectively in the sector. Examples of these in the tsunami included complaints and response procedures, gender-based violence and child protection measures, and mechanisms that supported accountability initiatives by government to the people.

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[23] Cf. Blagescu et al. op. cit.

Annex 1: Accountability Initiatives

ALNAP. ALNAP is an international network which aims to promote a culture of learning across the humanitarian sector in order to improve performance. Publications include *Participation by Crisis-affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: Practitioners' Handbook* www.alnap.org

Do No Harm. Do No Harm identifies ways in which humanitarian and development assistance can help people disengage from fighting and develop systems to settle problems that prompt conflict. *The Listening Project* links perceptions of aid effectiveness to quality improvements. www.cdainc.com

Emergency Capacity Building Project. The ECB was set up to address gaps in emergency response and to improve the speed, quality and effectiveness of NGOs working in emergencies. Oxfam will publish ECB's *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: the 'Good Enough Guide'* in 2007. www.ecbproject.org

Global Accountability Project. The GAP framework was developed in 2001 with the aim of enhancing the accountability of international NGOs, inter-governmental organizations and trans-national corporations to the individuals and communities they affect. www.oneworldtrust.org

HAP. The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership-International was founded in 2003 by a group of agencies wishing to make humanitarian work more accountable to its beneficiaries. In 2007, HAP International will publish its Manual of Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management. www.hapinternational.org

Mango. Mango's mission is to strengthen the financial management of NGOs working in humanitarian aid and development. Its *Who Counts?* campaign and materials encourage NGO staff to provide financial reports to their beneficiaries. www.mango.org

People in Aid. The People in Aid Code of Good Practice is comprised of seven principles on management, support and training of field staff. Compliance can be externally monitored using social accountability and a certification process. Key publications include *The People in Aid Code of Good Practice: Implementation Manual.* www.peopleinaid.org

The Sphere Project. Launched by humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, the *Sphere Handbook* includes standards for four sectors of humanitarian assistance. Common Standard 1 focuses on participation by beneficiaries and is supported by a web-based *Documents Database.* www.sphereproject.org

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Annex 3: Contributors

We would like to thank individuals from the following organisations who contributed to this document through interviews, round-table discussions, questionnaire response or feedback on draft documents. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policy of these organizations.

BRR

ACFID, Australia

AIDMI, Chennai

ALNAP

ARC, Aceh; Colombo; USA

Arugam Bay Tourist Association, Sri Lanka

Arugam Bay Community Task Force, Sri Lanka

British High Commission, Colombo

Canadian Red Cross, Aceh

CARE, Aceh; Colombo; USA

Catholic Relief Services, USA

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, USA

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Colombo

Consortium of NGOs for Trincomalee District, Sri Lanka

DEC UK

ECB Project

ECHO, Colombo

Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, USA

Forsikal, Aceh

Foundation for Co-Existence, Colombo

Government of Tamil Nadu

Habitat for Humanity International, Sri Lanka

HAP, Geneva

Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, USA

Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

ICVA, Geneva

Indonesian Red Cross Society/ Palang Merah Indonesia, Aceh

InfoAceh

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Colombo; Geneva

IMC

International Organisation for Migration, Aceh

IRC

Kosma, Aceh

LEADS, Sri Lanka

Mercy Corps, Aceh; Colombo, Ampara and Arugam Bay, Sri Lanka; USA

Muslim Aid Indonesia, Aceh

One World Trust, UK

Oxfam Australia

Oxfam GB, Aceh; Colombo; UK

Oxfam India

Plan International

Provincial Health Office, Aceh

Rabita Taliban Aceh

Reconstruction and Development Agency, Colombo

Refugees International

Sarvodaya, Colombo

Save the Children, USA

SCHR, Geneva

Sewalanka, Colombo

The Sphere Project, Geneva

Sri Lanka Red Cross Society

SWOAD Akkaraipattu, Sri Lanka

Tearfund, Colombo; UK

Transparency International, Colombo

TEC

UNDP, Aceh

UN OCHA, Colombo

VOICE, Brussels

WVI, Aceh; Colombo; Geneva; USA

Coordination

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Coordination Working Group was convened for the NGO Impact Initiative by
International Medical Corps (Mary Pack) and
Save the Children US (Rudolph von Bernuth).
Margie Ferris-Morris (Consultant) was the lead author.

I. Background

The main objective of this report is to help international non-governmental organizations (INGOs)[1] reflect on coordination during the tsunami experience. It focuses on issues that arose during the tsunami, exemplary practices from the tsunami and other emergencies, and field-generated recommendations for improved coordination. It is not a comprehensive review of the literature or a list of recommendations to resolve all the issues that have beset humanitarian emergencies for decades. The reviewers recognize that improvements in coordination may take time, especially when humanitarian coordination involves many actors with different agendas.

Over the past decade initiatives including the *Logical Framework* (early 1990s); the *Red Cross Code of Conduct* (1994); the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP, 1997); People in Aid (1997); the Sphere Project: *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (1998); the Humanitarian Accountability Project (now Partnership) (HAP, 2001); and the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (2003) have been launched to improve humanitarian response including coordination in emergencies. These aspects of response are linked to improving local capacities, addressing protection and human rights,[2] improving humanitarian aid practices, and encouraging greater ownership of humanitarian aid outcomes. While the humanitarian sector has improved coordination of relief operations, great potential for improvement remains.[3]

This review focuses on the constraints, challenges and opportunities faced by international, national and local NGOs in coordinating efforts to respond to natural disasters.[4] Many studies, donors, and humanitarian relief workers in the field identify lack of coordination as a major – if not the most critical – issue that contributed to problems during the tsunami response, including critical gaps in service delivery and duplication of efforts.

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[1] INGOs refer to international non-governmental organizations and NGOs refer to both national and local non-governmental organizations unless otherwise specified.
[2] See for example the UN-NGO Impact Initiative papers on Human Rights, Accountability, Professionalism and Local Capacity Building.
[3] Groupe URD. 2005. "Eleven Lessons Learnt from Hurricane Mitch and the Earthquakes in El Salvador Which Might Be Useful for the Tsunami Response." Paris.
[4] Although this paper focuses on coordination issues that arise during natural disasters and does not fully address coordination during complex emergencies, many of its recommendations are helpful for both settings.

The Coordination Working Group process has been consistent with that employed by all five NGO Impact Initiative Working Groups. The group circulated a concept paper identifying major issues of concern for input from INGOs and local and national NGOs and conducted a broad literature review (see Annexes 1 and 2). Based on preliminary consultations, the following topics became the chief focus of the Coordination Working Group:

- Access to practical and efficient tools for needs assessment, information management and communication;

- UN, government and donor coordination structures and strategies;

- NGO institutional culture, views and issues.

The group participated in consultations with INGOs, NGOs and government and civil society representatives in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka during July and August 2006. In Aceh, Indonesia, the consultation engaged over 100 participants, approximately half of whom represented local and national NGOs. Almost half of the 40 participants in the Colombo, Sri Lanka consultation represented local and national NGOs. Those unable to attend the Sri Lanka event for security reasons were invited to offer input by email. Consultations in Chennai, India, involved INGOs, NGOs, trade unions, UN coordination bodies and Government of Tamil Nadu officials. The group also received input from members of the Impact Initiative Consultative Committee, such as ACFID, HAP and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. We summarize below our findings and analysis that incorporates input from all these sources (see Annex 3). Our concluding recommendations represent the collective views of the many people who have participated in this reflection process.

The next section introduces the importance of coordination in emergency response, explores coordination roles and challenges, and cites examples of effective coordination during the tsunami response.

II. Coordination of Disaster Relief

Humanitarian actors coordinate efforts during emergencies to address the critical needs of disaster survivors.

While imperfect, definitions of humanitarian coordination generally include the ideal outcome of fair and impartial delivery of aid. The definition UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) uses focuses on roles and responsibilities for coordination in emergencies. It bases humanitarian coordination on the belief that a coherent approach to emergency response will maximize benefits and minimize pitfalls. Through approved structures and policies set out by its Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), OCHA helps actors define common priorities, agree on tactics and jointly monitor progress. As emergencies evolve and needs change, relief agencies and other actors come and go, underscoring the need for ongoing analysis of political, social, economic and military environments and periodic assessment of humanitarian needs. Coordination forums allow actors to analyze relief situations, solve problems, share lessons learned, and build trust, transparency and accountability.

Another definition of coordination focuses on the process, which ideally should yield effective, efficient and coherent delivery of humanitarian services. According to Larry Minear, coordination involves the systematic use of policy instruments to achieve leadership and management of representative bodies, negotiation and maintenance of a serviceable framework with host political authorities, functional division of labor, strategic planning, resource mobilization for integrated programming, data collection and information management, accountability (including to recipient populations), joint advocacy, and identification of gaps and protection issues.[5]

Both definitions maintain that a coherent approach to disaster response will help address critical needs and minimize gaps and duplication of efforts. Activities that contribute to effective communication include developing common strategies, assessing situations and needs, broadly sharing key information to target program response, convening coordination forums, mobilizing and strategically allocating resources, addressing common problems, and sharing coordination mechanisms and tools. Appropriate, effective, efficient and coherent delivery of humanitarian services is vital for transparency and trust among humanitarian players and the communities they serve (see box below).

Systematic Coordination Can Foster:[6]

- Leadership and management of representative bodies;
- Negotiation and maintenance of an operational framework with host political authorities;
- Functional division of labor (including civil-military);
- Strategic planning;
- Resource mobilization for integrated programming;
- Data collection and information management;
- Accountability (including to recipient populations);
- Joint advocacy; and
- Identification of gaps and protection issues.

Several initiatives to strengthen the quality of humanitarian work, such as the Sphere Project and the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHD), stress that coordination and accountability are essential to meet needs, avoid wasted resources, and respect humanitarian principles of human dignity, neutrality and impartiality. The Sphere Project Charter highlights the need for agencies to meet common standards of participation, initial assessment, response, targeting and monitoring and evaluation with coordination amongst agencies as a core part of each standard.[7] The GHD, which sets out 23 guiding principles to help donors provide more

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[5] Adapted from Minear, Larry, U.B.P. Chelliah, Jeff Crisp, John Mackinlay, and Thomas G. Weiss. 1992. "United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis, 1990–1992." Providence, RI: Watson Institute. Cited in Bennett, J., W. Bertrand, C. Harkin, S. Samarasinghe, and H. Wickramatillake. 2006. Coordination of International Humanitarian Assistance in Tsunami-Affected countries. London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

[6] Minear, op.cit.

[7] Sphere Project. 2004. *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.* Chapter 1, pp. 28–39. Sphere Project, Geneva, Switzerland.

rational, coherent humanitarian response in emergencies, requires collaboration and coordination of funding and activities.[8] At the UN level, OCHA is mainly responsible for coordination in humanitarian response.

Along with people in disaster-stricken communities, stakeholders in coordination efforts include government and UN agencies, the military, bilateral and multilateral donors, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies and both local and international NGOs. Although stakeholder objectives may vary, all play unique roles in emergency response and benefit from coordination. OCHA plays the main role in coordinating UN agencies and working with governments, the military and NGOs (see box).

The United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

OCHA's mandate is to coordinate humanitarian emergency response, policy development, and humanitarian advocacy. OCHA carries out its coordination function through the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC), chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The IASC comprises all humanitarian actors from UN agencies, the Red Cross and NGOs. OCHA mechanisms to facilitate coordination and emergency relief include the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), a global network of urban search and rescue experts; UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination Teams (UNDAC) of disaster management professionals who can be rapidly deployed at the request of disaster-stricken countries to assess needs and help support and coordinate domestic and international responders; Relief Web; Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs), Geographic Information Support Team (GIST); Integration Regional Information Networks (IRIN); and Early Warning. Among other emergency relief tools and services, OCHA facilitates logistical support for and relationships between humanitarian and military components of relief operations to encourage the efficient use of military and civil defense assets.

Source: www.ochaonline.org

All stakeholders should consider the costs of coordination, which requires resources. NGOs and INGOs do not always commit resources and staff needed for coordination and collaboration. As one participant during the consultations in Aceh reflected, "*NGOs need to view coordination as a duty not an option."*

The challenges involved in effectively coordinating a large humanitarian response are magnified when hundreds of actors are involved. Natural disasters in a conflict environment that involves attacks or reprisals along with other problems present a protection challenge. In addition to the normal array of humanitarian actors, insurgent groups, paramilitary groups, peace-keeping forces and police may be part of the response in these situations. Effective coordination and information sharing can help protect vulnerable parties and poor coordination can harm disaster-affected populations as well as humanitarian actors. Protection is an important cross-cutting issue that needs to be studied further.[9] The correlation between effective INGO and

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[8] Almost all of the principles of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, launched in 2003, require some level of coordination among donors, but principles 7, 8, and 10 are specifically directed at facilitating coordination among NGOs, governments, and communities.

[9] See also the UN-NGO Impact Initiative paper on Human Rights.

NGO coordination and humanitarian aid outcomes, costs and benefits would also be worthwhile to investigate.

III. Coordination during the Tsunami Response

A major gap identified in the field consultations was *the lack of adequate and representative coordination between INGOs and NGOs.* Field consultations and tsunami evaluations[10] also have highlighted the marginalization of local NGOs, inadequate information sharing, and gaps in or duplication of efforts during the response.[11]

A major gap identified in field consultations was the lack of adequate coordination between INGOs and NGOs.

Abundant funding for the response did not contribute to ideal donor coordination, according to a Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) report. From both the consultations and the literature, the following additional coordination concerns arose:

- Donor and media imperatives superceded the value added of coordination.

- National and local NGOs, and in some cases local governments, lacked qualified staff, time and dedicated funding to facilitate coordination.

- NGOs may not want to be coordinated and often do not agree on who will speak for them.

- Agency branding marked geographic areas or beneficiaries, discouraging other agencies, including national and local NGOs, from providing value-added services.

- Agencies competed for beneficiaries and funding, often perceiving information collection as a means to obtain funding from donors or notice from the media.

- Agency activities were not always channeled through or implemented with government budgetary approval, hampering planning.

- Frequent UN and INGO staff turnover reduced the coherence of humanitarian aid.

- Larger humanitarian agencies poached local agency staff needed by INGOs and the UN for effective local implementation, weakening local agencies' capacity to coordinate.

- International NGOs often saw local NGOs as contractors rather than true partners.

- Aid agencies lacked unified strategic objectives in the response.

- Policy instruments that defined common objectives and strategies or guidance were often weak or dysfunctional.

- NGOs failed to recognize how their contributions could positively (and negatively) impact the bigger coordination picture.

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[10] Bennett, J, W Bertrand, C Harkin, S Samarasinghe and H Wickramatillake. 2006. *Coordination of International Humanitarian Assistance in Tsunami-Affected Countries.* London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.
[11] Field consultations as part of the NGO Impact Initiative process in Sri Lanka and Indonesia noted all of these as problems, while the India consultation mentioned only marginalization of local NGOs.

Many humanitarian actors in the field reported that affected communities had little communication with INGOs and NGOs over issues that affected their lives.[13] At both field and global levels, INGOs and local NGOs voiced a need for more effective representation in umbrella organizations and at the UN to ensure information sharing and adherence to common standards. During the field consultations in Aceh, INGOs and NGOs expressed a desire that an NGO forum be organized for recovery activities and that part of the management design of such a structure should include the designating of one person for lead responsibility for coordination.

Umbrella organizations need to speak for their members as well as listen on their behalf. Respondents perceived a clear and significant leadership gap in coordination. INGOs and NGOs also voiced concerns that poorly organized and ineffectual meetings impaired coordination. Too many meetings that were unfocused, conducted in languages that affected communities could not understand, or did not elicit active input from local participants were disincentives to coordination. Some NGOs and community members felt disenfranchised from the humanitarian aid project cycle because of their nominal input into assessments, strategic planning and project design. The comments below from INGO representatives at the Sri Lanka consultations illustrate some of these concerns.

> *There were problems with donors who discouraged cooperation: Donors requiring such identifiable activities made multi-donor projects difficult to manage, particularly when there was a single activity – for example housing budgets sometimes were too large for one small donor (to manage) yet they were unhappy to share area with another agency.* – Field Interview, Sri Lanka

> *INGO coordination with local actors (such as different religious communities) was poor; more successful coordination could have provided valuable info and knowledge. Of course local actors have no experience coordinating in this way.* – Field Interview, Sri Lanka

While not explicitly about coordination, local and civil society representatives tapped by the Listening Project Aceh reflected some of the outcomes of poor coordination:[5]

Lack of coherence

> *"They gave our village ten boats. But why ten boats? It just seemed arbitrary."*

> Other villages received boats and nets and no fuel. Agencies did not complement the aid so that it could be made useful.

Lack of strategic targeting among NGOs

> People noted being confused. Why did another village get something that theirs did not or why were some people targeted for aid and others in the same village were not?

Lack of sufficient information with communities about the delivery of aid

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[13] NGO Impact Initiative review of coordination roundtable consultations and feedback from concept paper guiding questions in Sri Lanka and India in August 2006, and from Aceh workshop consultations in July 2006.
[5] CDA Collaborative Learning Project. November 2005. *Report of The Listening Project, Aceh, Indonesia*

Temporary shelter 'villages' elected aid coordinators and established village-level committees but aid agencies did not communicate well or frequently enough with these entities. This was also reflected in the consultations in India and Sri Lanka.

Most of these barriers and challenges to coordination are not new. Some are not likely to change dramatically (such as agency branding, media pressures) and are difficult to address, while others can be addressed over time and with collective determination. INGOs and NGOs have a part in this process. On the other hand, participants pointed out that the tsunami was not a typical emergency. The next section addresses recommendations by INGOs and NGOs, acknowledging that donors, UN and governments impact their efforts.

IV. Coordination Innovations and Better Practices

Despite the problems outlined above, new forms of coordination emerged from the tsunami response. National governmental or quasi-governmental disaster coordination groups arose, such as the Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) in Indonesia. District and local entities such as the Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), an NGO umbrella organization in Sri Lanka, took on expanded roles to facilitate coordination. Communities formed committees to interact and coordinate with aid agencies and, in the initial response phase in Sri Lanka, a small group of INGOs worked directly with the government to develop an effective transitional housing policy.

The following examples highlight the elements of effective coordination – donor support including resources; strong leadership in sectoral coordination; established policy instruments such as charters and frameworks; sectoral guidelines, protocols and, in some cases, delineation of indicators; strategic allocation of resources and humanitarian actor responsibilities as a result of effective meetings and collaboration; attendance of decision-makers at coordination meetings; decision-making based on rationalization of aid as well as protection of affected populations; NGO commitment to provide timely information and data using accepted protocols and reporting guidance and efficient division of responsibilities; work with national and local entities that have local environment knowledge and expertise; and, in the case of Malawi, fostering of a learning environment.

The World Health Organization in Sri Lanka is one noteworthy example of coordination at the national level in the health sector (see box below).

> ### Coordination of the Health Sector in Sri Lanka
>
> In Sri Lanka the World Health Organization (WHO) facilitated health sector coordination during the tsunami response. WHO and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health established good cooperation and coordination of international health players during the early relief response phase.
>
> WHO provided INGOs with updated technical expertise and coordinated their health activities. INGOs working in the health sector were invited to weekly WHO meetings to discuss urgent issues and help mitigate disease outbreaks. International organizations attending these meetings then provided information to their local NGO partners. The meetings bolstered national coordination structures, including the Ministry of Health in Colombo and Deputy Provincial Directors of Health Services in tsunami-affected areas.
>
> NGOs reported that WHO's efforts probably helped them avoid critical gaps in geographic coverage and duplication of services and may have decreased operating costs by promoting efficient use of common assets and tools. Good national-level coordination, however, was not matched at the field level, in large part because of lack of trained staff. Field NGOs also reported that the weekly meetings did not address areas of concern to them, such as mental health and laboratory equipment.
>
> Though not perfect, the WHO meetings allowed participants to share lessons learned from other major emergencies. Significantly, WHO tried to involve local health actors through its close relationship with the Ministry of Health and engendered a sense of ownership and participation among local health workers.

Consultation input suggested that, during the recovery phase, it generally worked better when agencies coordinated with local structures that included representatives from communities rather than building new or parallel structures.[15] Local entities are repositories of cultural and historical knowledge, necessary ingredients for coordination and appropriate targeting of aid to vulnerable populations. The box on the next page describes good examples of tsunami coordination close to the community in two tsunami-affected countries.

Examples from outside the tsunami demonstrate other elements that facilitate effective coordination. The model of the *Joint Emergency Operations* in Ethiopia (2000), although not without problems, worked well because the donor provided funds to an appointed "lead" agency that consolidated reports and hosted strategy meetings, reducing the donor-NGO management burden and increasing coherence among INGOs responding to the emergency. When donors such as the UN Border Relief Operations on the Thai-Cambodia border in the mid-1980s and UNHCR in Tanzania during the Rwandan crisis have given money directly to coordinating agencies, the agencies' stronger hand has reportedly led to more successful coordination.[16, 17] In Malawi in 2003, the *Joint Emergency Food Aid Program* (JEFAP) purportedly improved coordination *and* targeting of aid by establishing common guidelines in the context of joint multi-donor, multi-agency food distributions. JEFAP worked with a Learning Support Office (LSO) to facilitate organizational

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[15] There were exceptions, however, such as in the health sector, where trained staff were needed at the local level.

[16] Sommers, M. 2000. "The Dynamics of Coordination." Occasional Paper 40. Providence, RI: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University.

[17] Many authors (Borton 1996, Linear 1999, Sommers 2000, Stephenson 2004) have recommended giving some degree of command authority to the lead coordinating agency to facilitate coordination. Field consultations during this review also showed a desire for stronger leadership in coordination.

learning, including among local NGOs, in humanitarian response. The main stakeholders in the response supported the LSO's efforts.[18]

Building on National Structures to Enhance Coordination in Sri Lanka and India

Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka OCHA took the lead in establishing initial relief coordination mechanisms, while the long established Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) set up a new forum for NGOs and INGOs after the tsunami. The Consortium's role evolved to help INGOs and NGOs, many of which were established before the tsunami, share information and improve networking and coordination. When the UN set up a Strategic Issues Group chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator to bring together key relief partners to solve problems as they emerged, CHA set up a parallel group for NGOs and developed a close working relationship with the UN. The CHA-sponsored group met weekly, with extra sub-groups as needed. An MOU with CHA and the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry has strengthened the coordination and facilitation among INGOs, NGOs, the private sector, and the government. CHA's policymaking and advocacy capacity deserve more support and direction and better definition. CHA also should increase collaboration with the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) to improve relations between NGOs and the government for more effective decision-making.

The Tamil Nadu Tsunami Resource Center (TNTRC), India

Post-emergency in southern India, NGOs asked the UNDP to facilitate coordination of relief efforts. The resulting Tamil Nadu Tsunami Resource Center (TNTRC), a joint initiative of the UN Recovery Team and NGOs, was designed with support from the state government to support recovery and reconstruction. To complement government efforts, the center supports coordination, policymaking and recovery planning, facilitates access to resources and current data, and encourages NGO partnerships. The TNTRC is a conduit for NGO meeting announcements and minutes, activity reports and newsletters. NGOs feel the center has been very useful and would like it to become active in operational and policy issues.

In complex emergencies or protracted wars, coordination mechanisms may take on different roles. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail these differences, it is worth noting a recent, although limited example – the NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI). The NCCI aims to provide a neutral, independent and impartial forum for coordination and information sharing, as well as advocacy for human rights. The NCCI has a charter and guiding principles, requires member agencies to abide by a code of conduct based on that of the Red Cross, and demands professionalism of its members as well as sponsorship by other members. Membership is voluntary, but agencies sign on to a common understanding of the priority of meeting the needs of the Iraqi people. This initiative has other factors in its favor such as strong supportive donors.

While these examples of coordination better practice presented above reflect an improvement of the process, there is a need to better document their impact on affected populations.

IV. Priorities for Improved Coordination

If INGOs want to improve coordination, they need to prioritize it, see it as a duty rather than a choice and actively address barriers identified in the field consultations and literature. In essence,

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[18] Reto Zehnder. 2003. Learning Support Office Malawi. Real Time Evaluation. Echanges Equipement (ee) Switzerland.

INGOs need to look beyond their own institutional needs and look to the broader agenda, the common good to which they respond. Addressing coordination issues also will improve the effectiveness of their own programming and response. This section proposes priority coordination activities drawn from field consultations and, where noted, supported by the literature, for two sets of actors both before and during emergencies: first, INGOs and NGOs, and secondly, the UN, donors, the Red Cross, and governments that impact INGOs and NGOs.

Before an Emergency

The international humanitarian community *must* invest in preparedness planning and put policy instruments in place *before* crises arise.[19]

What takes place in the humanitarian community between emergencies is as important as what happens during the emergency response.

INGOs and NGOs

It is likely that few INGOs or NGOs mention coordination responsibilities in job descriptions or provide training that includes coordination. This simply has not been an institutional priority, although the literature and field consultations stressed the importance of NGOs establishing internal coordination instruments and tools and sharing better practices. The Sphere Project maintains that systematic knowledge and information sharing is fundamental to common und erstanding of problems and effective coordination among humanitarian agencies. INGOs have long paid lip service to the value of sharing assessments, data and protocols and conducting joint assessments and evaluations. Organizational culture, however, and competition for donor funds have inhibited coordination and will likely remain significant barriers to more effective INGO/NGO collaboration unless donors request coordination measures in proposals and fund more collaborative initiatives.

Leaders of organizations should encourage multiple forms of information sharing at all levels to increase organizational learning as well as coordination. Examples were found in field consultations and the literature of networks of umbrella NGO groups working on coordination, accountability, and other issues.[20] Strong leadership was noted as a critical factor in the effectiveness of these efforts, as well as boundary-spanning communications across NGO networks such as the sharing of better practices, protocols and indicators among ACFID, VOICE, VENRO, ICVA, InterAction, SCHA and other umbrella agencies.

UN, Red Cross, Governments and Donors

UN bodies and governments have an important role in facilitating INGO and NGO coordination. These bodies should establish joint criteria for operations and government approval and mechanisms to address problems of and among implementing bodies.[21] Establishing reporting instruments and structures like the BRR in Aceh as well as submitting proposals to a government

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[19] While pre-disaster planning is primarily the responsibility of nation states, INGOs and NGOs can support concrete actions to prevent and respond to emergencies, particularly in states that cannot or will not carry out preparedness planning.

[20] European Consultative Workshop, Geneva, Switzerland, September 25, 2006, and India consultations, August 2006. Examples include Interaction's Working Groups, ICVA's Advocacy Alliance for Humanitarian Action, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded Emergency Capacity Building Project, particularly the initiative on information and technology.

[21] ALNAP and ProVention Consortium. 2005. "South Asia Earthquake 2005: Learning from Previous Earthquake Relief Operations."

entity may discourage agencies from going outside established structures to do their own programming and facilitate coherence in the overall aid response. Experienced personnel should be seconded for this task, and national and local coordinating capacity should be assessed and strengthened to improve coordination with government bodies and communities.

Donors may have more power than any other set of humanitarian actors to exercise a positive influence on coordination

Donors may have more power than any other set of humanitarian actors to exercise a positive influence on coordination. They can "enforce" sector coordination and stabilize coordination structures and systems by funneling funds through certain agencies and can influence power relations between humanitarian actors.[22] To influence more effective coordination, donors should promote shared needs assessment and analysis, take an active role in setting strategies such as the Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP), support advocacy efforts by the Humanitarian Coordinator and IASC for safe and unimpeded access, and promote joint monitoring and evaluation whenever possible.[23] In complex disasters, a different configuration of response and coordination may be needed.

During Humanitarian Response

When an emergency occurs, INGOs and NGOs are obligated to do even more to coordinate their efforts strategically. Elements of this process might include managing representative bodies, assessing relief assistance needs, strategic project planning, convening coordination forums and advocating jointly for key issues (land rights, housing, gender inequality, etc.), including protection of vulnerable groups in coordination forums.

INGOs and NGOs

Assessments. Assessments should be periodic, coordinated among actors and shared with as many stakeholders as possible. The UN, Red Cross and Crescent Societies, INGOs and NGOs should use the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) not only for funding but as a tool for coordination as well. Pre-formatted, downloadable assessment surveys, translated into local languages whenever possible would facilitate the utility of assessments. Additional useful operational tools include community indicators, demographic and socio-economic profiles of beneficiaries and instruments for INGO assessment of local capacity, including the capacity of potential partner NGOs.[24] Agencies could include information technology (IT) communication in training programs. Information and communication tools and systems should be technologically appropriate (GPS, mobile phones) and up to date but not place too great a burden on staff. All these efforts require dedicated resources from the UN, donors and INGOs.

System-wide common tools. System-wide tools such as the Sphere Project's common indicators, the ALNAP guidelines for joint assessments and real-time evaluations, and Humanitarian Information Centers (HIC) make information sharing more efficient. Encouragingly, a number of agencies have conducted joint real-time evaluations and assessments

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[22] Sommers, op.cit.

[23] Willitts-King, Barnaby. July 2006. "Practical Approaches to Needs-Based Allocation of Humanitarian Aid: A Review for Irish Aid on Donor Approaches." *Fourth International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship*, Geneva.

[24] ALNAP and ProVention Consortium. 2005. *South Asia Earthquake 2005: Learning from Previous Recovery Operations*.

using agreed upon methodologies.[25] An added benefit of joint activities is encouragement of interagency learning and sharing. In Aceh, Indonesia, NGOs developed common indicators to measure the impact of their post-tsunami activities. Such efforts should be maintained to monitor material needs and livelihood recovery.

Data collection. The project cycle may be a logical point of entry for coordination among INGOs and NGOs. Joint activities should be undertaken at each stage of the cycle wherever possible, ensuring participation and voice from communities. In the first phase of the tsunami response, as in other emergencies, many organizations collected their own data and operated under their own relief and recovery agendas. Little of the information collected was shared with other agencies or communities that could have benefited from it.

Information sharing. When agencies responding to the tsunami did not use data strategically, programming coherence suffered. Examples made visible by the media are well-known – more fishing boats in Sri Lanka and India than people needed, inadequate attention to land rights or livelihoods, too many shelters in some areas and none in others, along with many other such examples.

Information sharing and communication must focus on addressing gaps and reducing duplication of effort.

The HICs have been a valuable resource for sharing data and information in numerous slower-onset emergencies, but they were initially less effective after the tsunami for a variety of reasons. First, databases need continual updating and input from all humanitarian actors for timely and effective information sharing. The HICs collected data during the first half of 2006 but agencies failed to submit information on changes in their projects, programming, staff, or office locations. Second, no prior agreements existed on how to make HICs fully operational. Third, key agencies relied on their own data sources. Fourth, HIC mapping exercises were at times redundant. Finally, the speed of the onset of the emergency, the lack of pre-defined agreement on information needs and turnover of INGO staff reduced the initial usefulness of the HICs. Agreements between INGOs and HIC coordinators prior to an emergency and reinforced during an emergency would improve their effectiveness in rapid-onset large-scale emergencies.

Meetings. Coordination meetings should be forums for active strategic planning and decision-making to address coherent delivery of aid and services, protection and advocacy of key issues impacting vulnerable groups. Too often inter-agency meetings are used simply to report activities, and the participants are not the real decision-makers. Suggestions for improving the usefulness of coordination meetings noted in field consultations for this review as well as assessments after the 2005 Pakistan earthquake included announcing meetings in local languages through various outlets (radio, meetings, INGOs to NGOs, central gathering points, HICs, UN Cluster meetings). Translators ought to be on hand if needed and translation equipment brought in where possible. Agencies also recommended posting progress reports and management changes on an electronic web site such as a HIC before meetings so that the meetings can focus on critical issues. They also stressed that people with decision-making responsibility attend meetings whenever possible,

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[25] Examples include CARE International/Oxfam GB/World Vision International. 2005. *Multi-agency Evaluation of Tsunami Response: India and Sri Lanka. Final Report*; the *Multi-Agency Evaluation of Tsunami Response: Thailand and Indonesia* undertaken for CARE and World Vision International in 2005; and the joint evaluation by Catholic Relief Services, CARE, World Vision International, and the Save the Children Fund of Niger's food crisis of 2005, reported in Humanitarian Exchange #34.

with junior staff attending only as a backstop measure, and that the chairperson, co-chair, translator and minute taker act as key facilitators. A wide range of invitees from civil society stakeholders such as trade unions, cooperatives, religious institutions and NGO and INGO representatives would better serve the interests of those most in need. To encourage the participation of appropriate decision-makers, meetings ought to be limited in number and short and succinct. Minutes should be circulated and posted on the HIC web site within a day or two after the meeting. The box below shows an ideal meeting agenda suggested by the consultations.

Sample Meeting Agenda

1. Brief overview of current situation by lead agency, UN, government
2. Updated status report of key agency activities (actions taken, when and where, since the last electronic posting), to include local NGO consortia spokespersons
3. Plans and decision-making points for the next day/week/month
4. Discussions, presentations, problem-solving, and advocacy issues
5. Summary of decisions, agencies/persons responsible for further action, and date, time and venue of next meeting

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Obstacles to local representation. Coordination requires balanced and broad local representation. Local and some national NGOs in Indonesia and Sri Lanka felt ignored or marginalized despite their familiarity with local customs and cultures. Language was a major barrier. Even today, there is no system-wide mechanism to address language barriers at the onset of an emergency. In Aceh there was no forum for coordination between INGOs and NGOs. In India, networks were established but the field consultations reported they needed improvement. Lack of coordination with community representatives in both Indonesia and Sri Lanka caused frustration and anger with relief actors, particularly in the housing and livelihood sectors. This lack of representation also meant women were unable to express their needs, increasing their vulnerability to issues requiring protection. The divide between community representatives and humanitarian agencies extended to funding. In Aceh, some donors funded capacity building projects between INGOs and national and local NGOs but would not consider capacity building projects with local communities.

There are encouraging signs in Aceh, where the tsunami monitoring and impact assessment system plans to incorporate a qualitative component to improve beneficiary feedback. The UN Cluster approach, first implemented in the Kashmir earthquake in 2005, aims at an integrated response drawing on the comparative advantages of each UN agency. The Cluster approach is still developing, but this review identified weaknesses in cross-cluster coordination and information sharing.[26] Improving coordination and strengthening linkages between INGOs and NGOs, particularly at the local level, can improve the coherence and integration of humanitarian response. Another suggestion is to make data collection and analysis more coherent through a data cluster.[27]

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[26] ActionAid International. 2006. *The Evolving UN Cluster Approach in the Aftermath of the Pakistan Earthquake: An NGO Perspective.*
[27] Currion, Paul. 2006. "A Little Learning Is a Dangerous Thing: Five Years of Information Management." *Humanitarian Practice Network* Number 33. London: Overseas Development Institute.

UN, Red Cross, Governments and Donors

However coordination is structured, leaders need to be empowered to put it into effect.

Coordination requires effective leadership and collaboration. Donors should require coordination in emergency response efforts between NGOs and the UN bodies, between national and local governments and between the military and NGOs. In the initial tsunami emergency, efforts to communicate UN roles and services to NGOs were insufficient, reducing the possibility of common agreement on procuring goods, hiring staff and setting staff salaries.

An example of a local leader empowered by donor and INGO support arose in a sub-district in Meulaboh, Aceh where a dynamic *Chamat* (sub-district government leader) was given adequate computer and communication resources. He was then able to map projects, know each organizations work and lead the coordination to appropriately direct aid efforts in his sub-district. The consultations in Sri Lanka echoed the need for stronger information systems, suggesting one worthwhile way to facilitate the means of communication through government structures to their regions would be by putting funds into internet services for district offices so that communication for all is as instant as it is for INGOs and other humanitarian actors.

Coordination is most effective when donors work together to harmonize procedures and align them with recipient government procedures. Humanitarian actors need realistic expectations, however, of governments' ability to coordinate funding, agencies and operations. Extensive damage, pressure to spend funds and an influx of international aid agencies actors in large-scale emergencies such as the tsunami would strain even the most organized government systems. Experience has shown that national authorities often need support to carry out their work effectively. NGOs consulted for this review reported that lack of district and local staff and resources hindered the effectiveness of government structures. In Aceh many local government officials perished as a result of the massive destruction from the tsunami, leaving a gap in personnel and services. It should be noted that degrees of scale of an emergency impact coordination: smaller-scale natural disasters with fewer responders typically have fewer such challenges to coordination.

UN coordinating bodies and government structures such as the BRR in Indonesia and Presidential Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN, now the Reconstruction and Development Agency or RADA) in Sri Lanka were critical to manage and coordinate the flow of tsunami aid, but the magnitude of funds *Coordination is most effective when donors work together to harmonize procedures and align them with recipient government procedures.* and NGO response required a parallel INGO and NGO coordinating body. In Aceh this became a problem because no such forum existed, in part because *INGOs did not agree on who had the right to speak for them.* Short-term, ad hoc funding of posts, lack of resources and deployment of junior-level field staff in Aceh and late deployment of staff in Sri Lanka hampered OCHA's efforts at coordination. Moreover, donors and media substantially contributed to the pressure for agencies to use up resources quickly, often compromising good development principles.

Government, UN, INGO and NGO oversight remain important for information sharing and dissemination of common tools such as assessments and databases. *This review found that decentralizing coordination during the transition and recovery phases helped facilitate local coordination.*

Nonetheless, despite positive efforts to coordinate NGO and INGO humanitarian responses, constantly changing government resettlement and rehabilitation policies and varying standards of aid delivery frustrated tsunami efforts, created imbalances and complicated coordination.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

The objectives of this initiative were to capture the NGO views, needs and recommendations around the topic of coordination. It was a self-look, primarily qualitative in nature. Most of the studies point to problems of organizational culture, donor or media pressures, or the ineffectual leadership of the UN. This paper focuses on what INGOs and NGOs can do to improve coordination. Without the will of this community to make a radical shift, it is difficult to enact these recommendations.

Donors, too, could do more to encourage collaborative coordination among INGOs. INGOs can do more to coordinate better among themselves and NGOs and to tap the voice and resources of affected communities. Communities, while victims of the disaster, are not necessarily neutral parties, nor might they necessarily approach aid coordination and distribution using the Red Cross' Code of Ethics, or other humanitarian principles. Some level of authority, some framework of instruments to carry out coordination is needed. The world's donors would not fund entities such as OCHA without collective agreement on the need for a leading, respected coordinating body.

INGOs and NGOs admit they could have done a better job during the tsunami, that the plethora of funds, the extent of the catastrophe, the media spotlight and the speed at which communities perceived the damage to have been repaired, affected the quality and quantity of coordination. In the early phases of the response, the first responders – neighbors, communities, local government, religious and other entities – met the first urgent needs. The military, governments, UN and international communities by and large commanded and controlled coordination of needed relief and medical aid, given the extent of the disaster and the massive number of responders. It was during the transition and recovery phases that coordination became increasingly complex and problematic.

Many of the recommendations from the literature and the field consultations stress that coordination during emergencies is as important as coordination between emergencies. Solid policy instruments, including tools for information gathering, assessing, synthesizing monitoring and communicating needs, need to be developed among NGO networks in between emergencies. The recommendations also emphasize the need to work with affected communities in each step of humanitarian response to better target aid, protect the vulnerable and ensure that the beneficiaries have representation and a voice in coordination.

The lessons from the Asian tsunami and previous humanitarian emergencies described in this paper generated major recommendations for the NGO community and UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. These recommendations are primarily designed for natural emergencies and admittedly are not a panacea for improving coordination. They are broken down into two timeframes — what can be done between emergencies and during humanitarian response. As part of the larger picture in which INGOs can play a part, the recommendations focus primarily on the INGO level. To make coordination a functional requirement in humanitarian

response, NGOs and INGOs will need to make a fundamental shift in organizational mentality. Donors, governments, the Red Cross movement and the UN must likewise take action to improve coordination.

Recommendations

A fundamental organizational mentality shift is thus called for among humanitarian actors – all must see and prioritize coordination as a duty and functional requirement in humanitarian response. It is not an option.

Before Emergencies

INGOs/NGOs

- **Internally.** INGOs should take responsibility to ensure that their staff view coordination as an institutional priority, that they provide staff and resources for coordination and that they include coordination activities in staff job descriptions, program design, project proposals, and staff training.

- **Among agencies.** NGO consortia (InterAction, ICVA, SCHR, VOICE) should consider drafting coordination guidelines and adopting an INGO performance standard and indicators on NGO-managed coordination mechanisms in humanitarian emergencies. They should actively generate buy in by its membership at the operational level. This standard should include a definition of pre-coordination mechanisms, protocols and contingency plans. These activities should be a part of or linked with Recommendation One in the UN-NGO professionalism paper on establishing a core set of professional operating standards.

UN, Red Cross, Governments and Donors

- The INGO community should take steps to encourage donors to invest in NGO staff and INGO consortia-led mechanisms needed to advance effective coordination in humanitarian emergencies.

- The UN should encourage governments to establish specific entities for pre- and post-disaster response to facilitate coordination and information sharing and insist that agencies interact with these entities. The Red Cross movement should play a key role in encouraging local Red Cross/Red Crescent societies to undertake or to accelerate pre- and post-disaster response activities and outline which entities would coordinate and collaborate with other entities in the event of a disaster.

- The IASC should approach OCHA and NGO consortia to: establish a pre-defined agreement outside of an emergency on the role of the HICs, outlining information needed (agency sites, percentage of services and sectors covered, and time frames; involve other NGOs in designing the system to ensure it meets their needs and encourage the government to make disaster maps and other needed information available); and ensure that coordinating bodies collect data proactively rather than passively waiting for it. An MOU should be finalized within one year.

During Humanitarian Response

INGOs/NGOs

- INGO/NGO field managers should allocate staff time to measures that will improve coordination of data collection and analysis.

- INGO/NGO field managers should encourage INGO field staff tasked with coordination to develop or build upon information sharing platforms in close collaboration with local NGOs. Part of this focus should be to prioritise mechanisms for community engagement in the coordination process, including developing capacity in such a way that serves the long-term interests of the community (e.g., investing in local government capacity to coordinate and strategically plan as well as agency capacity).

- To improve the quality of the assessment process, INGOs should include people with a background in social sciences in joint assessment and evaluation teams to help identify gaps and carry out thorough analysis of human rights, gender and vulnerability issues.

- NGOs deploying in an emergency should define focal points whose responsibility it is to assess and develop local coordination mechanisms building on existing indigenous NGO forums wherever possible.

- INGOs/NGOs should ensure adequate INGO, NGO, and community representation within coordination structures at all levels and advocate for the rights and fair treatment of affected communities and marginalized groups.

- INGOs should play a leadership role in addressing local concerns when sharing information and narrow the gap between INGOs and local NGOs by holding local meetings and NGO fora in the local language with English translation. INGO/NGO field managers should ensure that women and their needs and affected communities are fully represented.

- INGOs should also take increased measures to ensure communication flow from national to local levels. Communication regarding coordination meetings should be distributed widely through local communication mechanisms (e.g., newspapers, posters, local communication networks, etc.), in the local language. They should not be sent through means that only INGOs can access.

UN, Red Cross, Governments and Donors

- Donors and the UN need to empower indigenous NGO consortia to provide leadership and coordination, establishing from the outset a vehicle to local NGOs a voice –those who really know their needs and can truly make a difference in the process. One effort to facilitate this process is for the UN to provide translators or translation equipment for national meetings, and disseminate information in local languages as well as English.

- The Office of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator should take on an NGO liaison role to include NGO representation in recovery phase, coordination of mechanisms comparable to that for humanitarian aid under OCHA's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), and institution of mechanisms to facilitate effective communication of policies, assessment results and other resources across agencies and to district and local levels.

- Donors should promote and provide resource support for secondment of experienced INGO and UN personnel to government offices beyond the central level to build capacity and facilitate local aid coordination.

- The IASC should promote the use of global and field-level UN clusters as a vehicle for developing common indicators, reporting, and joint assessments, focusing coordination efforts on the project cycle.

- OCHA should work to actively ensure the inclusion of international and national NGOs in cluster coordination meetings, drafting guidelines for cluster leads to include this requirement.

Annex 1: Guiding Questions

Field consultations and a literature review suggested the following questions to guide the review process:

1. Institutional views and issues

- What institutional views and issues affected NGO coordination?
- To what extent did INGOs prioritize coordination before, during and after the tsunami?
- Did governments provide for coordinated responses?
- What models, if any, worked?

2. Impact of UN agencies, national and local governments, and international donors

- What coordination structures and strategies were in place in the country?
- How effective were they?
- What models of coordination were the most effective?
- What sector, if any, provided good examples of coordination?
- What practical measures could improve coordination between international and domestic actors while strengthening existing coordination mechanisms?

3. Communication and information technology tools and strategies for data collection and assessment

- How can efficient, effective and well-resourced system-wide tools be developed and used for coordination?

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Annex 3: Participants

The organizations and individuals listed below contributed to this review through interviews, roundtable discussions, questionnaire response, or feedback on draft documents. The paper does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of all contributors.

Aceh Bangkit, Aceh

Aceh Information Tekhnologi Development, Aceh

Aceh Institute, Aceh

Aceh and Nias Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Board (BRR)

ACFID, Australia

Action Contre la Faim, Sri Lanka

ADF, Aceh

AJMI, Aceh

All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, Chennai

ALNAP/ TEC

American Red Cross, Aceh; Colombo; USA

AmeriCares, US, Aceh, Sri Lanka

ASHO, Aceh

Basic Needs, Sri Lanka

Bina Swadaya, Aceh

BLESS, Tamil Nadu

British High Commission, Colombo

British Red Cross, Aceh

Canadian Red Cross, Aceh

CARDI, Aceh

CARE, Aceh; Colombo; USA, Care India

Catholic Relief Services, USA, Aceh

CCD, Tamil Nadu

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, USA

Centre for Policy Alternative, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Christian Aid, Sri Lanka

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Colombo

Dhan Foundation, Tamil Nadu

Discipleship Centre, New Delhi, India

Don Bosco Anbuillam, Tamil Nadu

EFICOR, Tamil Nadu, India

EHA, New Delhi, India

ELSAKA, Aceh

Flower Aceh, Aceh

Forsikal, Aceh

Forum LSM, Aceh

Foundation for Co-Existence, Colombo

Government of Tamil Nadu (IAS)

Habitat for Humanity USA

HAP International, Geneva

Harvard Humanitarian Initiative

Helen Keller International

HUMAN, Tamil Nadu

Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

ICVA, Geneva

Ikatan Bidan Indonesia (IBI), Aceh

IMPACT

Indonesian Red Cross Society, Aceh

Inform, Sri Lanka

Interaction, USA

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Colombo; Geneva

International Medical Corps, Aceh, Colombo, Washington, DC

International Labour Organization, Aceh

International Office for Migration, Aceh

International Organization for Migration, Aceh

International Rescue Committee

Institute for Human Rights, Sri Lanka

INTUC, Tamil Nadu

Islamic Relief, UK, Sri Lanka

IUCN, Sri Lanka

JKMA Aceh,

KKTGA, Aceh

Koalisi NGO, Aceh

KONTAC

LEADS, Sri Lanka

Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (LBH), Aceh

Lembaga Posko Kemanusiaan, Aceh

LKM Ebenheizer, Aceh

Mataraja, Aceh

Mental Health Services, Aceh

Mercy Corps, Aceh; Colombo; USA

MISPI, Aceh

Mitra Perempuan Sejati Indonesia (MISTI), Aceh

Muslim Aid Indonesia, Aceh

Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, New York

Operation USA

Oxfam Australia

Oxfam GB, Aceh; Colombo; India, UK

Plan International, USA, India, Aceh, Colombo

PKM Sumut, Aceh

Practical Action, Sri Lanka

PREPARE, Tamil Nadu

Project Hope, Aceh

Provincial Health Office, Aceh

Rabita Taliban Aceh

Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) Colombo

RedR, Sri Lanka

Refugees International, US

RPuK, Aceh

Save the Children

SIA, Aceh

Solidaritas Perempuan, Aceh

SORAK, Aceh

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, Geneva

The Sphere Project, Geneva

Sri Lanka Red Cross Society

SuLOH, Aceh

Tamil Nadu Tsunami Resource Center, India

TOFARM, Tamil Nadu

Transparency International, Colombo

Tsunami Evaluation Consortium

Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme, Tamil Nadu

UNDP, Aceh, Tamil Nadu

UN Representative, New Delhi

UNOCHA, Colombo, Aceh

US Agency for International Development, Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

UPLINK, Aceh

US Department of State, INR, Humanitarian Information Unit

VOICE, Brussels

WALHI, Aceh

Women in Media Collaborative, Sri Lanka

World Food Programme, Aceh

World Vision International, Aceh; Colombo; India, Geneva; USA

Yah Dian Desa, Aceh

Yah Ekowisata Aceh (YEA)

YAPPIKA, Aceh

Yayasan Leuser International, Aceh

Yay. Peduli Sabang, Aceh

Yay. Satunama, Aceh

Yay. Holiana'a, Aceh

YPK, Aceh

Zoa Refugee Care, Sri Lanka

Enhancing Local Capacity

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Enhancing Local Capacity Working Group
was convened for the NGO Impact Initiative
by the International Rescue Committee (George Biddle)
and the International Medical Corps (Mary Pack).
Lizanne McBride (IRC) and Hervé de Baillenx (IRC)
were the lead authors of the report.

I. Background

The imperative of humanitarian international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) working in both natural disaster and conflict situations is saving lives. Once a crisis stabilizes, INGOs transition to meeting basic recovery needs and restoring livelihoods. Over time, INGOs recognized the need for a fundamental shift, understanding that populations not only had a right to participate in and lead their own recovery processes, but that locally driven responses were more appropriate, effective, efficient and therefore, sustainable. This awareness engendered new challenges - how to avoid undermining local capacities during emergencies – and how to strengthen local capacity for disaster planning, response and recovery.

In an effort to meet these challenges, several INGO initiatives were launched in recent years. In 1998, the Sphere Project outlined minimum standards for disaster response that included as part of its focus on service delivery, basic indicators for promoting human resource capacity and training. The Sphere standards have been implemented widely, to varying degrees of effect, but are still considered groundbreaking in their efforts to standardize the industry. A growing body of literature and learning has since evolved, promoting greater awareness for standardization and a particular push for enhancing local capacity. For instance, in 2003 the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership formed and included in its services advisory and capacity building support to agencies interested in developing their accountability to beneficiaries. In 2004, ALNAP issued a definitive paper on capacity building in humanitarian action to promote discussion of its efficacy in the aid community. In 2005, the Gates Foundation supported the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project led by seven major US INGOs. The ECB project focuses on staff capacity building and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and includes the issue of capacity building for emergency preparedness.

Despite these meaningful efforts, it is now a widely held belief that in the most recent and well-funded crisis of our time – the Asian tsunami – INGO attempts to enhance capacity fell short of ideals. A recent report issued by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), a group of 46 international agencies that included significant INGO representation, buttressed this notion. Consequently, the United Nations Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, President Clinton,

urged the INGOs to self-examine in an effort to define concrete recommendations that would help improve the way humanitarian actors conduct business. To this end, an analysis of literature was undertaken and the basic issues relative to capacity building were outlined. These were vetted in a series of field consultations in the three major tsunami-affected sites of Aceh, Indonesia; Chennai, India; and Colombo, Sri Lanka – and with major INGOs in Europe and the US. The results of this collective effort are summarized below. The narrative includes basic definitions and the rationale for strengthening local capacities; major factors related to strengthening local capacity in the tsunami response (also applicable to other crises); and recommendations that were endorsed in the field for improving INGO ability to promote local capacities in crisis and recovery.

What do we mean by enhancing local capacity?

To enhance or strengthen local capacities - or to conduct 'capacity building' as it has been traditionally termed – refers to two related processes: one where 'individuals, groups, organizations and institutions increase their abilities to perform core functions, solve problems and define and achieve objectives'; and two, a process in 'which these parties understand and deal with their needs in a broad context and sustainable manner.'[1] In crisis response, this means those who are affected by the disaster should not only have technical capacity to respond, but should be able to assess the services and program offered, to influence and set policies for a longer term recovery agenda, and to hold those responsible for aid delivery, accountable.[2]

Why enhance local capacities?

It is now universally understood, although perhaps not yet fully embraced, that ownership of problems and solutions in crisis and recovery should rest with the affected populations. People should not be treated as helpless victims but as dignified individuals who have the *right* to aid that will enable them to recover in a manner that contributes to their own self-reliance. Failure to offer such support undermines individual and organizational potential, strips away learning possibilities, and can encourage a dependency that is ultimately difficult to counter. Further and equally important, experience shows that when the community or local populations drive their own recovery, their responses more clearly address their perceived needs, are generally more cost effective relative to internationals, and are more efficient in achieving objectives. In effect therefore, no recovery can be considered "rights-based" or "sustainable" without the full participation of local actors.

Who are these local actors?

The three most important actors in humanitarian assistance are host governments, the disaster-affected population and the humanitarian assistance community. As evinced in many humanitarian crises, tension will often result when the capacities of some stakeholders are developed while others are ignored. When different parts of society move at different speeds, have different access or vulnerabilities, the ensuing imbalance can cause damage and undermine a society's ability to move methodically and collectively towards sustainable recovery. Therefore, capacity building must involve *all* stakeholders - local communities, local government, civil society, the private sector and local staff.

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[1] UNDP. 1997. *Capacity Development*. UNDP Technical Advisory Paper 2: 3.
[2] TEC. 2006b. *Impact of the Tsunami Response on Local and National Capacities: Regional Report*: 8.

When should capacities be built?

There is widespread agreement that strengthening capacity for disaster preparedness should occur in all developing countries, at all levels of society.[3] But there is open debate about whether it makes sense to focus on strengthening capacity during crises. Humanitarians often claim that during the acute phase of an emergency the imperative to save lives prevails over other considerations, and that time and resources should not be diverted from this goal. However, the duration of response is often extended long beyond the period of most acute emergencies. Once the urgent humanitarian imperative of life-saving work has abated, a recovery process should be underway and local capacity building should be planned for early-on, even if concrete activities may not begin until later. Some even argue that enhancing local capacity does and should begin *immediately*, with concrete activities undertaken through a "learning by doing" approach in a crisis environment.

What capacities should be built?

Capacity building can take many forms: development of human and financial resources; systems and organizational development, including managerial and technical support; political and social empowerment through information and advocacy support, etc. Finding the right balance between types of intervention and timing is important. While disaster preparedness will encompass all forms relative to existing capacity, by and large in the earliest days of an emergency or recovery intervention, capacity building will focus on:

- Strengthening local nongovernmental organizations, community-based groups, and local staff to engage with communities in a participatory manner, to advocate on their behalf and to deliver discrete aspects of basic services;

- Enhancing local communities' abilities to express needs and to monitor and support local response and recovery initiatives in an inclusive and transparent manner; and

- Supporting local governments and the private sector where appropriate to coordinate activities or deliver services.

As the situation stabilizes, local NGO and CBO partners' capacities generally are strengthened to take on increasing responsibility in the delivery of services, while organizational development and institutional strengthening is progressively introduced. The capacity of communities to drive their own recovery processes and of government and the private-sector to restore services and livelihoods are further supported through more sophisticated programming mechanisms.

Nevertheless, it must be recognized that existing capacities vary widely by region and country, as do individual local groups within a region. National partners at a very local level may have more capacity than an intervening international agency with a broader geographic reach. For these reasons, INGOs cannot use a one-size-fits-all "capacity-strengthening package". They must assess potential local NGO partners *each on their own merits and support them with appropriate resource development and plans depending on their existing capabilities and needs*. Where local capacities are adequate, support may take the form of logistics, fund transfers and advocacy: in other words,

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[3] The ECB project will explore these areas fully and therefore the issues are for the most part excluded from this study which intends to complement rather than replicate.

providing access to supplies and other recovery assets versus actual training, mentoring and organizational development.[4]

> While disproportionately affecting the poor, disaster destroys assets that are central to their human security and (ability) to provide security for their families. This does not mean that they cannot manage their own recovery. Disaster after disaster, we have seen that they are capable of this. What outsiders can do however is help remove barriers to recovery assets such as supplies, finance and education of the disaster affected.
>
> *Source*: Bhatt, M. R. August 2006. "Supporting Local Coping Capacities: The Past and Future of Disaster Risk Reduction": 3.

II. Capacity Building in Action during the Tsunami Response

> One of the lessons of the tsunami is that most relief is local and that local capacity and preparedness is key to effective relief.
>
> *Source*: Fritz Institute. 2005b. *Lessons from the Tsunami: Top Line Findings*: 5.

Capacity building during the tsunami response was considered somewhat effective at the national level given that most affected governments were stable, capable and proactive, although clearly opportunities were missed. The response was less inspiring at the community level. In the cited instances where local capacity building was deemed effective, INGOs had teamed up with pre-existing partners.[5] In effect, partnership allowed for a deeper understanding of the context, culture, local actors and systems. It also ensured adequate surge capacity and competent field staff and not surprisingly, these factors combined led to a more appropriate response.

A major Sri Lankan report on the roles of national and international NGOs sheds even more light on what went right. While the first few months of emergency response were "frantic" after which many NGOs departed, the situation stabilized and internationals became more actively involved in supporting local organizations. In fact, six months after the tsunami, half the INGOs were working with local organizations, and these partners assessed their overall relationships with INGOs as positive.[6] In Aceh, some INGOs actually took a proactive effort to outline a capacity strengthening strategy in field operations from the very beginning of the crisis, to significant effect. And in the Maldives and elsewhere, some international agencies seconded international staff to support public-sector institutions at an early stage.[7]

Nonetheless, and despite ample consensus that enhancing capacity should be a main thrust of humanitarian action, the literature and voices within the INGO community, and from local actors, make clear the sector did not live up to its aspirations. Most pointedly, the TEC found that:

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[4] Bhatt, M. R. August 2006. "Supporting Local Coping Capacities: The Past and Future of Disaster Risk Reduction," in *Southasiadisasters.net*, Special Issue 18. Amedabad: AIDMI: 3.
[5] TEC. 2006b. *Impact of the Tsunami Response on Local and National Capacities: Regional Report*: 35-36.
[6] Haug, M. and C. Weerackody. April 2006. *The Role of Sri Lankan NGOs and INGOs in Tsunami Aid Delivery*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (draft): 35.
[7] TEC. 2006b. op cit.: 35.

…to a significant extent, local ownership of the tsunami response was undermined by the actions of international agencies. In some cases, recognition and engagement with local capacities was totally lacking, particularly where capacities were not visible in the form recognized by international agencies. In other cases, local capacities were rendered even more vulnerable by the response[8]

….Underlying the problems at the community level [was] a lack of engagement at the earliest stages with community-based and local non-governmental organizations…many of [which] had played a major role during the search and rescue phase.[9]

Our consultations in Aceh, India and Sri Lanka supported this notion. Though local actors praised the INGOs' early life-saving activities, some community representatives stated that they felt marginalized in their desire to help during the crisis, a situation which fueled resentment that spilled over into the recovery stage. They also felt that local government was bypassed when it came to capacity building efforts. Reports cite that INGOs failed to work with, coordinate or support local government responses, and failed to understand their role and the community's role vis-à-vis government authorities.

In 2004, the ALNAP *Humanitarian Review* posited that local institutions were not taking leading roles in humanitarian assistance despite repeated attempts by the aid community to foster this change. They stated:

It is difficult to find anyone in the humanitarian sector who is openly against building local institutional and human resource capacities. Humanitarian proclamations, plans, programs and procedural guidelines abound with statements about the array of benefits that the sector will gain when local organizations and nationally recruited personnel take their rightful place in the system…It is equally evident that capacities are not being built or utilized at the pace these claims would imply to be essential.[10]

The findings from the tsunami response seem to indicate this is still true, that standards developed are not being met and that lessons learned are not being applied. To understand why the INGO community has not lived up to its aspirations, one must consider the forces at play:

A compartmentalized perspective

Humanitarian actors tend to view their profession as unique. They interact mostly with each other and draw less than they could on competencies from other fields of work. In fact, good practices do exist: the Red Cross movement, development agencies and some faith-based organizations have decades of experience in building local capacities. But this know-how has been built for stable situations and remains heavily compartmentalized. Not only is it poorly disseminated among development and humanitarian agencies, but frequently it is not even properly shared with the different national sections of federated agencies, or between the humanitarian and development departments of "dual-mandate" agencies.[11] This results in a real deficit of knowledge among humanitarian actors—the professionals who launch activities in the

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[8] TEC. op cit.: 43.

[9] TEC. op cit: 9.

[10] ALNAP. 2004. *Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004*: 2.

[11] The same could be said of the lack of dialogue and cross-fertilization between humanitarian and development donors. The debate over the Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development approach (LRRD), meant to provide a space for such exchanges and to facilitate transition, is considered a thing of the past by E.U. donor agencies, for instance, while no noticeable progress toward a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to recovery can be shown.

very first days following a disaster and, by default, set the tone of the response for months to follow.

Competition between service delivery and capacity building

Capacity building is often perceived to occur in tension with the provision of services, especially under conditions of acute crisis. As indicated, the imperative for saving lives within the emergency cycle is considerable, the *raison d'être* of humanitarian organizations. But as the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* (1994) plainly states: "The immediacy of disaster relief can often lead NGOs to unwittingly put pressure on themselves, pressure which leads to shortsighted and inappropriate work."

In fact, it was widely seen in the tsunami response that even within agencies that had sound policies and support from both headquarters and donors for capacity development, field staff still underestimated local capacity and gave "excessive import to the delivery of assistance."[12] This may be in part because a majority of deployed staff were more skilled to "do" rather than implement the more nuanced capacity building techniques. It was also undoubtedly in part due to media, donor and headquarters pressures for rapid deliverables as outlined below. But the dilemma persisted well beyond the acute phase of an emergency because, to reiterate, initial priorities and methods set the tone long after their justification has disappeared.

Media, donor and headquarter pressures

While the media serves to raise more global awareness and donor funds than ever before, it also raises expectations for highly visible results. INGOs sometimes allow media presence to propel their focus on public relations, advocacy awareness and deliverables. As a result, capacity building can be sacrificed. Donors, while perhaps more savvy, are also in the spotlight. When faced with political pressures, they too demand that the INGO community deliver services. Further, their in-house personnel are often compartmentalized, with award-funding mechanisms, reporting requirements and conditionality favoring service delivery over capacity building. Both of these push factors affect headquarters staff who, working on another continent, are often less attuned to new practice and demand immediate deliverables from the field for publication and reports. Field staff often feels pressure from this group, who influence and/or oversee their careers.

> The tsunami response in Sri Lanka is a prime example in which not taking local capacity into account slowed international assistance….every international agency came with a set of interventions in its tool kit to respond to the immediate needs of the population, but without a real backup plan for how to assist, should functioning local structures be already working to meet those needs. Some agencies shamelessly pressed on with their initial plans, ignoring what they saw… field teams faced enormous pressure from their home offices, the donors and the media to quickly spend the vast sums donated to 'do something visible' immediately.
>
> *Source*: Fitzpatrick, M. January 16, 2006. "Responding in the More Developed World." *Monday Developments*.

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[12] TEC. 2006b. op cit.: 11.

Proliferation of NGOs, skill sets and differing mandates

In recent years, large-scale emergencies have drawn the attention of a significant number of inexperienced or relatively new INGOs. Consider that up to 250 INGOs came to Aceh in the first two months alone,[13] down to 124 in December 2005[14] and even fewer today. Many new agencies are unfamiliar with standard operating procedures and lack policies and a skills base for enhancing local capacity.

However, one should keep in mind that in the tsunami disaster, most of the financial resources allocated to the response went to a dozen of the main international humanitarian actors.[15] Some of these more sophisticated aid agencies missed the mark. Thus, it seems that in the absence of professional standards relating to capacity building, or of an in-house career-path system, INGOs pressured for deliverables and competing with one another, hire short-term staff on the basis of their technical skills and capacity to deliver rather than on their ability to transfer their know-how. And it is an industry-wide phenomenon in emergency situations writ-large that INGOs often hire far too many expatriates, underestimating and overlooking the local potential. At the same time, some INGOs believe primarily in direct implementation of services, a mechanism that if substituted for local service providers or duty bearers beyond the acute emergency, can be counterproductive in the aim to foster local capacities.

Therefore, it is no wonder that humanitarian agencies new to the sector have difficulty. Had more experienced groups engaged in building local capacities, perhaps the proliferation of inexperienced national and international NGOs which prevented local actors from benefiting from a transfer of skills, might have been avoided.

> This lack of capacity to use or build capacity is also due to limited institutional knowledge, a lack of previous experience with capacity building and a dearth of case studies focusing on how to work with populations in crisis. It is not surprising, then, that truly effective means of working with local populations are neither taught formally in training seminars nor exchanged informally among more and lesser experienced staff.
>
> *Source*: Lautze S. and J. Hammock. 1996. *Coping with Crisis, Coping with Aid: Capacity Building, Coping Mechanisms, and Dependency, Linking Relief and Developmen*t: 10-11.

Reticence in working with local government

> Very few international implementers appear to have assigned significant value to working with local government departments; they have turned to local government for damage related and socio-economic information, but rarely as coordinating partners. Local civil servants are not oblivious to the fact that in many cases they have been, and continue to be relegated to a secondary role.
>
> *Source*: Aid Watch. Eye on Aceh, February 2006. *A People's Agenda? Post-Tsunami Aid in Aceh*: 25.

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[13] TEC 2006a. *Synthesis Report:* 55, 155.
[14] TEC 2006a. op cit: 155.
[15] TEC 2006a. op cit.: 20.

UNDP's *Lessons Learned on Local Governance in Tsunami Recovery* revealed that "the tsunami had…not significantly changed the institutional capacity or local government in place after the immediate recovery phase (14)." This is to be expected. Humanitarian INGOs generally believe it is the role of the donor community to support the capacity building of government.[16] INGOs have little practical experience in this domain, since their mandate of neutrality prevents them from associating too closely with authorities in conflict settings where they frequently operate. But today, natural disasters and human conflict, as well as peri- and post-conflict environments often operate in tandem, and these precepts do not necessarily apply.

In fact, engaging with and supporting legitimate authorities and technical line ministries, as well as fostering links between populations and governments, is essential if INGOs are at minimum to avoid undermining local capacity and at best to facilitate a rebuilding process owned and managed by those responsible for its functions. This point was made clear in all field consultations, where participants called for systematic involvement of INGOs with local government. In fact, consultations stated that some of the best practices in the field come from experiences where INGOs, local NGOs and local governments work together (Enhancing Local Capacity Meeting Notes September 2006, 8). Literature and lessons on the practical nuts and bolts of this work, particularly at local levels where humanitarian actors are the primary means of support are however in short supply. This does not mean that such knowledge cannot be found.

Certainly, the lessons and best practices that exist within the development domain can be adapted and used by humanitarians. But unlike in stable development environments, little is actually known about building local government institutions that are emerging from conflict (as was the case in Aceh, Sri Lanka and many complex emergencies), particularly when it brings about change through newly elected bodies, guerilla movements being transformed into political parties, etc. These types of scenarios present a unique set of challenges, not least of which is local governments that may have no experience governing, or lack the funds and support to make their ideas reality. Consultations in all field sites indicated that finding a mechanism to enhance such knowledge would be a significant benefit for policymakers and practitioners in the donor community, new and existing national governments as well as for humanitarian aid agencies.

> Government and NGO relationships are challenging in any environment. In Tamil Nadu, these relations have been very positive but not without problems. They seem to have worked best where NGOs and the government worked together on operational issues.
>
> *Source: Southeastasia.net,* September 2006: 14.

'Poaching' implications

Most evaluations from the tsunami response (and many pre-tsunami) suggest that the issue of "poaching," or drawing staff away from national agencies, is a major downside of humanitarian intervention. In natural disasters and complex conflict emergencies, national staff jump in large numbers to INGOs and other aid agencies because they have enviable budgets and/or because they can increase their salaries and benefits. The issue is not exclusively the domain of INGOs and may in fact begin with multilateral agencies, which set salaries extraordinarily high, raising the bar for qualified staff at INGOs, the largest employers.

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[16] From consultation notes.

> Most of the NGOs came for short term projects. They were offering high salaries to their staff, and as a result there was a dearth of trained staff under national and local NGOs and their programs suffered.
>
> *Source*: NGO Impact Initiative. August 25 2006b.

Counterarguments suggest that qualified staff should have equal opportunity for alternative employment and higher salaries, and that movement to INGOs actually builds capacity. These arguments, while certainly valid, do not account for the gross disparities between international and national organizations. Consider the words of Ashraf Ghani, former finance minister of Afghanistan: "Within six months of starting my job as finance minister, my best people had been stolen by international aid organizations who could offer them forty to a hundred times the salary we could."[17] It is clear that national agencies cannot compete at this level. Indeed, it could be posited that poaching decimates the ranks and harms existing organizational capacity and defeats the potential for building a national organization, agency or group better prepared for disaster prevention and longer term development.

> A number of local actors at the Aceh consultation capacity building break out group made clear that they worked hard to try to hold onto their staff but that it was difficult and that those staff members [who migrated] might gain skills, but they are also gone for long periods of time, which means local NGOs are constantly having to rehire and rebuild their teams.
>
> *Source*: George Biddle, Enhancing Local Capacity Working Group, September 2006: 4.

Consultations elicited a strong sense for a need to level the playing field by requiring that national staff salaries be set within a reasonable range to moderate the brain drain to international agencies. However, literature to date revealed nothing in the way of studies, conferences or international policy documents that definitively and with scientific rigor outlined the economic or institutional impact of poaching. Without credible evidence to document what is heard and seen on the ground, local actors consulted felt that the ability to effect change among policy makers would remain questionable.

Language as a barrier

In most cases, INGO expatriate staff have no - or very limited - command of the local language, forcing INGOs to hire local staff who speak English. This practice not only entails a loss of talent within local organizations and local government, but it also deprives these groups of *their* English speakers, the very people who can facilitate interaction with INGOs and donors, who can represent their organizations at coordination meetings set up by U.N. agencies (which are almost always held only in English), who can explain to the media the role that local bodies are playing, and, more generally, who can advocate for a more active role for local society in its own recovery.

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[17] "Millions of Dollars Worth of Aid Money are Being Wasted," BBC News, 26 February 2006.

> A commitment to strengthening institutional capacity involved a commitment to understanding the culture and environment in which the disaster occurred – and being prepared to spend some time in discovering and respecting these things...and also understanding the language...
>
> *Source:* Linda Tiongco, NGO Impact Initiative. August 25 2006b.

True, in later phases, INGOs will have their training modules and procedures translated into the local language, will introduce translation facilities and will make a greater effort to reach out to local communities through local bodies, but valuable time will have been lost. These early patterns will endure longer than justified. Surely, the difficulties caused by the language barrier (language training, translators and so on) should be handled by INGOs rather than transferred to local entities.

As demonstrated by some INGOs, negative effects could be mitigated in part if more effort were made to recruit native speakers for management positions, or to recruit within the country but outside the area affected by disaster, thus reducing the pressure on the limited pool of qualified, English-speaking staff. While it is unavoidable that INGOs will recruit locally, they could also consider systematically bringing in seasoned expatriates as advisors or trainers to local administrations or local NGOs, partially counteracting the loss of expertise they suffer and maintaining bridges between local and international NGOs.

Weak dialogue with the community

One of the consequences of the many issues outlined above - that is, pressure for deliverables, lack of expertise in capacity building, high staff turnover, weak understanding of context and country, etc. – is that communities were often bypassed or only superficially consulted. This served to undermine their own capacities to solve problems, to initiate activities appropriate to the moment, and to ensure local leadership addressed their concerns.

> During the United Nations workshop on Lessons Learned and Best Practice held in Medan 13-14 June, 2005, concern was raised that communities had not been consistently consulted on aspects or relief and recovery work and their involvement in needs assessments, planning and implementation of emergency assistance was not prioritized...Participants in the Maldives and Indonesia workshops found that disaster and damage assessments had been carried out without the involvement of affected communities...it was said that this in some cases had led to aid being delivered without actual needs being taken into account, leading to resources being wasted.
>
> *Source*: UNDP. 2005. *Local Governance in Tsunami Recovery: Lessons Learned and Emerging Principles:* 11.

Furthermore, INGOs often used local elites as entry points to communities, which undermined the larger community's capacity to work together in a transparent and inclusive manner and marginalized some of the most affected groups that remained outside the remit of support. Interestingly, the private sector, which could or did contribute substantially to the effort (with voluntary or for-profit supplies and services), were almost never mentioned beyond those that received capacity building for their lost livelihood resources.

This lack of adequate participation and consultation meant that:

- Many vulnerables and in particular women were further disadvantaged[18]

- Little accountability existed towards the populations that INGOs aimed to serve;

- Projects that got off on a wrong track were not always corrected, based on reliable feedback;

- The communities did not take ownership of the projects that were designed to their benefit, making their sustainability doubtful.

Need for a Forward Vision

It was suggested by national partners from India that it may be time for the international aid community to step back and project what the industry should look like in ten years time. With globalization, an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, new technologies and systems, not to mention more capable and sophisticated local partners, humanitarian interventions and the role of the INGO should be markedly different in the future. Understanding that picture today and setting wheels in motion to meet this vision will make disaster response and recovery far more appropriate in the ensuing years.

In congruence with the more recent push in humanitarian circles for disaster preparedness, perhaps INGOs should be working towards a world where local partners generally are able to respond themselves, with only financial or technical backstopping. For this to occur means INGOs must fundamentally rethink and reorient themselves – they must understand they are part of an evolving process that is moving away from oversight, design and implementation of service provision, to that of enhancing local capacity through client-based relationships. Indeed, both ALNAP and TEC have concluded that if humanitarian work were viewed through a capacity empowerment framework and moved "from delivery to support and facilitation,"[19] we would measure success differently. The media, donors and headquarters would naturally shift their focus, devoting the resources and attention to better developing policy, practice, skills bases and an understanding around such efforts.

For INGOs, this would mean not just incorporating capacity strengthening in their own strategies, but making it the basis of action equal to that of service delivery; it may even require establishing links in advance with local entities in fragile and disaster-prone countries, providing them on a long-term basis with training or institutional support. Clearly this would not apply for all agencies, nor would it apply in all contexts. But what is suggested here is that when preparing for the future, INGOs should draw from the lessons of the tsunami response and other major crises and must seriously question their institutional practices if they are to go beyond lip service and to truly place local partners and communities at the forefront of the next major disaster response.

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[18] TEC 2006b. op cit.: 33.
[19] TEC 2006b. op cit.: 44.

III. Key Recommendations

INGOs must make strengthening local capacity in recovery from emergencies a priority equal to that of service delivery; it must be a standard to which we are measured and held to account. To achieve this we recommend:

1. An Appeal to Prioritize Capacity-Building

A high level panel should be formed to promote the TEC Local Capacity Sub-Group recommendation for "sector wide discussion at the global level to address the need for reorientation of the humanitarian framework based on the principle that ownership of humanitarian assistance rests with the claim-holders."[20] The panel should hold a forum for international NGO agency leaders within the next year – with the intention of gaining full endorsement of this shift and a commitment to relevant next steps that may include items such as:

- Dedicating specified resources toward defining policy, institutional guidelines, good practice and skills sets that will realistically enhance capacity building;

- Requiring as a matter of policy, that capacity building frameworks be instituted from the onset of any new emergency;

- Allocating definitive budgetary percentages yearly to strengthening local capacities for disaster preparedness, response and recovery;

- Outlining in annual reports, steps underway and percentages of budgets allocated to these efforts.

This body could in a later phase, task a sub-group to produce minimum standards for enhancing local capacity; develop key indicators that NGOs, professional bodies and donors could build into their assessment and evaluation protocols; and assist in raising public and media awareness of these issues. However, there must be a mechanism by which organizations are held to account, and thus we recommend that INGO national platforms and international networks include in their membership criteria, a commitment to building local capacities and, when established, support a body or mechanism that oversees adherence to said standards.

2. A Role for Donors and the Media

Donors can support this reorientation towards enhancing local capacities by:

- Taking into account INGO expertise and proposed budgets for strengthening local capacity when evaluating program proposals and performance;

- Bridging the divide that exists between humanitarian and development departments in their own organizations and by altering funding criteria accordingly;

- Demanding and supporting evidence-based program proposals and reports to facilitate credible learning on this subject.

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[20] TEC 2006b. op cit: 47.

Equally, media informs the public and thereby can promote understanding of the importance of enhancing local capacities in crisis preparedness and response. INGOs should commit to working with their internal media departments as a first response; and INGO networks in the US and Europe should develop a comprehensive strategy that promotes engagement with the external media as a means of better informing their constituencies and the general public.

3. Better Support for Local Government

The INGO Enhancing Local Capacity Working Group should continue under the aegis of the Clinton Global Initiative to facilitate much needed learning related to support for local government in emergencies and recovery. As a first step, a seminar series should focus on local government officials in countries who have undergone crisis to recovery processes; local government associations from developed countries that have accompanied them in this process; and newly emerging governments in post conflict zones that seek to address the issue. The group should produce and present to the international community a definitive proposal for relevant policy change.

4. A Shift toward Local Staff Retention

The UN system, which sets the salary standards for qualified local staff in crisis, should in the immediate, self-regulate by working with local governments to develop salary scales for its staff that do not distort local economies and are consistent with local practices. INGOs can also be self-regulating; minimum standards and codes of conduct should insist on maintaining salary levels that do not damage local management capacities. As a sign of commitment, INGOs could even undertake to second experienced staff to local NGOs and local government entities, in return for the local talent they are hiring.

However, for lasting change to take effect, credible evidence demonstrating the impact of poaching is required. We recommend that the major INGO platforms come together to commission a study under the HAP or Harvard Humanitarian Initiative on the economic/institutional effects of poaching and to set forth policy change recommendations for presentation to the international community.

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Annex 2: Meetings and Consultations

Enhancing Local Capacity Working Group Meetings

June 16, 2006
September 6, 2006

Working Group members included American Jewish World Service, Episcopal Relief and Development, Habitat for Humanity, Heart to Heart International, Helen Keller International, Lutheran World Relief, Operation USA, Tearfund-UK, and World Learning. International Rescue Committee and International Medical Corps acted as co-conveners.

Steering Committee Meetings

May 17, 2006
June 12, 2006
June 19, 2006
August 9, 2006
August 14, 2006
September 6, 2006
September 14, 2006
September 29, 2006
October 6, 2006
October 20, 2006

Steering Committee members included American Red Cross, CARE, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Plan USA, Refugees International, Save the Children, and World Vision.

European Consultations

July 11, 2006, London
July 12, 2006, Geneva
September 25, 2006, Geneva

For a list of participants, please refer to the Synthesis Report.

Field Consultations

July 17-18, 2006, Banda Aceh, Indonesia
August 24-25, 2006, Colombo, Sri Lanka
August 27, 2006, Chennai, India

For a list of participants, please refer to the Synthesis Report.

TEC Local Capacity Sub-Group

July, 2006

Human Rights and Disaster Recovery

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Human Rights Working Group was convened for the NGO Impact Initiative by CARE USA (Rigoberto Giron and Virginia Vaughn) and Refugees International (Joel Charny). Virginia Vaughn was the lead author.

I. Background

Human rights began taking center stage in international development circles over the past decade, and many agencies are currently using a rights-based focus for long-term programming. In humanitarian assistance programming, much of the discourse has centered on the complex relationship between human rights and humanitarian action in situations of violent insecurity.[1] As such, there has been a disproportionate focus on the civil and political rights agenda. Less well documented are the issues involved in protecting and promoting social, economic and cultural rights in a natural disaster setting.

Humanitarian assistance often centers on the logistics operation to address immediate life-saving needs. This may be true during the first few weeks after a disaster – the initial rapid response phase – but humanitarian assistance programming often continues for several years, as has certainly been the case for many INGOs following the tsunami of 2004. Humanitarian responders have *typically* not started to focus on protecting and promoting social, economic and cultural rights until this more protracted recovery and rehabilitation period. However, some challenge 'continuum' thinking, the notion that relief, recovery and development are distinct phases of a relief effort.[2] Others argue that recovery and rehabilitation should be addressed from the earliest possible stage of a response to a natural disaster.[3] Consistent with this, the initial findings in the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) evaluation of the international tsunami response concluded that missing this window undermined the opportunity to address issues of equity, gender and governance in an integrated and holistic way.[4]

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[1] For example, *Rights-based Approaches to Humanitarianism: A Review of the Debates*, ODI-HPG Research Report forthcoming 2006 (contact m.bradley@odi.org.uk for details); and *Rights in extremis: do human rights help to achieve humanitarian outcomes?* , ODI-HPG Work in Progress due 2006.

[2] Buchanan-Smith, M. and P. Fabbri. 2005. *Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development - A Review of the Debate. TEC Thematic Evaluation on LRRD*. TEC.

[3] Goyder, H., C. Coventry, J. Adams, T. Kaiser, S. Williams, and I. Smillie, 2006. *Linking Relief, Recovery, and Development* – Policy Study, for SIDA by International NGO Training and Research Center. TEC.

[4] Cosgrave, J. 2005. *Tsunami Evaluation Coalition Initial Findings*. ALNAP.

The rights-based approach (RBA) to programming – that shifts the focus from charitable fulfillment of needs to duty-driven advancement of rights – offers a conceptual link that may help the humanitarian community better integrate its relief and development agendas.[5] Many INGOs aim to address 'rights' in their tsunami recovery programs, yet there is much to learn about how RBA can best be operationalized in emergency response programs. To advance this learning, the Human Rights Thematic Working Group therefore chose the implications of RBA in a natural disaster response as the focus of our work.

While there is no generally agreed upon definition of the term 'rights-based approach', there is some consensus on the concepts implied. We explore the four concepts highlighted below.

What Do We Mean by a Focus on a "Rights-Based Approach"?

RBA is not a fixed set of interventions but rather a conceptual framework that can inform all humanitarian assistance decisions and activities.

RBA recognizes a need to provide goods and services during an emergency but it views this support as a right rather than as a handout.

RBA considers rights to be relational: they imply duties and responsibilities.

Rather than viewing 'vulnerability' as consequence of disaster that can be addressed with a technical fix, RBA focuses on identifying and exposing the root causes of ongoing vulnerabilities, and offers a correspondingly expanded range of responses.

Our process has been consistent with that employed by all five NGO Impact Initiative Working Groups. We circulated for comment by INGO staff an outline of major issues surrounding human rights in emergency contexts based on a desk review of relevant literature. Based on comments received, we drafted questions (see box below) to guide discussion during our field consultations. To further explore specific experiences implementing RBA in tsunami recovery, we interviewed local NGO, INGO and UN field staff in Colombo and Banda Aceh. We summarize our findings and analysis below with respect to their implications for: training, accountability and assessment. Our concluding recommendations represent the collective views of the many people who have participated in this reflection process.

II.   A Rights-Based Approach in the Tsunami Response

The research of our Working Group revealed three major issues that will need to be addressed in order to move forward on human rights promotion and protection in emergency recovery: current general perceptions on the impact of training, the focus of accountability and the methods of assessment.

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[5] Darcy, J. 2004. *Human Rights and Humanitarian Action: A review of the issues*. A background paper prepared for the workshop on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action by the IASC Sub-Working Group and co-hosted by UNICEF, the UNHCR and ICVA Geneva, April 2004, Human Rights and Humanitarian Action – HPG Background Paper Humanitarian Policy Group. ODI.

> **Questions that Guided Working Group Consultations**
>
> What are some specific examples of successful rights-based approaches by NGOs in the tsunami response? How did these approaches differ from the needs-based approaches? What are the challenges faced by NGOs while integrating rights-based approaches to emergencies?
>
> What are the major unmet rights of tsunami affected populations at this time? What should the role of the NGO community be in addressing these unmet needs?
>
> What constraints or obstacles must we overcome to fulfill this/these role(s)?

Training

RBA is an attempt to operationalize a commitment to respect humanitarian principles and protect the rights embodied in the *International Bill of Rights* and humanitarian law. While these same principles and rights inform the *Red Cross and Red Crescent Code of Conduct,*[6] the Sphere Project *Charter and Standards,*[7] and the *Do No Harm Framework,*[8] humanitarian assistance professionals continue to struggle to implement them during emergency response. When asked what limited NGOs from more broadly implementing RBA in the tsunami response, the most common response we heard was a lack of staff training in human rights. Excellent training materials exist[9] and RBA concepts should be included in any accreditation/validation process of the kind discussed in the Professionalism Thematic Report. But INGOs are chronically overtaxed, and it may not be realistic to expect such training to be extended to the large numbers of staff involved in urgent response to disasters.

An additional constraint is that although training introduces concepts and information, it does not substitute for the necessary skills that come with practice. Further, the management, technical and operational skills required for excellent emergency response may be very different from the strategic, social and analytical skills needed to promote RBA. Thus it may not be realistic to expect all staff to possess both skill sets.

For this reason, some NGOs hired specialized gender, accountability, partnership and/or advocacy advisors to assist their staff in responding to the tsunami. But their limited numbers and the enormity of their task have spread these advisors thin, a situation exacerbated by frequent demands on them to assist with ongoing logistics and management activities.

The Oxfam Great Britain commitment in Banda Aceh to entire partnership and advocacy units staffed with non-management personnel is one of the most successful attempts to ensure availability of the necessary technical skills. While this approach has improved advocacy

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[6] *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief.*

[7] *The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, Sphere Project.

[8] *Do No Harm: A Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict*, Local Capacities for Peace Project.

[9] For example, Action Aid's *Learning About Rights* series (available at www.actionaid.org.uk) and the Sphere Project *Training Module 2: The Humanitarian Charter* (available at www.sphereproject.org).

initiatives, advocacy is only one aspect of RBA. Context-specific experience is also required to understand the complexity of issues preventing rights from being enjoyed.

Finally, the 'experience' requirements for RBA refer not only to technical experience but context specific experience. This perhaps explains why participants of the Chennai consultation claimed that Indian NGOs are more capable of developing and implementing a rights-based approach than their international counterparts. There are success stories of INGOs implementing RBA concepts in tsunami response, but they tend to be in geographic areas where the responding agency had a presence prior to the tsunami.[10] In a disaster the magnitude of the tsunami, prior presence – of either local NGOs or INGOs – can not be expected in all affected areas. As illustrated in the case study below, there is no magic formula or simple solution to the problem.

RBA Requires More Than Training

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) had operated in Aceh for several years when the tsunami struck. With experienced national staff in place, the IRC was much better prepared than other INGOs to incorporate RBA into their tsunami response. To do so, IRC hired new 'community facilitators,' provided them with two to three days of rights-based training, and reassigned long-term staff to supervise and support them. Constant reflection on program quality by project staff highlighted several lessons learned. Because the IRC had stipulated minimum educational achievement as a condition for employment as a Community Facilitator, most hires were young women from well-to-do urban families. As such, they lacked the authority to 'empower' communities. Two days of intensive training were sufficient only to impart concepts; most Community Facilitators struggled to apply them. Support from seasoned supervisors was helpful but a much larger number was needed. The IRC is currently addressing these issues and has made this a long-term commitment. - Field Interview, Sri Lanka

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Accountability

Traditionally, humanitarian organizations have focused on meeting basic needs. A fundamental difference in RBA is that rights are relational: they imply duties. Whereas needs can exist in isolation, rights are meaningless apart from responsibilities and committed actors.[11] The practical application of RBA thus involves identifying the responsible actors and holding them accountable to respect, protect, fulfill and/or claim rights. The three most important actors in humanitarian assistance are host governments, the disaster-affected population and the humanitarian assistance community itself. We discuss each in turn below.

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[10] For example, CARE's *Confronting Gender-Based Violence in Batticaloa* project in Sri Lanka.
[11] Jones, A. (nd) *The Sphere Charter and Minimum Standards*, CARE.

Host Governments

The State is typically understood to be legally responsible for ensuring human rights are enjoyed by its citizenry.[12]   In response to a catastrophic disaster however, States often can not immediately meet all the needs of the affected population and INGOs play a major role in assisting them. But does assuming the responsibility to provide services automatically transform INGOs into duty-bearers?

Much of the debate around this question stems from the fact that many emergencies occur in countries with weak or failed States. In countries with a strong, credible State however, research indicates that emergency response is more effective if the State is supported rather than replaced as duty bearers.[13]   This conclusion is reinforced by studies conducted in tsunami-affected countries.[14]   It is outside the scope of this paper to present a full discussion of this debate; however relevant issues and concerns surrounding the concept of duty-bearer were raised in our field consultations.

These include reported instances of struggling to:

- Identify legal duty-bearers (for example, in northern Sri Lanka both the State and the LTTE have controlling interests);

- Give full responsibility to the State (for example, when it appeared housing targets were being based solely on political campaign concerns);

- Assume the role of duty-bearer given the limitations of INGO power (for example, newly constructed housing sat vacant when located in areas with no basic services).

In recognition of the fact that this is not an 'either-or' issue, there was tentative agreement among those interviewed that, while acceptance of funding by NGOs implies certain responsibilities,[15] the long-term responsibility of legal duty-bearer should remain with the State. This stems in part from a concern that the State must ultimately assume this role when INGOs depart.

To address this issue, RBA promotes the practice of 'lateral accountability'. Rather than focus predominately on INGO accountability to beneficiaries (which reinforces the notion of the INGO as duty-bearer), RBA also emphasizes INGO accountability to the legal duty-bearer. Lateral accountability therefore requires respect for the primary authority and responsibility of the State, and efforts aimed at enabling the State to fulfill its responsibilities. At a minimum, this implies that INGOs should be fully aware of the national and local political environment and that they use this knowledge in their advocacy activities and reconstruction programs.[16] Lateral accountability also implies that INGOs are obligated to ensure that local and national

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[12] For example, the *Humanitarian Charter* affirms States' obligations under international law for ensuring rights are met and calls on humanitarian assistance agencies to advocate for the fulfillment of such obligations.

[13] Vaux, T. July 5 2006. "Service Delivery for Sustainable Peace," *id21 Research Highlight* (original source: Service *Delivery in Countries Recovering from Conflict*; DFID, Final Report, January 2005).

[14] See for example Goyder et al., op cit.

[15] For example whether or not INGOs are considered 'legal' duty-bearers, they always have a moral obligation to provide quality services and goods in a professional manner.

[16] Goyder et al., op cit.

government authorities are aware of the codes of practice informing the humanitarian sector and that all have a common and realistic understanding of rights and responsibilities.

However, while lateral accountability may reduce the potential for aid to undermine State accountability, it is not simply a technocratic exercise:

…governments and bureaucracies make political choices about what should be prioritized. The presence or absence of political will is therefore a determining factor in the realization of rights.[17]

Nonetheless, RBA provides a different way of analyzing such political choices, and assessing how governments are acting. While there are examples of INGOs working to bridge this current gap between 'legal' duty-bearers and rights-holders (see box, below), many others are struggling with the concept.

RBA Supports Host Governments

Oxfam has moved beyond simply advocating for the rights of tsunami-affected populations to negotiating directly with local administration officials who have some leeway to interpret government policies and decisions. The strength of this approach over national-level advocacy is its direct relevance to the service delivery role.

For example, local land-rights advocacy can facilitate the provision of shelter. Also, following work with communities on site plan development – and before construction begins – one can negotiate with local authorities to assure they deliver required services.

Oxfam is also advocating for the resources duty bearers need to fulfill their rights-related responsibilities (through *Paris Club* advocacy and work related to the *Drop the Debt* campaign and the *Multi Fibre Agreement*).

 -- Letter from Alison Cleary, 2006

Disaster-Affected Populations

In an attempt to operationalize the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* concept that all people are "equal in dignity and rights," many NGOs have stated a commitment to help the people they serve achieve this basic right to life with dignity. This involves respect for the disaster-affected population's right to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.[18]

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
-- Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

Public access to information about aid activities is an essential first step to participation. There has been considerable discussion around the lack of information provided to tsunami-affected populations during the initial response phase, though by now most INGOs have designed mechanisms to address the issue. Some disseminate information through local leaders or officials. Because information about aid flows is a source of power and is sometimes tightly held

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[17] O'Neil, T. 2006. *Human Rights and Poverty Reduction: Realities, Controversies and Strategies.* ODI Meeting Series.
[18] Jones, op cit.

by people in power,[19] others distribute documents in local languages to make them broadly accessible. The most promising approach may be the publicly accessible 'information centre.'[20]

Recognizing the need for two-way information flow, INGOs have established many ways to gather community input and feedback, including suggestion boxes, grievance committees, complaint cards, watchdog committees, community consultations and even a "help line."[21] Information about aid activities alone, however, is not sufficient. RBA implies that INGOs promote information flow about rights, about how NGOs are promoting them and about obstacles to their realization for local populations.[22] It also implies providing any support populations may need to utilize this information.

Ensuring that affected populations have a voice to exercise their rights is also an aspect of participation. INGOs have been active in advocating for the tsunami-affected populations, most notably the right to return to previously occupied land; land and property rights; women's rights; equal access to humanitarian assistance and recovery processes; and children's rights. Successful techniques have included:

- Working within, and sometimes even forming, an NGO consortium to enhance NGOs' voice and to promote skill- and experience-sharing;

- Putting advocacy on the agenda of technical working groups;

- Framing issues in a rights perspective;

- Becoming involved in an issue such as housing to have more impact on relevant decision-making.

These activities help to protect basic human rights, but they do not necessarily promote the tsunami-affected population's right to participate as they often involve speaking 'for' the population. To have their own voice, the affected population – or claim holders – must have a functioning relationship with government officials – or duty-bearers. Some INGO activities have focused on building such relationships. For example, rather than advocating 'for' communities, one INGO is forging links between community organizations and government officials or the Human Rights Commission so that they can directly advocate for themselves.

These relationships are constrained by more than simply a lack of venue for discussion, however. For many, especially the most vulnerable populations, relationships are constrained by issues of power, governance and social position. In the presence of INGOs during humanitarian assistance operations, affected populations may appear to have a voice. But if the underlying patterns of exclusion are not addressed, these same populations may not be able to continue to participate after the aid community leaves.

Changing underlying patterns of exclusion requires a long-term commitment. Nonetheless, the tsunami recovery period provides an opportunity to begin the process as emergencies tend to

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[19] Christoplos, I. 2006. *Links Between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in the Tsunami Response.* TEC.

[20] CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. November 2005. *Report of the Listening Project, Aceh, Indonesia.*

[21] Devanand Ramiah and Dilrukshi Fonseka, interview, 24 August 2006, Colombo.

[22] Jones, op cit.

expose existing patterns and create space for change and reform.[23] Also, research indicates the most effective emergency responses have focused on rebuilding social relationships.[24]

Building social relationships requires more than building houses, and is especially difficult in tsunami-affected areas where many of the settlements being planned do not represent genuine 'communities'. As one field staffer noted: "We can't suddenly start a representative body, decision-making structures, accountability, etc. just because a disaster happened; we need to have something in place to start with."[25]

Also, in Banda Aceh and Sri Lanka, a vision of social transformation must be informed by careful conflict analysis to avoid interventions that aggravate pre-existing conflicts or trigger new ones.[26] The process of addressing social exclusion and related power imbalances will almost always exceed the timeframe of humanitarian assistance operations yet initial steps towards promoting participation can and should begin during the initial stages of response (see box).

RBA Promotes Participation to Improve Response Outcomes

About four weeks after the tsunami, relocation sites for internally displaced people (IDPs) being housed in schools in Vaaharai, Batticaloa district were selected by the government and some of the NGOs. Groups of IDPs were then neatly assigned to relocation sites without consultation. 'Speed,' it was said, was of the essence and consulting people could be 'messy.'

OCAA and KPNDU, its local NGO partner, challenged this assumption and carried out a rapid survey of over 85% of the 2,656 displaced families to better identify people's relocation preferences. The results were telling. Over a third of the people surveyed did not know where they were assigned to move and most believed, wrongly, that they would lose their entitlements if they did not go to their assigned site. The survey demonstrated that it was neither time-consuming nor 'messy' to consult people during an emergency.

More importantly, the process illustrated the importance of participation in decision making. People became aware of their options and discussed them with relatives and neighbors. They critically considered such factors as security (there are military and rebel camps dotted in the area), soil fertility and dry season water availability, none of which had been of much concern to the planners. The findings helped Oxfam Australia to raise these issues at district coordination meetings and ultimately led to the formation of a shelter policy group that continues to play an important role in shelter and relocation issues. As a result, the people in Vaaharai relocated more sites than were initially identified. Their right to transitional shelter on their own land, if preferred, was also respected.

Source: Roche, C., N. Kasynathan and P. Gowthaman. 2005. "Bottom-up Accountability and the Tsunami."

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[23] Morago-Nicolás, L November 2000. *A Rights-based Approach to Emergencies: Rights-based Analysis in Practice*. ActionAid Emergencies Unit Briefing Paper.

[24] Vaux, T. July 5 2006. "Service Delivery for Sustainable Peace," id21 Research Highlight (original source: *Service Delivery in Countries Recovering from Conflict*; DFID, Final Report, January 2005).

[25] P.B. Gowthaman, interview, 23 August 2006, Colombo.

[26] Goyder et al., op cit.

Humanitarian Assistance Community

As discussed above, lateral accountability implies respect for the primary authority of the State and improved knowledge and information exchange. It also implies that, just as INGOs scrutinize the practices of the State and advocate for compliance to international standards, the State has an equal right to scrutinize INGO practices and hold them accountable to the international principles of humanitarian assistance. Few INGOs have thus far exposed themselves to such scrutiny. Indeed, the TEC LRRD report concludes that the major stumbling blocks to genuine implementation of RBA are "the weakness of relationships between the government (at all levels) and the international aid community, as well as mutual distrust."[27]   It is not just the INGO community that resists scrutiny, however. One of the issues Action Aid faced in trying to 'hold governments to account' is that their leverage to scrutinize donors' human rights approaches is compromised by their financial dependency.[28]

The Accountability Thematic Working Group report discusses ways to promote INGO accountability. Nonetheless, as RBA implies placing human dignity at the heart of every decision,[29] INGOs should be held accountable to respect this right. What organizations and individual staff members must recognize is that every aspect of their demeanor and activity conveys how well they have internalized the concept of respect for the dignity of every disaster-affected individual.[30] To ensure such accountability will require each organization to re-examine, through a rights-based lens, all management, human resource and programming policies and practices. INGOs active in tsunami recovery have developed two approaches that may help launch these efforts: the *Value for Money Audit*[31] being conducted by Transparency International in Sri Lanka and the *Social Equity Audit*[32] implemented by CARE in India (see box below).

The CARE Social Equity Audit in India

A wide spectrum of development professionals and stakeholders in India agreed on the need for systematic and reflective inquiry into the processes of social exclusion and discrimination in tsunami relief and rehabilitation activities. The Social Equity Audit (SEA) emerged as a tool to support this process. It has been used thus far to assess both the programming and organizational practices of four grassroots organizations and one INGO. Lessons learned are being used to improve the audit protocol.

Source: CARE 2006b. Social Equity Audit (SEA): A Tool for Inclusive Development.

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[27] Christoplos, I., op cit.

[28] Luttrell, C., L. Piron, and D. Thompson. 2005 *Operationalising Norwegian People's Aid's Rights-Based Approach - A Review of Lessons From International Non-governmental Organisations of Relevance to Norwegian People's Aid's Adoption of a Rights-based Approach*. ODI

[29] Piron, L. 2005. "Human Rights: Promoting Accountable Aid," *Opinions*, Number 56, ODI.

[30] Leaning, J., G. Greenough and M. VanRooyen. September 22 2006. *Comments on Reports Relating to Special Envoy/NGO Impact Initiative (for discussion in Geneva, September 25, 2006)*. Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Harvard University.

[31] Rukshana Nanayakkara, interview, 28 August 2006, Colombo.

[32] Sandhya Venkateswaran, personal correspondence, August 2006.

Assessment

Most emergency response evaluations discuss the quality of needs assessments. Indeed, the TEC devoted an entire study to this topic.[33] This study recommends differentiation (and subsequent prioritization) be made between different kinds of need, specifically those that:

- Are truly life-threatening
- Are better met locally
- Are perceived as priority by the 'beneficiaries' themselves
- Result from pre-existing conditions[34]

Guidelines to help INGOs identify life-threatening needs and examine local capacities are available ,[35] and every agency professes to employ a participatory needs assessment process. Unfortunately, time constraints and management pressures often constrain quality needs assessment, at least during the early days and weeks of a disaster response. Instead, initial assessment exercises tend to focus on quantifying needs that the agency can address, with emphasis placed on 'traditional' vulnerable groups, such as women, children and the physically disabled. More importantly, these assessments tend to frame needs and vulnerabilities in their current 'situation' – the disaster context –- and fail to distinguish those that existed before the disaster hit. In many tsunami-affected countries, these 'pre-existing conditions' include chronic poverty resulting from structural inequity and social exclusion. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, focus on the 'situation' also has tended to exclude an entire vulnerable group: those displaced by civil conflict.

The TEC Synthesis Report clearly calls for increased attention to social inequality, exclusion and hierarchy, and asserts that identification and inclusion of the most marginalized groups should be a fundamental humanitarian principle. To accomplish this, INGOs need to improve their abilities to identify vulnerability and better understand its causes. The goal is not simply to better or more efficiently target response programs, but to address the underlying dynamics of vulnerability which is central to recovery. The TEC concludes that some rehabilitation efforts uninformed by such knowledge risk being ineffective and unsustainable. Worse, some of these interventions may actually undermine future development. It also argues that chronic poverty has actually increased post-tsunami in many cases due (in part) to loss of family labor and skills; social capital, especially where communities have been devastated and fragmented; and public service institutions. [36] As ACFID (2006) stated in their input to this initiative, "consider as a right the right not to be left more vulnerable after the disaster response and recovery."

Consider as a right the right not to be left more vulnerable after the disaster response and recovery. – ACFID input to the NGO Impact Initiative

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[33] de Ville de Goyet, C and L. C. Morinière. 2006. *The Role of Needs Assessment in the Tsunami Response.* TEC.

[34] Op cit.

[35] For example Save the Children's *Emergency Nutrition Assessment: Guidelines for Field Workers* and Mary Anderson's *A Manual for Training in Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis.*

[36] Christoplos, I., op cit.

The issue therefore is how to identify vulnerable groups not included in current assessment procedures, and understand their vulnerability adequately to design appropriate response programs. A simple solution is to change assessment processes. Shifting the focus from 'vulnerability due to the situation' to 'the structural causes of vulnerability' requires emphasizing individuals' and groups' *position* in society, rather than just their *situation*.[37] Such an assessment process will involve gathering information on the pre-disaster human rights context and its relationship to pre-existing vulnerabilities; identifying the patterns and causes of inequality and exclusion; and analyzing power structures and the local values, principles and norms proclaimed in the wider legal system applicable in the society. Relevant assessment tools exist, such as that employed in the CARE *Social Equity Audit* profiled above.

One lesson to take from the *Social Equity Audit* is the need to view such assessments as inter-agency efforts. The process of identifying and understanding social exclusion requires a wide variety of skills and knowledge that are generally not available to every INGO. Joint assessments could improve analysis and sharing of a comprehensive understanding of the situation.[38] They could also foster inter-agency programming required to operationalize the beneficiary-centered approach called for in the TEC Synthesis Report.

The recovery process is a dynamic, ongoing, political, economic and social process that enables and constrains affected populations[39] and peoples' needs and vulnerabilities change over time. INGO interventions themselves impact the recovery process, and not necessarily in the intended positive manner. For example, the exclusion of 'conflict-affected' people from many tsunami assistance programs in Banda Aceh and northern Sri Lanka provoked increased tension. Ongoing monitoring of the recovery process is also needed to inform constructive adjustment of INGO activity.[40]

III.   Recommendations

It is not the intention of this paper to present a definitive statement on RBA in emergencies. The reflective process has been plagued by the same constraint that keeps many INGOs from addressing RBA in emergencies: inadequate time allocated to research and analysis. Another major constraint to implementing RBA in emergencies is the timeframe of humanitarian assistance operations; NGOs attempting to implement RBA in their long-term programming are committing to a period of at least ten years.

Instead, this paper attempts to provide a preliminary response to tsunami evaluation recommendations that "all relief and rehabilitation must be informed by a human rights *framework* and all disaster response *policies* must be based on a human rights approach" (emphasis added).[41] As such, the implementation of RBA is viewed as a series of processes, not simply the end goal of empowerment. And the process of implementing RBA in emergencies has already begun for several NGOs.

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[37] Morago-Nicolás, op cit.
[38] de Ville de Goyet, C and L. C. Morinière, op cit.
[39] Christoplos, I., op cit
[40] Lowrie, S., C. Smith, and S. Austin. August 2005. *Conflict, Compliance and Sphere - What it Means for CARE Sudan in Darfur*, version 3, Discussion Paper, CARE UK.
[41] Action Aid International. 2006. *Tsunami Response: A Human Rights Assessment*. PDHRE, People's Movement for Human Rights Learning, Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network: 56.

Through the traditional humanitarian assistance mandate of providing protection and services to 'rights-holders' when other institutions are unable to meet their obligations, INGOs have long been protecting rights. This paper illustrates that some INGOs are also promoting rights, from the earliest stages of tsunami response, through a variety of activities. Others are beginning to grapple with the complex issues surrounding social exclusion and the underlying causes of vulnerability. These processes are a long way from perfect, but emergency response does not occur in a perfect environment. It must be kept in mind that to respond to the tsunami, most INGOs were required to expand by upwards of 400% – almost overnight. There is no private or public sector entity that could expand to such an extent without sacrificing quality.[42] It must also be kept in mind that shifting towards a rights-based culture throughout the humanitarian response community will require more than simply adding additional activities and requirements to already overburdened emergency response staffs.

In recognition of the primary TEC recommendation calling for a fundamental reorientation from supplying aid to supporting and facilitating communities own relief and recovery priorities,[43] the following recommendations are made:

1. Articulate Human Rights Strategies

Require all INGOs that state a commitment to human rights in their mission statement to articulate strategies for protecting and promoting all human rights in their emergency response programs.

While RBA can be operationalized by applying human rights principles, in particular accountability, participation and equality, INGOs need to avoid 'repackaging' traditional approaches by simply using the language of rights.[44] What is needed to avoid this pitfall is an institutional commitment to building a rights-based culture, not a short term fix in response to emergencies like the tsunami. At a minimum, the long-term strategies should contain the following components:

- A human rights review of organizational management, human resources, and programming policies and practices to identify how internal rules, processes, culture or resource allocation are shaping behaviour and practice.

- Training plans to ensure all staff receive a minimum amount of human rights education.

- 'Learning' plans to ensure practices in the field are documented, analyzed and distributed.

- Measures to ensure all program development staff are fully aware of the national laws and policies in the countries in which they work, as well as regional and international treaties, declarations and agreements; and this information is used during disaster response operations.

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[42] Christopher Necker, interview, 28 August 2006, Colombo.
[43] Telford, J., J. Cosgrave and R. Houghton. 2006. *Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report*. TEC
[44] Luttrell, Piron and Thompson, op cit..

- A participatory process that listens to – and acts upon – the concerns and priorities of claim-holders, no matter how this may 'inconvenience' the plans of the INGO.

- Contingency plans to: ensure both local authorities and affected populations are aware of the legal and policy framework of rights; and strengthen the lines of communication between local authorities and affected populations.

- Exit strategies that clearly illustrate steps needed to enable affected communities to claim their rights and local and national governments to respond to these claims. While completing these steps within the timeframe of humanitarian response may not be feasible, the practice will encourage a cultural shift towards RBA.

2. Establish Inter-Agency Team to Support RBA

At each large-scale emergency response, establish an inter-agency team dedicated to providing the ongoing contextual assessment and monitoring information, as well as technical support, needed by all operational INGOs.

Humanitarian assistance staffs are already struggling to simultaneously implement quality programming and meet demands for upward accountability in a difficult and challenging environment. It is not reasonable to expect them to take on the additional responsibilities for context analysis and monitoring to better address rights and the underlying causes of vulnerability. Also, not all NGOs have the resources or mandate to undertake these activities themselves, yet most could improve their response programmes through access to quality information. In addition to addressing these issues, a dedicated,[45] inter-agency team will:

- Ensure coordinated data collection and analysis to improve program quality, reduce gaps and avoid duplication of efforts in emergency response.

- Build on the diversity of humanitarian actors and comparative advantages of each. In addition to INGO/local NGO staff members with strong social, anthropological, context analysis, and human rights skills, the team should include representatives of the local communities. A skills audit of the 'beneficiary' populations should identify qualified candidates.

- Improve coordination with, and capitalisation on the specific skills and mandates of, other international bodies such as the UN Cluster System, ProVention,[46] IDRL,[47] and the Emergency Capacity Building Project.[48]

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[45] To avoid conflicting priorities, RBA Support Team Member should be viewed as a full-time position.

[46] Formed in 2000 by World Bank to provide a forum for dialogue and a framework for collective action, ProVention has identified 'social and political contexts' and 'policy environments that enable (or hinder) the implementation of effective risk reduction measures' as areas of further study.

[47] *International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles.* The TEC Synthesis Report recommends development of IDRL as a means of "clarifying and strengthening respective responsibilities, accountabilities and authority of affected states and international agencies" (Telford and Cosgrave 2006, 115).

[48] Jointly implemented since 2003 by Oxfam GB, SAVE US, WVI, CRS, IRC, CARE and Mercy Corps, the ECB project has a focus on program quality through its *Accountability and Impact Measurement* initiative. It has also implemented inter-agency evaluations of tsunami response programs.

- Promote a common understanding of RBA throughout the community. It can also help to promote inter-sectoral programming and a focus on root problems which are common to all rights areas, such as gender inequality and power imbalances. Additional activities of the team may include establishment of longitudinal studies to assess the impact of RBA in emergencies; analysis and documentation of successful RBA implementation claims; and evaluation of the effectiveness and ease of use of the variety of assessment tools available.[49]

- Specifically address concerns of Jan Egeland (2006) as stated in his presentation during the launch of the TEC Report:

  It is important that we all work in partnership rather than in isolation of each other. . . . Efforts should be complimentary rather than divisive and relationships should be built on mutual trust rather than on competition for space, turf or money. . . . We should recognise our limits and areas of expertise and not pretend that each actor has the know how to do it all. Agencies should not treat recovery activities as extensions to relief operations or simply overstretch themselves and operate outside areas of competence.

3. Develop monitoring indicators

Develop monitoring indicators to measure both the processes and outcomes of implementing a human rights framework. A consultative process is recommended for such development to ensure the indicators are effective and to help build capacity and common understanding throughout the community.

When asked to describe their experience implementing RBA, many NGOs staff referred to their adherence to Sphere standards. At a philosophical level, the Sphere *Charter and Minimum Standards* represent a practical articulation of RBA,[50] yet they are limited in the scope of rights addressed[51]. A further criticism is the *Minimum Standards* appear to treat "rights as susceptible to technical fixes by agencies through relief and development programmes."[52] While the value of Sphere is not in question, the point is that Sphere compliance is not the same as 'doing' RBA.

Work is currently being undertaken by IASC to produce a *Manual for the Operational Guidelines on Human Rights Protection in Situations of Natural Disasters* that provides detail on what the general human rights norms mean in the specific circumstances of natural disasters. While this document goes beyond the current scope of Sphere, it also has limitations. For example, while cognizant of the indivisibility of rights, in practice many agencies implementing RBA focus on root problems common to all rights areas, such as gender inequality and power imbalances. Also, rights imply responsibilities of both duty-bearers and claim-holders. There are no standards proposed to address these issues. Also, the document is intended for a wider audience than the NGO community and therefore includes standards that exceed the mandate of NGOs. Finally, a limitation recognized by the author is the lack of indicators. "The key indicators, as

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[49] Activities planned in 2006 by the UN Early Recovery Cluster include development/ improvement of common tools for analysis to ensure recovery is planned from the very early stages of a crisis in such a way that it integrates risk and vulnerability reduction measures (OCHA 2006).
[50] Lowrie et al., op cit.
[51] For example, there is little discussion concerning one of the major unmet rights in tsunami response: the right to livelihoods.
[52] Darcy op cit: 12.

measures to the standards . . . function as tools to measure the impact of processes used and programmes implemented. Without them, the standards would be little more than statements of good intent, difficult to put into practice."[53]

In developing human rights framework monitoring indicators, the following issues will need to be addressed:

- Due to the breadth of human rights, it is fully recognized that it may never be possible to compile a single, comprehensive document of minimum standards for RBA; or that such a document is even desirable. A similar issue was faced during the development of Sphere. Work should therefore begin with a close examination of existing international standards[54] to avoid duplication or contradiction; and priority should be given to developing indicators for those standards.

- Indicators will need to be designed to assess the degree to which project activities enable the state to fulfil the rights of the disaster-affected population,[55] and the communities to claim their rights (e.g. to participate; contribute and express opinions; and decide).[56] Work in this area should build on that already underway in the 'development' field.[57]

- Methods will need to be designed to facilitate the rapid development of indicators for host government standards,[58] as needed.

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[53] Sphere Project. 2004. *The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, Oxfam Publishing, Oxford: 8.

[54] Including the IASC Manual, Sphere, and DAC criteria (ALNAP 2006).

[55] Christoplos, I., op cit.

[56] P.B. Gowthaman, interview, 23 August 2006, Colombo.

[57] For example, Action Aid has developed qualitative indicators for measuring 'empowerment' and Plan has a benchmarking tool to allow it to assess its progress in implementing RBA.

[58] For example, the constitution of a country that spells out rights and obligations within the national framework (van Brabant 2003) as well as those included in national monitoring mechanism.

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Annex 2: Persons Interviewed

Adrian Ouvry	ARC	Partnership Coordination Delegate - Sri Lanka & the Maldives
Alison Cleary	Oxfam Australia	Tsunami Information and Advocacy Coordinator
Ashika Serasundara	CARE	Director-PQ&L
Cherian Mathews	Oxfam-UK	Campaigns & Policy Manager, Colombo
Chris Necker	CARE	Emergency Coordinator, Colombo
Devanand Ramiah	UNDP	Peace and Development Analyst, Colombo
Dilrukshi Fonseka	UNDP	Project Liaison Officer, Colombo 5
Donald Lees	CARE	Humanitarian Assistance Director-Kilinochi/Mullaihivu
Nayomi Dharmatileke	CHA	Advocacy Coordinator-HSRP
Priyanka Shamal Samarakoon	CARE	Program Quality & Learning Unit
Nijananthy	CARE	Program Quality & Learning Unit
Nikki Burns	CARE	Program Quality & Learning Unit
P.B. Gowthaman	Oxfam Australia	Colombo
Patricio Cuevas-Parra	WVI	Advocacy and Humanitarian Protection Manager
Paul Adams	CARE	Partnership Advisor
R. Ravi Shankar	SCF	Strategic Programme Advisor
Rukshana Nanayakkara	Transparency International	Project Director, Colombo
S. Karunakaran	CARE	Humanitarian Assistance Director- Jafna
Sally Austin	CARE	Assistant Country Director, Colombo
Sandhya Venkateswaran	CARE	Colombo
Simon Eccleshall	IFRC	Colombo
Sophie Harding	Tearfund	Policy advisor-Tsunami Task Force
Faisal Hadi	ACEH NGO Coalition for Human Rights	Executive Director, Banda Aceh
Udeshi Amarasingh	CARE	Information Coordinator - Humanitarian Management Unit, Colombo
Salbiah Ahmad	UNFPA	Gender Advisor, Banda Aceh
Yanti, Lacsana	UNDP	Programme Manager, MDGs Support Unit, Colombo
Ingvild Solvang	CARE	RBA + HAP Advisor, Banda Aceh
Christophe Legrand	CARE	Emergency Coordinator, Banda Aceh
Rossella Bartoloni	CARE	Banda Aceh
Melinda Young	Oxfam-UK	PM-Operations, Banda Aceh
Ali Aulia Ramly	IRC	Coordinator of Child Protection, Banda Aceh
Nomas Winoto	TI Transparency International	Director, Banda Aceh
Dellaphine Rauch-Houekpon	American Red Cross	Sr. Country Representative, Banda Aceh
Ismet Nur	Director	Lembaga Posko Kemanusiaan, Banda Aceh
Nicky Rounce	IOM	Head of Stakeholder Relations, Banda Aceh
Erwin Setiawan	Flower Aceh	Banda Aceh
Cut Ratna Hayati	SIA-Aceh	Banda Aceh
Gunawan Adnan	Aceh Bangkit	Banda Aceh
Fadullah Wilmott	Muslim Aid	Banda Aceh
Ismed Nur	Lembaga Posko Kemanusiaan	Banda Aceh
M. Taufan	Plan	Banda Aceh

NGO Professionalism

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The NGO Professionalism Working Group was convened for the NGO Impact Initiative by PLAN USA (Sam Worthington[1], Cara O'Hare and Frank Manfredi) and World Vision US (George Ward and Rein Paulsen). Ken Giunta (InterAction) was the lead author.[2]

I. Background

The response to the South Asia tsunami of 2004 by the humanitarian community, the public, governments and multilateral institutions was unprecedented. Indeed the event itself was unprecedented, the loss of life staggering. Swift human action immediately after the disaster helped to prevent further significant loss of life. The magnitude of the crisis and the size of the response, however, placed significant stresses on all the entities engaged in relief and recovery.

According to TEC synthesis report up to 300 individuals and charitable organizations including international NGOs (INGOs) arrived – in Aceh alone – to assist in the relief effort during the first two months after the tsunami and, as of 2005, 178 registered international NGOs remained in the country.[3]

These non-governmental respondents continue to provide critical work in health and nutrition, education and psychosocial support, shelter and housing, and livelihood restoration and promotion, that governments could not have provided on their own.

The scale of the disaster however revealed challenges for INGOs that merit attention, in order to strengthen their performance in the future. When INGOs fail to uphold their stated missions, or worse, harm the communities in which they work, their failure taints the entire sector and shakes the public trust in the INGO community broadly. It is imperative, therefore, that a mechanism is established to provide a blueprint for professional conduct for all INGOs that can mitigate opportunities for such failures.

Perspectives shared from the field, from the governments of the tsunami-impacted countries and from the communities where many INGOs worked, reveal that many INGOs made unkept promises, stretched their mandates beyond their capacities to deliver, hired away the best and

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[1] Through September 2006; now at InterAction.

2 The Working Group appreciated in-depth conversations with representatives of the following organizations: Accenture, ACFID, ARC, AIDMI, Africare, Aid to Artisans, American Enterprise Institute, American Friends Service Committee, Better Business Bureau of the United States Wise Giving Alliance, Cal Safety, CARE-USA, CARE-International, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Christian Children's Fund, Collaborative Learning Project, CONCORD, Coordination Sud, Dalberg Project, Ford Foundation, Georgetown University, GAP, One World Trust, Habitat for Humanity, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, HAP, ICRC, ICVA, IMC, IRC, Mercy Corps, National Association of Social Workers, Northwest Medical Teams, Oxfam, People-in-Aid, Plan UK, Plan USA, Refugees International, Save the Children, Social Accountability International, SCHR, TEC/ALNAP, The Sphere Project, U. S. Committee for UNDP, U.S. AID, VOICE, and World Vision US.

[3] Tsunami Evaluation Coalition. 2006. *Synthesis Report.*

brightest of local talent thus undermining the capacity of local NGOs to meet their goals, and too often failed to adequately collaborate and coordinate with local stakeholders and communities to ensure sustainable outcomes.

The humanitarian response to the tsunami crisis presents an opportunity for the INGO community to reflect upon and define what structures, systems, policies, procedures and staff they need to ensure professional conduct, by strengthening institutional capacity, and transparently delivering service in ways that make them *accountable to affected populations*, host governments and communities, as well as to donors.

Questions that guided working group consultations

How can we help define what constitutes responsible, professional NGO practice?

How is professionalism different from accountability?

What are the core operational standards that would likely lead to effective, accountable performance?

Defining Professionalism

The INGO Professionalism Working Group inventoried and built upon many existing national and international initiatives, networks, and platforms that address the issue of INGO professionalism and accountability. Our consultation process invited additional input on how INGOs, donors, scholars, charity regulators, host governments, and local NGOs define "NGO Professionalism" within the context of lessons learned from the tsunami experience

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Initiatives and best practices referenced by the professionalism working group

1. InterAction's work on NGO standards, third-party certification and self-regulation

2. Standards-based national platforms such as those in Germany, Australia, Ghana and the Philippines

3. Existing and evolving codes of conduct around the world such as those developed by Action Aid, the Sphere Project, the *International NGO Accountability Charter* (IANGO), People in Aid, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP), ACFID's *Code of Conduct and NGO Effectiveness Framework*, the Global Accountability Project (GAP), the *Codes of Fundraising Practice* being generated by the Institute of Fundraising, and the *Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS*

4. Multi-indicator compliance and certification models such as those developed by the ISEAL Alliance, ISO, SGS, and the Wise Giving Alliance of the U.S. Better Business Bureau

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Based upon the consultative process employed by all the NGO Impact Initiative Working Groups, and a review of commonalities across existing bodies of work, this report proposes a definition of NGO professional conduct that could be adopted globally, and that is based on and guided by a set of universally defensible norms and/or standards that lend themselves to being monitored for compliance.

Consultations in the Europe, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the United States underscored consistent interest on the part of humanitarian NGOs to improve their organizations. These discussions elicited three different, but overlapping, perspectives on NGO professionalism.

1. The first perspective focused on institutional capacity to deliver services effectively. Many local NGOs claimed that INGOs judge their "professional capacity" by assessing their staffing and institutional infrastructure, but that they rarely dedicate resources and technical assistance to strengthen the institutional capacity of these local actors

2. The second perspective focuses on the governance and management structures, systems and policies that an NGO should have in place to ensure that it operates professionally, transparently and effectively[4].

3. A third perspective focuses on the professional competencies of individual staff, particularly those whose work benefits from specialized knowledge and experience. This issue is discussed in a bit more detail below.

During the project consultation process, it was alleged that too often INGO staff are not adequately prepared to carry out their work. Where there are established professional associations with responsibility for licensing and reviewing specific professional competencies, it was argued that these professional associations too often do not appear to take an active interest in the performance of their licensees when they are assigned to international relief work. It was suggested therefore, that there is a degree of professional impunity in international relief work, and that the conduct of individual humanitarian workers needs to be considered an important part of this examination of INGO professionalism. Good humanitarian relief service delivery and stewardship depends on many professional skills and competencies, and INGOs are judged, in part, on how well or poorly their staff perform. Humanitarian INGO platforms and donor agencies that support humanitarian relief should work in concert to define occupations and skills needed in the field of humanitarian relief. They should consult with associations that license relevant professionals to ensure that they extend oversight to the conduct of professionals involved in humanitarian relief.

Ultimately, however, INGOs must be held accountable for the conduct of their staff. While often the most important factor determining the quality of programs is key on-site staff within

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[4] concerns were raised throughout these consultations that establishing a definition of professional conduct could be too restrictive for small, resource poor NGOs, and that what this paper proposes would create barriers to entry that would stifle new entries to humanitarian relief. Consensus did emerge across these consultations that once an INGO raises funds and provides services in a vulnerable community (in the aftermath of a crisis), they become duty bound to operate in a transparent, accountable and professional manner, as well as to do no harm. The issue of INGO professionalism discussed in this paper is intended to apply to the licensed practitioners [international, institutional actors (INGOs)/organizational entities]. It is not the intent of this proposal to establish norms for professional NGO conduct that would restrict or make it a "crime" for local citizens and communities to help their neighbors.

agencies, hiring NGO must be held accountable for implementing the human resource policies that guide staff recruitment, training, oversight and personnel evaluations. The INGO is responsible for hiring staff with the experience, skills, and professional credentials required to do their jobs.

II. Establishing Core Principles of Professional NGO Conduct

Through the consultations and reviews of the several existing and emerging NGO standards and codes of conduct around the world, several common characteristics of what defines a good, and "professional," NGO emerged:[5]

- A commitment to mission;[6]
- Established checks and balances through an accountable, transparent governance structure
- Financial controls;
- A commitment to established principles of humanitarian and human rights law;
- A commitment to early consultation and to working through and in concert with the communities in which the organization operates;
- Truth in advertising and funding appeals;
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating organization program effectiveness that, by definition, is guided by a strategic plan and that includes perspectives from affected populations; and
- A mechanism for transparent public reporting on the organization's work and program results.

These common universal principles that define good humanitarian INGO stewardship recur throughout existing literature and were validated during our consultative process. No individual or institution consulted or engaged during this study refuted the validity of these basic principles.

Can Consensus Be Found?

Concerns were raised throughout the consultative process over whether a common set of principles that define the professional conduct of such a diverse sector could be articulated.

While it is true that the NGO community can be likened to "a million flowers in bloom,"[7] documented evidence from the few existing NGO accountability, rating, and certification, systems around the world demonstrates that standards that suggest INGO approaches to governance and management structures that INGOs should have, are useful tools that are

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[5] See Appendix A for a list of the resources reviewed.

[6] While private for-profit respondents to a humanitarian crisis should adhere to these same principles of professional conduct, a fundamental difference between them and non-governmental charities is their mission statements.

[7] The humanitarian sector is not monolithic. Some NGOs deliver direct relief services in the field, while others focus exclusively on advocacy. Some are pass-through agents, while others are hybrids. Some are engaged in humanitarian relief, while others focus on longer-term development. Some INGOs have operating budgets that exceed those of national governments, while many smaller community-based charities struggle daily for financial survival.

increasingly being applied successfully by NGO networks around the world in rendering more effective, less ad hoc and significantly more transparent the work and performance of their member NGOs, irrespective of their diversity in size and mission.

It must be understood that adopting a set of defined, structural and programmatic norms and standards, and more importantly, implementing the good organizational structures, policies and procedures needed to comply with them is *not a guarantee* of good performance. Rather, they simply increase the *likelihood* that an NGO will operate responsibly and effectively, that it will be able to mitigate opportunities for problems to occur, as well as have the systems in place to deal with problems effectively and transparently if and when they do occur. Adopting such standards now, and having the required principles and systems in place in advance of a crisis, also increases the likelihood that quality will not be compromised as much as it might otherwise be during the relief phase of a disaster response, when all are under pressure to disburse funds and services quickly.

Establishing basic criteria that define the structures that should be expected of a "professional" NGO, gives the public (including NGO beneficiaries), governments and donors a tool to help hold NGOs to greater account, as they define the terms and basic expectations against which NGOs can be judged.   If as the sector continually contends, beneficiaries should be placed at the center of this debate, then, as a sector, INGOs must provide beneficiaries tangible, mechanisms to hold them (the INGOs) accountable. In short, having a standards or norm-based system that helps, in part, to define NGO professional conduct, *enables* greater levels of transparency and accountability.

In order for a standards-based structure to be successful in promoting the systems needed to advance NGO professional conduct, the standards must be embraced as internally relevant, valuable and necessary by those NGOs being held to their account. Considerable effort and time must be invested from the outset to build consensus for these standards among their intended duty bearers. Existing national, regional and sector-focused NGO platforms offer an established mechanism from which consultations can take place and local validation and adoption by humanitarian NGOs of these standards can be advanced. The process of validation must be driven locally.   In order to be embraced, standards cannot be perceived as mandated by the north on the south or by the United States NGO networks on its European counterparts.

NGO platforms whether they be supra-national (e.g., CIVICUS), national (e.g., InterAction), regional (e.g. the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development [CONCORD]) or sector-specific (e.g., the Sphere Project and HAP) can help to organize and strengthen the work and organizational structures of the NGOs that are members of their network. They can do this through a variety of mechanisms. They can establish universal codes of conduct that become requirements of membership, as well as provide technical assistance to members in implementing and coming into compliance with these codes of conduct. NGO Platforms can amplify the visibility and legitimacy of the collective in their interaction with government, donors, communities, and other stakeholders, by effectively coordinating the individual, and often diverse, voices of their membership. As networks mature, they can also work to evolve into a community of practice, by engaging with members around lessons learned through program successes as well as failures that are then shared across the network for overall program quality improvement.

Many of the INGOs that have been party to these consultations report that their donors already require that they have the governance and management systems being defined by these proposed principles of professional conduct. Therefore, they argue that there is no need to have specific norms or standards applied to them. This proposal requires compliance certification, perhaps through self-regulation to an NGO platform that goes beyond reporting for example, that the INGO has a board of directors. Rather, self-certification requires the NGO to demonstrate, first and foremost to itself, that its board consistently exercises its fiduciary responsibilities.

Having standards that are attached to a compliance mechanism, whether through monitored self-regulation overseen by an NGO platform or external audit, forces internal reflection and stock taking on a regular basis. The role of standards in promoting institutional learning and capacity building goes to the heart of why having a standards-based system supports overall program quality management.

- Does my organization have an engaged board?
- Is it meeting regularly and providing sufficient oversight?
- Have we met our financial controls (e.g., audits, 990 forms in the US context)?
- Do we have good human resource policies?
- Does our staff know what they are?
- Are we doing all we can in our recruitment, personnel evaluations and management controls to ensure that we hire the best-qualified staff?
- Are we offering staff sufficient protections?
- Do we have grievance procedures and clear policies and procedures that protect whistleblowers?
- Did we consult with the communities in which we work at the front end in project design?
- Did we have sustainable outcomes? Did we affect positive change on the ground?
- Did we engage with our beneficiaries in making these assessments and do they agree?
- Were we transparent with our donors and use the funds raised in the manner promised? etc. etc.

Core Professional Operating Standards

All agreed that there is need to bring discipline to INGO conduct and reduce the uneven and ad hoc performance of INGOs that was witnessed and reported during Tsunami relief (as documented in the TEC report).

Some core professional operating standards (CPOS) that draw upon common themes emanating from NGO platforms in the north and south and that support the consensus definition of professional conduct above, could include [verifiable] implementation of the following:

- A clearly articulated and understandable mission statement that has a commitment to established principles of human rights and humanitarian law and to the primacy of affected populations at its core;

- A governance structure independent of the day to day management structure (board) that provide checks and balances oversight;

- Defined financial controls that may, for example, require regular independent audits;

- Employee policies that clearly define their roles, responsibilities and rights, as well as grievance procedures that protect whistleblowers, both at headquarters as well as in the field;

- A clear and unequivocal statement of commitment to non-discrimination at point of service;

- A formal policy to work through and in concert with affected populations and their communities, as well as to transfer and develop local capacity;

- Systems and procedures for strategic planning, as well as for ongoing program monitoring and evaluation and results reporting that engages with affected populations; and,

- Systems and procedures for annual public reporting on its work.

As a way forward, it is proposed that a working group be established among ACFID, the CCIC, InterAction and the relevant humanitarian INGO platforms in Europe (such as VENRO, ICVA, HAP, SPHERE and GAP) to launch a consensus building dialogue around the adoption of a modest number of core operating standards.

Compliance and Enforcement

The experiences of these several existing NGO accountability systems also demonstrate that having established standards in place is not enough. Compliance review, verification and certification are needed.

No agreement was reached on who or what entity would/should have the authority to monitor INGO compliance with standards, and be charged with offering technical assistance to NGOs wanting to meet them. Also unresolved was any agreement on what the appropriate incentives might be to promote the embrace of these core standards, or what the penalty might be for an NGO that decides not to adopt these core standards, or is found to be out of compliance with them.

Some host governments argued forcefully that they should be granted greater authority to regulate NGOs and their compliance with these standards.[8] Others suggested that compliance enforcement should come from a supranational third party such as a United Nations Specialized

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[8] As is so well-stated in the TEC Report, "…the process of relief is not politically neutral." Precisely because of NGO's essential role as advocates and in social service delivery, government regulation of the NGO sector runs the very real risk of becoming politicized. While the Working Group on Professionalism does not support a standards certification regime overseen by government, based upon the consultations to-date, consensus was not reached on where the authority to regulate the NGO sector should rest. This issue remains unresolved. This paper proposes that NGO standards be established and their compliance enforced through self-regulation monitored by NGO platforms.

Agency, while others countered that an external body should not certify NGOs. It was suggested that transparent, publicly posted standards would permit the media and general public to monitor NGO work and to serve as effective watchdogs. Peer review among NGOs was proposed as a way forward. Many others argued forcefully that compliance enforcement should remain a matter of self-regulation within the sector.   Still others said that peer review and self-regulation did not go far enough and suffer from questions of legitimacy. No clear consensus emerged as a way forward in the area of standards compliance and enforcement.

Based on the experiences of those NGO networks that already have standards and compliance mechanisms, standards development and adoption should precede the implementation of an "external" compliance enforcement mechanism. The time needed between the adoption of standards and the implementation of a certification mechanism, need not be inordinate.   The embrace and adoption of global standards by a sector that has not been regulated and monitored in this way, is an important first step, which could be combined with the immediate requirement to self-certify compliance. However, NGOs will legitimately need a bit of time and technical assistance in the initial phase to put in place the systems, policies and procedures required, before it is suggested that they be audited by an external party.

INGO national and regional platforms, where they exist, offer a tested and viable structure through which NGOs can be held accountable to standards. Where such INGO networks or platforms exist and agree to hold their members accountable to a set of standards, they will need to have very clear rules about compliance enforcement. Among the core responsibilities of these national and regional platforms must be to mentor their members and to provide them with technical assistance before requiring them to certify their compliance with these standards. As with existing standards-based NGO platforms, such as VENRO in Germany, ACFID in Australia, and HAP and the Sphere Project in Geneva, and InterAction in the United States, national and regional platforms should be encouraged to develop more comprehensive standards and compliance mechanisms that go beyond the core professional operating standards being proposed.

It was also proposed through the consultations that the humanitarian INGO platforms in Europe, United States, Australia and Canada should come together to establish a mechanism to promote and verify optimal standards of performance by INGOs globally, perhaps in the form of an independent Humanitarian NGO Professional Association (HNPA). Whether this is an entirely new entity, or one that constitutes a merger among existing initiatives, this "mechanism" and/or HNPA would be charged, in part, with (a) reaching consensus among NGO platforms around a set of standards; (b) providing technical assistance and training to humanitarian NGOs in meeting these standards; (c) overseeing humanitarian NGO compliance certification with these standards; (d) working with other professional associations and universities around the training and credentialing/licensing of humanitarian staff in identified professional competencies, (e) providing a mechanism to receive and address complaints and grievances based on evidence of non compliance with these norms; and, eventually perhaps (f) developing an external mechanism for certifying NGO compliance with these standards.

If and when adoption of core professional standards takes root and are accepted globally by individual NGOs, NGO platforms and governments to the point of becoming normative, a demonstration of compliance with these basic core professional operating standards could

eventually become a precondition for access to donor funding and to the communities impacted by a crisis[9].

The Accountability Continuum

Standards development and compliance monitoring are an evolving process that moves along a continuum. This continuum begins with standards development and stakeholder validation of those standards. This can be followed in the immediate term by technical assistance to build institutional capacity and learning that supports structured self-regulation, based on clear definitions of compliance. Compliance monitoring can then, if demanded, move to external verification that can range from peer-review to second and/or third party auditing and accreditation. All those driving such an INGO standards compliance process should be mindful of this evolutionary process.

Concluding Notes

Emphasis was placed repeatedly on the need for INGOs to be held more accountable to their beneficiaries, to coordinate more with their colleagues and with local NGOs, as well as to commit to work through and help develop the capacity of local communities to ensure sustainability and the ability of local stakeholders to respond to crises effectively on their own.

These proposed standards and compliance requirements are designed to hold humanitarian NGOs accountable to those structures and systems that they themselves define as central to their work. This proposal should only pose an additional burden on those NGOs that do not have functioning boards, financial controls, good human resource policies or a commitment to ensure that coordination and beneficiary engagement at all stages of program design, assessment and evaluation are part of their standard operational costs and procedures.

If INGOs hope to retain their moral authority to hold governments and other relevant stakeholders accountable for their role in alleviating poverty and suffering, then INGOs must also be willing to hold themselves accountable to the same high standards that they set for others. If not, , the sector runs the very real risk that other stakeholders to humanitarian relief will establish their own criteria against which humanitarian NGOs will be judged.

III. Recommendations

1. Establish Consensus Standards

Establish an alliance among designated existing humanitarian INGO Platforms to reach consensus around a set of generic core professional operating standards for INGOs that could include [verifiable] implementation of the following:

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[9] Such a precondition already exists in Australia, where humanitarian NGO access to official development assistance is available only to NGOs that are signatories to ACFID's well established codes of conduct ACFID also has clear complaint and grievance procedures posted publicly on their website.

- A clearly articulated and understandable mission statement that has a commitment to established human rights and humanitarian law and to the primacy of affected populations at its core;

- A governance structure independent of the day to day management structure (board) that provide checks and balances oversight;

- Defined financial controls that may, for example, require regular independent audits;

- Employee policies that clearly define their roles, responsibilities and rights, as well as grievance procedures that protect whistleblowers, both at headquarters as well as in the field;

- A clear and unequivocal statement of commitment to non-discrimination at point of service;

- A formal policy to work through and in concert with affected populations and their communities, as well as to transfer and develop local capacity;

- Systems and procedures for ongoing program monitoring and evaluation and results reporting; that engages with affected populations and,

- Systems and procedures for annual public reporting on its work.

2. Establish a Mechanism to Oversee and Promote Humanitarian NGO Professional Conduct

Establish though this alliance a mechanism [perhaps in the form of an independent Humanitarian NGO Professional Association (HNPA)] whose mandate will be to:

- Work through these humanitarian INGO platforms to develop modules for technical assistance for INGO capacity building to meet these standards;

- Oversee humanitarian INGO compliance with these standards in the immediate term through structured self-regulation to their respective INGO platforms, based on clear evidence definitions of compliance.

- Establish alliances with existing national and regional NGO Platforms as well as with sector platforms such as the Emergency Capacity Building Initiative, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, the Sphere Project and the Global Accountability Project , etc.) to advance the professional development of humanitarian INGO staff;

- Work in concert with humanitarian INGOs, donors and other stakeholders in humanitarian relief (e.g., United Nations, ICRC, etc.) to define the various professional competencies needed by humanitarian staff in humanitarian relief programs.

- Serve as the liaison for the humanitarian INGO community with professional licensing associations to ensure that licensing requirements and obligations extend to whenever and wherever a licensed humanitarian professional works.

- Work in concert with existing NGO accountability and standards-setting bodies around the world in establishing a system or systems for external, non-governmental, compliance verification or certification mechanisms (e.g., build upon available, multi-indicator

certification models already being applied such as InterAction's child sponsorship accredited certification audits conducted by Social Accountability International, charity audits conducted by Better Business Bureaus around the world, the ISEAL Alliance, and the SGS NGO Benchmarking initiative, to name four [there are others]).

Appendix 1:
Professionalism Resource Bibliography

The Professionalism Working Group did its best to identify, review, and to be informed by, the many existing initiatives under way around the world to establish international standards, codes of conduct, and learning forums for NGOs. These include:

AccountAbility, 2005.

ACFID *CODE*, Amended 5 October, 2004. Australian Council for International Development

ALNAP. *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action.* Geneva: Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action

Caucus of Development NGO Networks. *The CODE-NGO, Revised Covenant on Philippine Development.*

CCIC. *Code of Ethics,* Canadian Council for International Co-operation

Collaborative Learning Projects. June 2005. *Proposal for Listening to People in Societies that Are Recipients of International Assistance.*

Dalberg Project. *Business Guide for Partnering with NGOs.*

Emergency Capacity Building Project. *The Good Enough Guide to Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies.*

Global Accountability Project. *Pathways to Accountability, The GAP Framework.* One World Trust

HAP. July 2006. *The Manual of Humanitarian Accountability.* Humanitarian Accountability Partnership - International

ICRC. *The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards Common to All Sectors.*

Institute of Fundraising. *Codes of Fundraising Practice.*

International Non-Governmental Organization's Accountability Charter, December 2005, CIVICUS, Harvard University and Amnesty International

InterAction. 2006. *PVO Standards*

----- 2006. *Self-Certification-plus Guidelines*

ISEAL Alliance. January 2006. *ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.*

NGO HIV-AIDS Code of Good Practice Project. *Our Voice, Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS.*

Pan-African Association for Sustainable Development. *The Ghana NGO/CSO Standards Project.*

People In Aid. 2003. *Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel.*

SGS. *NGO Benchmarking.*

Stakeholder Engagement Standard, Exposure Draft

VENRO. August, 2005. *Humanitarian Aid Put to the Test, Principles, Criteria and Indicators to Ensure and Monitor Quality in Humanitarian Aid.*

WANGO. *Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs,* World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations

Wise Giving Alliance *Standards for Charity Accountability, Implementation Guide.* Better Business Bureau.

AccountAbility
250-252 Goswell Road
Clerkenwell London
EC1V 7E13 UK
+44 (0)20 7549 0400
secretariat@accountability.org.uk

ACFID
Private Bag 3
Deakin, 2600
14 Napier Close, Canberra
(61) 02 6285 1816
main@acfid.asn.au

ALNAP
C/o Overseas Development Institute
111 Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7JD, UK
+44 (0)20 7922 0300
alnap@odi.org.uk

Australian Council for International
Development's Code of Conduct and NGO
Effectiveness Framework
See (ACFID above)

Better Business Bureau (BBB) Wise Giving
Alliance
4200 Wilson Boulevard
Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22203
703-276-0100
bweiner@cbbb.bbb.org

Canadian Council for International Cooperation
1 Nicholas Street
Suite 300
Ottawa, Ontario K1N7B7
613-241-7008
http://www.ccic.ca/

Carnegie Corporation of New York
437 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022
212-371-3200
gpm@carnegie.org

CIVICUS

24 Gwigwi Mrwebi Street
Newtown
2001 Johannesburg, South Africa
+27 11 833 5959
kumi@civicus.org

Code of Good Practice for NGOs responding
to HIV/AIDS
C/o International Federation of Red Cross/Red
Crescent Societies
PO Box 372
CH-1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
+41 22 730 42 22

Coordination SUD
14 Passage Dubail
75010 Paris
01 44 72 93 72
sud@coordinationsud.org

Draft Codes for Non-governmental
Organizations and Civil Society Organizations
Practice in Ghana
Pan African Organization for Sustainable
Development (POSDEV),
Interim Secretariat – Standards Project, E037
Anevon Court, Parakou Estates, Dtd Com.
15, Lashibi, Accra.

ECB Initiative, Gates Foundation
Greg.brady@ecbproject.org

Ford Foundation
320 East 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017
212-573-5000

Global Accountability Project, One World Trust
3 Whitehall Court
London SW1A 2EL UK
+44 (0)20 7766 3470
mhammer@oneworldtrust.org

Guidestar
4801 Courthouse Street
Suite 220
Williamsburg, VA 23188

757-229-4631
customerservice@guidestar.org

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
Maison Internationale de l'Environnement 2
Chemin Batexert 7
CH-1219 Châtelaine
Geneva, Switzerland
+41 22 788 16 41
nstockton@hapinternational.org

IANGO Accountability Charter
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London WC1X ODW UK
44-20-741-35500
jarenas@amnesty.org

Institute-of-Fundraising
Codes of Fundraising Practice
Park Place
12 Lawn Lane
London SW8 1UD UK
020 7840 1000
enquiries@institute-of-fundraising.org.uk

InterAction
1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Suite 701
Washington DC 20036
202-667-8227
info@interaction.org

ISEAL Alliance
Unit 1, Huguenot Place
17a Heneage Street
London E1 5LJ UK
+44 (0)20 3246 0066
secretariat@isealalliance.org

People in Aid
Development House
56-64 Leonard Street
London EC2A 4JX UK
+44 (0)20 7065 0900
info@peopleinaid.org

Red Cross Code of Conduct
(See Code of Good Practice for NGOs
responding to HIV/AIDS above)

Social Accountability International (SA8000)
220 East 23rd Street
Suite 605
New York, NY 10010
212-684-1414
info@sa-intl.org

Sphere Project
Box 372
1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
info@sphereproject.org

SGS NGO Benchmarking
1 place des Alpes
PO Box 2152
1211 Geneva 1
Switzerland
+41 22 739 91 11

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC)
(See ALNAP above)

VENRO
Kaiserstrasse 201
53113 Bonn
Germany
++49(0)2 28-94 67 70
sekretariat@venro.org

World Assembly of Non-Governmental
Organizations (WANGO)
155 White Plains Road
Suite 220
Tarrytown, NY 10591
914-631-8990
secretariat@wango.org

Appendix 2: Sample Standards for NGO Self-Regulation

CORE PROFESSIONAL OPERATING STANDARDS FOR NGOS
A BLUEPRINT FOR A STRUCTURED SELF-REGULATION REGIME
DRAFT I: FOR EXAMPLE PURPOSES ONLY
(September 12, 2006)

This draft is based on excerpts from InterAction's self-regulation model, "Self-Certification-Plus." It is based on the belief that, at a minimum, a professionally run NGO should have a governing body, mission statement, financial controls, human resources policies and systems that guaranty a policy of non-discrimination and inclusion at point of service, truth and transparency in its public reporting and fundraising appeals, and mechanisms that ensure accountability to beneficiaries and donors. For each of these proposed standards for good NGO performance, evidence has been defined to ensure uniform self-regulation as well as to assist NGOS in either their own internal self-assessment or in preparation for an external verification of compliance.

GOVERANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

I.   Governing Body Responsibility

      A. All NGOs should have an independent governing body.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review copies of pertinent sections of documents such as bylaws, charter, policies and procedures that vests the ultimate authority in the Governing Body to act with responsibility for governing all aspects of the organization.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review copies of pertinent sections of the policy or bylaws that specify the frequency of Governing Body meetings and defines the required attendance. Also gather and document evidence that the Governing Body meetings were held as planned and that formal records of such meetings were permanently maintained.

II.   Public Reporting

      A. All NGOs should have a mechanism and vehicle for reporting to the public upon request about their work and funding sources.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review copies of all required documents.

    a)   Audited financial statements,

    b)   List of current Governing Body members,

    c)   Other information that may be helpful to the public in understanding the organization's purposes, goals, activities and results.

      B. All NGOs should have a clearly articulated and understandable mission statement.

III. Governing Body Policies

    A. All NGOs should have Bylaws that describe their Governing Body's duties, fiduciary responsibilities, terms of service, conflict of interest, and role in fiscal oversight.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review copies of pertinent sections of the policy or bylaws that specify the frequency of Governing Body meetings and defines the required attendance. Also gather and document evidence that the Governing Body meetings were held as planned and that formal records of such meetings were permanently maintained.

    B. All NGO Governing Body members should be volunteers and serve without compensation

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review copies of the appropriate sections of the organization's policies and procedures that address the terms of service, restrictions on Governing Body members' relationships and services by employees, and Governing Body members' compensation and/or reimbursement for expenses.

    a) Restrict the number of employees who are voting members of the Governing Body,

    b) Provide limits for directors being related to one another, the founder, or the executive director or president/chief executive officer,

    c) Establish limited terms of service for directors and officers,

    d) Prohibit compensation to Governing Body members for service as directors.

Note: This restriction applies only to payment for services as a director and does not apply to salaried employees who are also directors. Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses is not considered compensation.

IV. Fiscal Management and Accountability

    A. All NGOs should have an operating budget that is approved annually by their Governing Body

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review a copy of the organization's budget for the current year.

    B. All NGOs with operating budgets over $250,000 should have an annual, independent financial audit.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Compile the names of the Governing Body members who are currently serving on the Governing Body's financial oversight committees, including the name of the organization's treasurer, if applicable. Gather additional evidence, as appropriate, to verify the elements of the components.

    C. The Bylaws should address the internal controls over all disbursements and prohibit any unauditable transactions or loans.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review pertinent materials prepared by the organization (including management letters and conflicts of interest policies etc.)

    D. All NGOs should file whatever financial reports required under all applicable laws, where they operate.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather all legal documents that specify the financial reporting requirements of the jurisdiction in which you operate as well as all financial reports filed in the past year that demonstrate fulfillment of these requirements.

V.   **Equal Access Rights**

A. All NGOs shall ensure the fundamental concern of the organization is the well being of those affected and that its programs assist those who are at risk without political, religious, gender or other discrimination.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review copies of the organization's instructions, directives, policies and/or procedures which direct personnel to adhere to non-discrimination practices in its eligibility decisions, and list the organization's most recent personnel orientations, trainings and instructional material addressing non-discrimination.

VI.   **Organizational Integrity**

A. NGOs shall always operate in accordance with all applicable laws.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Document internal policies and procedures that are in place to be used to demonstrate compliance with all applicable laws. If legal action has been initiated against the organization within the last three years, document internal policies and procedures followed, and any actions taken, to respond to and resolve legal action.

B.   Each director and employee shall follow the organization's written policies of conduct that provide that:

1. The organization opposes and does not act as a willing party to wrongdoing, corruption, terrorism, bribery or other financial impropriety
2. The organization has the systems, written policies and procedures to take prompt and firm corrective action whenever and wherever wrongdoing of any kind is found among its Governing Body and employees
3. This standard of conduct is always maintained despite possible prevailing contrary practices elsewhere.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review the following:

- A copy of the organization's written standard of conduct

A copy of the pertinent section of the organization's policies and procedures which address corrective actions to be taken in response to founded wrongdoing by Governing Body members, employees, contractors and volunteers

C. The organization will have policies and procedures that provide access for and that address complaints, as well as that prohibit retaliation against whistleblowers.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review a copy of the policy that protects employees who present evidence of misconduct by individuals associated with the organization. Verify that policies and procedures have been followed.

VII. Management and Human Resources

A. All NGOs shall be guided in their human resources policies by the People-in-aid codes of conduct.

B. All NGOs shall periodically reassess their mission, programs and operations in light of the changing world environment through an ongoing strategic planning process.

C. All NGOs shall have clear, well-defined, documented policies and procedures related to their employees, clearly outlining their rights and benefits.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review personnel policies and procedures, strategic planning documents and procedure, or other documents related to organizational operations.

Program Implementation

I. Program Development

A. The Organization's field programs should empower institutions and facilitate popular participation and sustainable development.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: The organization should draft a succinct but comprehensive description of the organization's training manuals and services or gather and review a copy of material containing this information. The following topics/materials should be covered and   should be verified that training was documented and delivered. Applicable organizational policies and standards include:

- Training manuals or guidelines for program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation

- Gender analysis tools for programming

B. All field-base programs shall facilitate self-reliance, self-help and popular participation by empowering individuals and communities and strengthening capacities of local structures.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Review training site locations and formatting of training materials developed over the past year to assess and verify that accessibility considerations were followed.

C. For all NGOs operating in the field, the organization shall give priority to working with or through local and national institutions and groups, where they exist.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Develop a list of the entities with primary responsibility in each country where the organization operates. Gather organizational policy, guidelines and/or training material about working in partnership with local community groups and/or instructors.

      D.   All NGOs engaged in humanitarian relief shall be guided by the Sphere standards.

II.   Program Quality Monitoring and Evaluation

      A.   All NGOS shall have established policies and procedures for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of its programs and projects

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review materials summarizing the organization's procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effective use of inputs.

      B.   All NGOs with field operations shall have the capacity to provide financial and performance oversight at the local level.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review material summarizing the organization's procedures for providing oversight of program finances and performance at the local level. If any of this oversight responsibility is outsourced, gather and review a copy or summary of the responsibilities to be carried out by the contractor in this area.

III.   Program Accountability, Fundraising and Accurate Disclosure

      A.   All NGOs shall exercise management and financial controls to provide assurance that donor contributions are used as promised or implied in their fundraising appeals or requested by the donor.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Gather and review policies on accounting practices and reporting on the generation and use of restricted and unrestricted funds, and document all communications to the public and donors on the use of restricted and unrestricted funds.

      B.   All NGOs shall be truthful in its marketing and advertising.

PROPOSED EVIDENCE: Summarize the methods used to assure the accuracy of conditions portrayed in the organization's communications. If no such guidelines exist, summarize the methods used to assure the accuracy of conditions portrayed in the organization's communications. Gather and review sample-marketing guidelines that address the organization's accurate portrayal of conditions in its communications. Survey donors to verify that the organization's intended message is accurately getting through.

End excerpt.