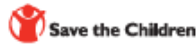


The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project

A chance to influence the humanitarian system



Accountability to crisis-affected populations: Project steps along the way

In March the project brought together an invited group of UN global cluster lead agencies, project consortium NGOs and accountability experts to discuss ways to promote and enhance accountability to crisis affected populations through the work of the clusters and field level. The meeting also aimed to share information and experiences and provide inputs for the April meeting of the IASC Working Group. Jock Baker from Care International, Monica Blagescu of HAP International and Nevio Zagaria of the Global Health Cluster presented on the work of their organisations, achievements and challenges.

The meeting discussion noted:

- the need for simple guides and frameworks for clusters to use
- the benefit of all agencies within a cluster using common language, frameworks and definitions,
- the importance of information sharing, accessibility and transparency
- need to involve communities so they are clear what they can expect and what agencies are accountable to them for delivering
- the need for greater understanding amongst humanitarian practitioners about what accountability to crisis affected communities is and what tools are available.

The meeting agreed the need to share information from experiences such as the Myanmar NGO Resource Centre, the upcoming Haiti real time evaluation and others, and the importance of rolling out at the country level the accountability frameworks and materials already devised by the Health and WASH global clusters.

Based on the discussion and recommendations of the March meeting, Bijay Kumar, made a presentation at the IASC Working Group meeting and amongst the points he underlined were the following:

NEWSLETTER

July 2010
In this edition

- Accountability Meeting in GVA
- Haiti ERF initiative
- New HC in DRC
- Afghanistan ERF update
- Afghanistan OCHA advocacy
- Zimbabwe CAP analysis
- New project products
- Upcoming events

- The need to shift the accountability focus to crisis-affected populations
- The plethora of initiatives and the need to focus initially on one or two specific initiatives
- The need for more a coordinated approach and to take advantage of the opportunity the cluster approach offers for humanitarian actors to work together on accountability
- Focus both on what coordinated approach of actors working together can do as well as individual agency initiatives

Bijay recommended to the IASC Working Group:

- Develop common understanding
- Include accountability in work plans and priorities
- Provide simple accountability frameworks including
 - Information sharing
 - Ensuring Participation of the affected community in decision making process
 - Setting up joint feedback and complaint mechanism
- Build national capacities
- Ensure shared learning
- KEEP IT SIMPLE

See www.ngosandhumanitarianreform.org for further information and detailed reports of the Geneva meeting and the presentation to the 76th IASC Working Group

The Project produces guidance to support National NGOs access the Haiti Emergency Rapid Response Fund (ERRF)

Project consortium member agencies working in Haiti have been concerned at how little access national NGOs in Haiti have had to the Emergency Relief and Response Fund. Globally the 15 country level Emergency Response Funds (ERFs) which are managed by OCHA provide about 75% of their funding to NGOs. In 2009 111 national NGOs received project grants from the 15 ERFs. However, in Haiti the number of national NGOs is much lower, with only 2 organisations receiving funding between January and May 2010.

In response to this situation, and in keeping with the project objectives to enhance national NGO access to pooled funds, the project obtained a small grant from CAFOD, to produce a guidance note aimed at supporting national NGOs' access to the fund. A project consultant, Leah Berry, the former interim Humanitarian Reform Officer in Ethiopia in 2009, worked closely with the OCHA ERRF Management Team in Port au Prince to research and produce the leaflet, which is now available on the project website (www.ngosandhumanitarianreform.org) and through the One Response Haiti page (<http://onerresponse.info>) – soon to be changed to humanitarianresponse.info.



Photo: ActionAid

The project has also produced a generic version of the leaflet and will be working with OCHA to disseminate it so that NGOs in other countries can access basic guidance on applying to their national level funds.

Amongst the tips the leaflet gives to NGOs are the following:

- *Attend the cluster meetings for the sector in which your organization is working (example- Shelter, Agriculture, Health, Protection, Camp Management, etc)*
- *If you are unable to attend the meetings, contact the cluster coordinator by email or phone, to set up a time to discuss how your proposed project will fit into the cluster developed strategy*
 - *See weblink above for directions to find the cluster coordinator contact information*
- *Reach out to international NGO partners who may attend cluster meetings if you want additional information or need help in getting in touch with clusters coordinators*
- *Form a partnership with a larger NGO if your organization does not have the capacity to do the required budget reporting or monitoring of an ERF project*
- *Highlight in your proposal how your project connects with the cluster strategy*

- *Ensure that the type of project you are proposing to do is similar to work that your organization has done in the past, in both activity type and size of the project*
- *Design a budget that is both detailed and realistic*
 - *Do not submit a budget requesting the greatest amount that the ERF will fund unless this is essential to project's success; your project will not be approved if the budget is inappropriate*
- *Ensure that your organization is able to do all of the budget monitoring and reporting required; for your own sake, be aware of auditing and fund disbursement rules before you submit the application, as percentages of the grant may be withheld until final audits are complete.*
 - *Details about reporting requirements are found on the ERF website (where they exist)*

The next steps for the Haiti initiative are to hold 2 half day workshops later in the year, in collaboration with OCHA in Haiti, to bring national NGOs together to inform them in greater detail about the steps necessary to successfully access the ERRF.

Ensuring Continued Effective Humanitarian Leadership in DRC:

Crucial Issues for NGOs

**Marit Glad, Policy and Advocacy Advisor,
International Rescue Committee, Democratic Republic of Congo**

Humanitarian Coordinators have been given the crucial role of speaking out for independent humanitarian action (in an often politicized aid landscape) and for continued funding for humanitarian action (in many cases in countries with donor fatigue for humanitarian response). They also lead in the coordination of humanitarian response (of actors that do not necessarily want to be coordinated).

To complicate matters further, most Humanitarian Coordinators also fill the role of Resident Coordinator – and are thus in charge of leading the UN Country Team in its development activities. Recent history has shown that when this double role exists, development responsibilities are often given more weight than the humanitarian ones and individuals recruited to fill the RC/HC positions are chosen mainly because of their development background, not their humanitarian experience.

It is an extremely difficult job, which makes it all the more important that it is taken seriously and that the right individuals are recruited for these positions. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Ethiopia, working through the Humanitarian Reform Project and in collaboration with others, found this role to be so crucial for humanitarian response that in February 2010 they wrote to the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ask for his support in finding an individual with a list of “necessary” qualities; these included “significant experience in the application of humanitarian principles” and

the ability to lead the entire humanitarian community (UN and non UN actors) to ensure accountability to the people in need.

In light of the abovementioned issues and difficulties, it is not surprising that the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project's 2009 Synthesis Report *Review of Engagement of NGOs with the Humanitarian Reform Process* identifies one of the major gaps in the humanitarian system as the lack of strong and experienced humanitarian leadership. NGOs think that some of the crucial elements of the role are as follows:

- 1. A high level visible UN representative could ensure that humanitarian needs are not downplayed or lack an adequate response due to international or national political pressure to show progress.** Vested international and host government interest to show progress in post conflict stabilization has led to increased pressure on political players to downplay the actual situation on the ground and the humanitarian needs of the population. In Afghanistan, NGOs had to undertake a concerted advocacy campaign to get OCHA back into the country to coordinate humanitarian action in 2008. Decisionmakers were reluctant to bring OCHA back because its reappearance would serve as an indicator of a deterioration of the situation in the country. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the protection cluster deemed it necessary to write a letter to the UN Special Representative to DRC in 2009 asking for an explanation as to why the UN Secretary General's report did not reflect the numbers and analysis of the humanitarian community.
- 2. Behind the scenes and public advocacy needs to be carried out by a high level UN representative with host governments and donors to maintain the independence of humanitarian action from political agendas.** Ensuring that humanitarian assistance is delivered according to humanitarian principles is increasingly challenging in the politicized aid environment in many countries. As comprehensive approaches to peace enforcement and stabilization and "hearts and minds" projects for military troop security become more common in conflict and post-conflict countries (where aid, military force and diplomacy go hand in hand), ensuring that humanitarian action is kept needs-based, neutral and independent is difficult. It requires advocacy from the highest level humanitarian in country.
- 3. High level UN leadership is an essential ingredient in the process of improving humanitarian coordination and response.** Even in DRC, where effective humanitarian leadership was the most evolved of the 5 countries researched for the 2009 Synthesis Report, there is room for improvement. While a number of mechanisms have been put in place, such as the cluster system, and a national humanitarian Pooled Fund, certain important decision-making processes have not been totally transparent, and there was no established Humanitarian Country Team until early 2010. In the first meeting with the new Humanitarian Coordinator, NGO representatives specifically asked the HC to take the lead in improving humanitarian coordination mechanisms and promoting humanitarian reform. NGOs also asked the HC to ensure that the Humanitarian Country Team becomes a functioning and transparent body based on the principle of partnership.
- 4. Humanitarian space needs a protector.** The Humanitarian Coordinator is also seen to have an important role in protecting "humanitarian space" (meaning the ability of humanitarian groups to gain access to and aid people in need) through public statements condemning

attacks against humanitarians and demands for investigations. Additionally, in several countries, administrative procedures are used to harass and intimidate NGOs (such as slow customs clearance and visa renewals for staff or national legislation that limits humanitarian actors' ability to operate). The HC is seen as a key player in fostering relationships with host governments to limit and resolve such problems.

To ensure the best possible humanitarian response, it is crucial that the UN agencies and the NGOs work in a true partnership, where the differences of each actor are respected while coordination of activities is ensured. The challenges of ensuring such a partnership increase in integrated missions, where the political character of the whole UN family of agencies is increased. In integrated missions, NGOs working in accordance with humanitarian principles find it more difficult to interact with the UN system. The HC's role in these missions is even more complex, as s/he has to negotiate between the UN system and the humanitarian community while leading the UN's political, peacekeeping and stabilization agendas.

The NGO community sees it as crucial to coordinate activities with the UN agencies to achieve common objectives, and to negotiate the space between political and humanitarian mandates. Maintaining a constructive dialogue between the HC and the NGO community is a fundamental aspect to ensure that humanitarian response is delivered as effectively as possible.

The ERF in Afghanistan remains under-funded despite advocacy

In May 2010, the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project issued an urgent call to donors to resource the Afghanistan Emergency Response Fund (ERF), which was established in January 2010 with a grant of US\$3.5million from SIDA. The fund has an initial target of 5 million, but in May no other donors had made firm commitments to contribute, despite the pressing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. Since the statement was issued Ausaid has contributed 400.000 \$ and the Netherlands 700.000 bringing the total available funds to US\$4.6 million



Photo: International Rescue Committee (IRC)

As a consequence of the limited donor support the fund has lacked the capacity to meet many of the urgent needs created by the Samangan earthquake in which 3,000 families were badly affected and the widespread floods effecting over 10,000 families in 20 provinces. In addition to the urgent need for funds to respond to sudden onset 'natural' emergencies the intensification of the conflict has led to increased humanitarian needs amongst conflict affected populations which in many cases are also going unmet. The 2010 Humanitarian Action Plan, for example, at its mid-year point remains only 40% funded, and for the ERF specifically, 28 proposals have so far been received totalling some 8.7 million USD, seriously outnumbering the funds available. This situation has the potential to complicate the coordinated humanitarian response, leading to potential gaps and urgent, unmet needs, in addition to the risk of fuelling local tensions due to inconsistent and inadequate support.

ERFs, now operational in 16 countries, are gap-filling funds that aim to respond rapidly and flexibly to unforeseen crises not included in the CAP/HAP. They offer national NGOs an opportunity to access humanitarian funding not often available to them elsewhere. In the case of the Afghanistan ERF of the 28 proposals submitted for funding so far, 19 are from national NGOs.

Despite this advocacy call for support from donors 6 weeks later the donor response has been weak with only 2 donors responding to the call. A couple have informally told the NHRP that they intend to contribute towards the fund, but this intention now needs to be translated into action.

The Project consortium partners and extended NGO community in Afghanistan voice their concern to John Holmes, UN ERC

On 24 June 2010, NGOs and Humanitarian Reform project members in Afghanistan issued a 5-page statement voicing their concern for the urgent need to strengthen the OCHA presence in this country. The signatories to this statement included the extended membership in Afghanistan: Afghanaid and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). At the same time that this statement was issued, a letter was sent to John Holmes, the UN Emergency Response Coordinator and Head of the United Nations Coordination Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), signed by 31 NGOs in which the current level of OCHA's presence was described as not being "adequately resourced or empowered" to carry out its mandate.

The NHRP statement put forward three recommendations and areas of priority to be urgently considered by OCHA; the underlying message being the critical need to strengthen OCHA's human resource capacity in Afghanistan to empower it in delivering "basic coordination, planning and information-management requirements".

On 30 June, John Holmes reacted to these concerns in an interview with IRIN News in New York (<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89705>). While accepting the concerns expressed in the letter "in the spirit in which it is intended" and acknowledging the issue of staffing capacity in Afghanistan, particularly at regional level, he pledged that the right level of staffing would be secured within the coming weeks, that is by July/August. He also highlighted the challenges in recruiting for Afghanistan, "for obvious

reasons of security and difficulty of operating" and the need for more resources from donors. In a subsequent response to the letter's signatories, John Holmes detailed steps OCHA had recently taken to increase its staffing levels in its various offices throughout Afghanistan. However, the letter did not address the underlying reasons for the recruitment and staffing challenges and the subsequent limited capacity of OCHA to address key strategic humanitarian functions in Afghanistan which is having a negative effect of issues such as basic coordination, planning and information management. A meeting between representatives of the signatory agencies and the ERC was pending at the time of this newsletter.

The Project's statement and the letter have also highlighted the importance of OCHA's independent positioning in terms of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan - UNAMA's political mandate and presence in Afghanistan, emphasizing this as a crucial element in efforts to strengthen and protect humanitarian space. According to IRIN News, John Holmes 'did not accept' the Project's critique that OCHA is not operating independently enough from UNAMA. However, he did acknowledge the need to address the NGOs' concerns.

The Project's consortium members will continue to actively advocate for strengthening humanitarian coordination in Afghanistan and will be working closely with the Humanitarian Coordinator and the newly appointed Interim Head of OCHA as well as other humanitarian stakeholders, to address the ongoing concerns.

See www.ngosandhumanitarianreform.org for the statement "Call for Strengthened Humanitarian Coordination in Afghanistan – June 2010".

NGO engagement with the Consolidated Appeal Process in Zimbabwe: Is it worth the effort?

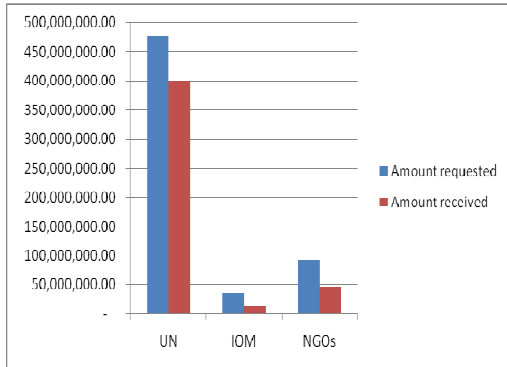
Mudasser Hussain Siddiqui, Humanitarian Reform Officer, Zimbabwe

A record 66 NGOs, many of them local and national organizations, participated in the 2010 Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) in Zimbabwe. Yet despite considerable investment in the process, NGOs consistently receive much less funding directly from the CAP than UN agencies and the IOM. Because of this, NGOs are increasingly questioning whether involvement in the CAP is worth the time and effort.



Photo: Save the Children, Norway

Figure 1: Amount of money requested and received, CAP 2009



Source: Financial Tracking System
<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fts.nsf/doc105?OpenForm&rc=1&cc=zwe>

An analysis of funding in response to the CAP 2009 shows that UN agencies requested and received by far the largest share of money under the CAP. UN agencies requested USD 475,764,991.00 and received USD 400,133,270.00 taking their funding rate to 84% of their requested amount. This is in contrast to the NGOs who had requested USD 92,834,775.00 and received only USD 45,942,236.00 thus keeping their funding rate to less than half at 49%.

Research carried out by the NGOs & Humanitarian Reform Project shows that there are several key reasons why NGOs consistently receive less funding than the UN under the CAP. These include but are not limited to, absence of a fund raising strategy that not only raises money for the CAP but also addresses the skewed funding of NGOs participating in it; absence of a robust needs assessment that is carried out in consultation with the communities; donor preference to fund UN agencies to minimize their own administrative costs and to mitigate compliance-related risk; mismatch between the funding cycles of some donors and the CAP development cycle that effects the percentage of the CAP funded overall; and poor reporting by donors and NGOs on their funding allocations through the financial tracking system (FTS), which is used to analyze the funding status of the CAP.

NGOs and Humanitarian reform project recommends that Cluster coordinators and NGO representatives should meet bilaterally with donors to advocate for funding under their sectors, HCT should devise a mechanism to monitor implementation and effectiveness of the whole process; the current format of the CAP should be revised to make it a needs based document instead of a project based document; Donors should continue supporting the NGOs directly, an increasing number of INGOs have experience of fund management globally and in Zimbabwe and could also be encouraged to act as pooled fund managers. Lastly, OCHA should continue advocacy at HQ level with donors to improve reporting. OCHA should also liaise more closely with donors locally to track funding outside the CAP.

The CAP process in Zimbabwe and in similar situations elsewhere is in clear need of reform. Under the leadership of the HC, NGOs and UN agencies,

working through the clusters, need to work together to streamline the currently cumbersome and labour-intensive CAP process, transform the CAP into a strategic, needs-based document, and develop a fund-raising strategy which takes into account the comparative advantages of various stakeholders. Donors should use this strategy to provide funding directly to those agencies with the most capacity to implement efficient and effective programmes. If these measure are taken they will contribute towards improving the speed and quality of humanitarian response and increase accountability to both donors and crisis affected populations.

New project products:

- **Basic Information Leaflet Series:**
 - *NGOs, Clusters and other humanitarian coordination mechanisms*
 - *Principles of Partnerships*
 - *Financing Mechanisms*
- **Action suggestions for NGOs**
- **CAP analysis in Zimbabwe**

Available on project webpage: www.ngosandhumanitarianreform.org

Upcoming events:

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group Meeting – 10 - 12 November 2010 – FAO, Rome, Italy

<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pagelader.aspx?page=content-calendar-calendardetails&meetid=1733>

NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project Regional workshops

- **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 26-28 October 2010**
- **Dakar, Senegal 1-3 November 2010**
- **Bangkok, Thailand 6-8 December 2010**

Workshop details will be posted on the project website and in next project newsletter. Participation intended for senior NGO/UN staff involved in humanitarian policy and advocacy.

For expressions of interest and more information contact Shahrzad Amoli (shahrzad.amoli@actionaid.org)