From Humanitarian Reform to the Transformative Agenda: NGO Voices
November 2011 – April 2013

"There is no limit to what we can achieve if we don't care who gets the credit."
Veronica Yates
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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the NHRP II Country Project Managers who made this report possible: Liliane Bitong Ambassa for Côte d'Ivoire, Joe Read and Mette Hartmeyer for Pakistan and Ethiopia, Steffen Schwarz for Somalia, and Joram Chikwanya for Zimbabwe. The Synthesis report also benefitted from support in Geneva from Katharina Samara-Wickrama and Mikkel Erland Jensen along with Monica Blagescu.

The consortium members who hosted the project in the four focus countries and who contributed to the study of the humanitarian architecture in South Sudan also deserve special thanks. These are: ActionAid, Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).

The NHRP II project was funded by ECHO and thanks also to the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations (Geneva).

The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project, Phase II, is funded by the European Commission’s Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO). The views expressed in this document should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of the European Commission.
Executive Summary

This report summarizes, from an NGO perspective, the work done over the course of the NHRP II in four focus countries from September 2011 to April 2013: Côte d’Ivoire, Pakistan, Somalia and Zimbabwe. It focuses on efforts to strengthen local, national, and international humanitarian NGO voices in influencing the policy and practice of humanitarian reform so that humanitarian response can better meet the needs of affected populations.

The report contains observations on how to improve Humanitarian Reform and the TA from the perspective of NGOs so that crisis-affected communities receive the best possible humanitarian response.

The Transformative Agenda remains in a nascent stage and has yet to reach its full potential in strengthening humanitarian coordination and effectiveness. However, despite the current lack of clarity at the field level, the Transformative Agenda offers an important opportunity to increase impact of humanitarian reforms if clearer guidance and support is provided on how humanitarian actors can engage and take ownership of it. The Transformative Agenda’s greatest potential for transformation lies with the recent inclusion of accountability to affected populations as the axis for positive change and with a reinvigoration of the Principles of Partnership as drivers for engaging all stakeholders with the complete compendium of reforms.

Leadership

OCHA’s move to expand the skills and experiences of Humanitarian Coordinators (HC) is welcome and much needed. So is the move to invite NGO input in their performance evaluations and the stronger management coming from OCHA. However, NGOs’ limited uptake of this opportunity reflects experience within the NHRP countries that their input will have little impact in improved HC’s leadership and engagement with NGOs.

The combined Resident Coordinator (RC) and HC roles continues to be vexing, particularly in humanitarian crises, where NGO colleagues cited instances in which they believed humanitarian issues had been sidelined to avoid compromising RC priorities. However, having unsuccessfully advocated for splitting these functions for several years, there seems to be a general view within the NGO community that advocacy efforts are better placed elsewhere if the quality of humanitarian leadership is to improve.

INGOs are increasingly taking on responsibility in engaging with Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and co–leading national or local clusters. Additional efforts to promote and harness these capacities is needed.

NNGOs have yet to take up stronger leadership roles in humanitarian reform processes. Despite a willingness to engage, they face language, time and resource limitations and often feel marginalised by UN–centric approaches. While the system must provide a more enabling environment, NGOs also need to take up opportunities.

Coordination

The project mapped and supported the Somalia INGO–NGO forum, the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum and National Humanitarian Network, Zimbabwe’s NANGO and supported Ivorian NGOs establish a forum. NHRP II work to support coordination showed that NGO voices are much better heard when the NGO community establishes forums that in turn provide space for discussion, debate and negotiation, often resulting in a more unified voice or at least identification of common concerns and goals. The establishment of a forum does not automatically result in collective positions and the international fora in Somalia and Pakistan proved challenging. NNGO networks on their part, in Somalia, Pakistan, Zimbabwe struggled to truly
represent their constituency and reach out to organizations across the country.

NHRP II found that despite challenges such as time constraints and funding limitations, many INGOs often managed to be closely involved in coordination bodies at local, national and international levels. A minority of local and national NGOs had also gained some access to clusters, pooled funding and HCTs, but the vast majority remained outside the "inner circle" of decision-making and coordination.

NGOs perceive HCTs to be strongly UN dominated with limited NNGO participation. Overall, HCT meetings were felt to lack strategy direction and suffer procedural issues. Cluster meetings often registered strong NGO participation in countries where clusters were deemed to be working well, but limited NGO participation where clusters were perceived to be dysfunctional. The involvement of clusters in reviewing pooled funding allocations was seen as undermining operational coordination. In Pakistan, clusters were cited as being difficult for NNGOs to engage with because of the limited outreach toward them and because the meetings were conducted in languages other than their mother tongue.

In countries in transition from crisis to recovery, NHRP II Country Programme Managers (CPMs) found there was limited guidance on how to deactivate clusters and transition to early recovery and developmental coordination. The lack of a continuum between cluster activation, management, deactivation and developmental coordination mechanisms created large gaps.

Accountability to affected populations

Despite IASC endorsement of the five Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (CAAP), there has been a lack of leadership and limited collective progress in terms of system-wide approaches to AAP.

Discussions taking place at country level within individual agencies and sector-wide Transformative Agenda efforts were separate from discussions on the Joint Standards Initiative and Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response certification project.

AAP is a costly endeavour, and organizations sometimes struggled to maintain dedicated financial resources to this important aspect of humanitarian response. Often donors expect AAP to be part of the normal functioning of agencies and additional resources can be challenging to secure.

Partnerships

There is little common agreement on the meaning of partnership at field level; INGOs, NNGOs, UN and donors alike use the term to reference everything from sub-contracting to implementing to strategic relationships.

Decades of sub-contracting relationships have not been effective in improving local capacities, and NNGOs feel at a disadvantage to better resourced organizations with far greater access to international funds and decision-making fora. Yet NNGOs highly value the INGO-NNGO relationship, finding that this is the nexus where capacity building could potentially be done.

Clusters too were identified as potentially good partnership and capacity building venues.

While NGOs welcomed training, it became evident that UN agencies and government officials too were in need of more comprehensive understanding and training on the Transformative Agenda.

Humanitarian Financing

The Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) is regarded as a good funding mechanism by NGOs, despite the complex prioritization and allocation process that it entails. A survey on the Spring 2012 Standard Allocation Process of the CHF for Somalia
noted room for improvement on the clarity of the guidelines and the process for project selection and feedback. The CHF has become a significant source of funding for NGOs in Somalia, and the risk management approach used there and applied equally to INGO and NNGO partners has resulted in NNGOs comprising 40 percent of eligible NGO partners in the country.

The Emergency Response Funds (ERF) in Zimbabwe have become a small but significant mechanism for funding national NGOs. NNGOs nevertheless continue to experience challenges in accessing the funds and implementing projects with ERF money. The newly endorsed ERF guidelines take into account some of NGOs’ expressed concerns.

Direct Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) funding is only available to UN agencies or the IOM, who then pass on the funds to NGOs. This often creates delays in approval and allocation, leading NGOs in project countries to question the process and its results. NGOs in project countries continued to be dissatisfied with the CERF allocation process but felt there was not much they could do to change the situation.
Introduction

Humanitarian Reform

In 2005, frustrated by the unsatisfactory responses to the crisis in Darfur and the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) Jan Egeland and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) initiated work to strengthen the effectiveness of humanitarian response through the implementation of a humanitarian reform process, based on the recommendations of the ERC–commissioned Humanitarian Response Review and conceived as having three “pillars”: Improved coordination through a cluster approach; increased predictability and timeliness of funding through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)\(^1\); and improved humanitarian leadership through Humanitarian Coordinators. In 2007, a fourth pillar was added when the Principles of Partnership were adopted as the basis of humanitarian partnerships.\(^2\)

**Humanitarian Reform Project, Phase I (NHRP I)**

From the beginning of the UN–led humanitarian reform process, there was recognition of the need to better involve NGOs – particularly national and local NGOs – in the various aspects of reform. However, a 2007 IASC evaluation reported that the lack of involvement of national and community-based organisations was one of “the most disappointing findings regarding the cluster approach” and that while “partnerships [had] improved marginally...no significant gains were seen for local NGO participants.” National and local NGOs were notably absent in many reform forums and even international NGOs often found it difficult to consistently engage in the various reform processes. National and local NGOs were frequently unable to access UN pooled funds and NGOs were excluded from direct access to the CERF.\(^3\)

To address these issues, a consortium of six international NGOs\(^4\) and a global network\(^5\) launched a project in September 2008 to increase the engagement of international, national and local NGOs in humanitarian reform (Clusters, humanitarian financing and Humanitarian Coordinator strengthening).

NHRP I made a series of recommendations on the role of NGOs in humanitarian reform, including co–leadership of coordination bodies, strengthening partnerships with national NGOs, improving accountability, increasing access to pooled funding, and supporting the delivery of better–coordinated responses. NHRP I concluded that where access had been enhanced for INGOs and NNGOs, humanitarian responses were better coordinated with more effective outcomes for affected communities.

The Transformative Agenda

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\(^1\) Subsequently the Emergency Response Funds (ERFs) and Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs) were added.


\(^4\) ActionAid, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Oxfam and Save the Children UK

\(^5\) International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
Despite improvements under the Humanitarian Reform process, challenges in deploying adequate leadership, enabling functioning coordination mechanisms and ensuring mutual accountability persisted and concern about these limitations peaked during humanitarian responses to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the 2011 floods in Pakistan. To address these shortcomings, the IASC Principals adjusted the reform mechanisms and agreed to focus on improving leadership, accountability to all stakeholders and coordination to further improve humanitarian action. These three areas of improvement became the Transformative Agenda, intended to result in more effectively coordinated humanitarian responses to meet the needs of, and be accountable to, affected populations.\(^6\)

While humanitarian reform was broadly accepted by the NGO community as beneficial,\(^7\) there was less understanding or acceptance of the Transformative Agenda and its added value. This may be attributed to the confusion created by new terminology and an inconsistent explanation of what the Transformative Agenda is, and when and how the various elements should be operationalised.

When the Transformative Agenda was introduced by OCHA in the four NHRP II focus countries, there was no clear understanding among humanitarian actors of what it entailed. Discussions with both UN and NGO representatives in the project countries revealed a lack of clarity on its purpose, on how it would be applied in the country, and how different organisations involved in the humanitarian response should engage with it. Throughout the project period, the Transformative Agenda was variously described by humanitarian actors as humanitarian reform repackaged, a reincarnation of humanitarian reform, and a refocusing, a re-energising, a rebranding, an adjustment, a simplification, a streamlining and a correction of humanitarian reform.

In the context of the NHRP II, the Transformative Agenda was largely understood as a series of tools designed to improve and strengthen Humanitarian Reform with a view to improving outcomes for and accountability to affected populations.

**NHRP II focus countries**

In the four focus countries, Côte d'Ivoire, Pakistan, Somalia and Zimbabwe, Country Programme Managers (CPMs) worked with small local steering committees to develop contextually relevant initiatives to strengthen the role of NGOs in humanitarian coordination and relevant decision-making fora and processes. While steering committees were drawn from the humanitarian community in each country, composition and form varied. Some committees had formal terms of reference and work plans, while others operated on a more informal basis. All committees included representatives from national and international NGOs. Some included donors and UN representatives.

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Similar activities took place in each country with variations depending on need and context. All countries focussed at some level on building NGO leadership and representation skills, increasing NGO advocacy, increasing NNGO access to coordination and funding mechanisms, and working to improve the way clusters work, including documenting transition processes.

NHRP II publications

The project produced numerous publications, including a humanitarian glossary in English, French and Urdu, humanitarian architecture studies, a case study of humanitarian networks, and a baseline analysis of the cluster coordination mechanism. See Annex 1 for a list of the key publications produced by the project, all of which are available on the ICVA website at www.icvanetwork.org.

At the global level, ICVA completed a guide on NGO coordination, which is also available on the ICVA website. The guide fed into the NHRP II project and was used in the establishment of the NNGO platform in Côte d'Ivoire.

Report structure

This report is organized into five sections corresponding to the pillars of humanitarian reform: leadership, coordination, accountability, partnership and financing.

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8 ICVA (2013). *NGO Coordination Guide*. Available at: www.icvanetwork.org
Leadership

Background

The humanitarian reform initiative placed emphasis on strong leadership to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response and its accountability to affected populations. Often described as the most crucial element of the reform, it was agreed that strong leadership enabled the coordination, financing and partnership aspects of reform to function more effectively. The reform envisaged a cadre of Humanitarian Coordinators (HC) playing a key role to ensure that responses to crises were effectively led, managed and coordinated by bringing together the operational humanitarian agencies from within and outside the UN. Reform documents assumed HCs should have expert understanding of humanitarian principles and standards, long experience working in humanitarian crises, and the capacity to build consensus amongst a wide range of stakeholders.

At the end of NHRP I, strong leadership continued to be considered the weakest element of humanitarian reform. For example, Resident Coordinators (RCs) with no humanitarian experience continued to be appointed as HCs (i.e. as combined HC/RCs) and HCs tended to be appointed solely from within the ranks of the UN. OCHA continued to lead the process to improve the pool of candidates from which HCs were drawn and to provide stronger support to and management of HCs in 2011 and 2012 as part of the Transformative Agenda and these efforts are proving positive.

The Transformative Agenda aimed to further empower HCs with the concept of “Empowered Leadership” to give HCs more authority over the allocation of resources, planning and priority setting, deployment of clusters, and advocacy for a period of three months in L3 emergencies (i.e. major sudden onset emergencies). The Transformative Agenda also included an inter-agency rapid response mechanism with the goal of deploying strong, experienced senior humanitarian leadership to guide the response from the outset of a major crisis, including a senior NGO person to be part of the team to support NGO coordination.

While NGOs are recognised as key players in the humanitarian response ($7.4 billion of more than $16 billion expended in 2010 in the humanitarian field, were resources of the NGO community) and some INGOs and a few NNGOs have taken up cluster co-leadership positions, in general NGOs remain under-represented in leadership roles. Co-leadership has been shown to ensure greater transparency and field relevance in cluster decisions and management, and helps maintain space for the defence of humanitarian principles. Based on assessed need, therefore, capacity building in leadership skills was a major NHRP II activity in all four countries.

Humanitarian Coordinators

HCs in the four focus countries had a good understanding of humanitarian reform. However, they often had less knowledge of the Transformative Agenda, and it was not clear to them which elements were applicable in non-L3 emergencies (none of the NHRP II focus countries had L3 emergencies at the time of project implementation). One HC described Empowered Leadership – an element that applies only for the first

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three months of a sudden onset emergency – as the most useful aspect of the Transformative Agenda in his daily work though he had been working in a protracted emergency for almost two years.

While the issue of the combined RC and HC roles was observed to have compromised the humanitarian response in Pakistan and Somalia, in Zimbabwe and Côte d’Ivoire, where the countries are transitioning from humanitarian crisis to recovery, stakeholders no longer saw problems pertaining to the "double-hatting" of the RC and HC roles. Having unsuccessfully advocated for splitting these functions for several years, there seems to be a general view within the NGO community that advocacy efforts are better placed elsewhere if the quality of humanitarian leadership is to improve.

During the project implementation period, OCHA began a more inclusive performance evaluation of HCs that invited input from a wider group of stakeholders. In 2012, the NGO networks of the IASC gathered and presented input from NGOs. While this initiative had been welcomed by NGOs, the number of NGOs responding was low. Given that there are regular informal complaints from NGOs about HCs as well as positive observations about what makes a strong HC, it was disappointing that NGOs did not respond more robustly. NHRP II initiated a dialogue about NGO engagement in HC performance evaluations to understand the low level of involvement and learned that a common NGO perception was that these evaluations would have little impact on HC selection and performance. However, in at least one case in 2012, NGO feedback was incorporated, and NGOs have since reported improvements in that HC’s leadership and engagement with national and international NGOs.

NGOs and leadership in the humanitarian sector

In the four focus countries, national NGOs (NNGOs) were not occupying any leadership roles in humanitarian reform processes. Despite a willingness to engage, NGOs reported feeling marginalised by UN-centric approaches and found it challenging to bring NGO perspectives to the various coordination fora, including clusters, inter-cluster coordination meetings, humanitarian country teams, pooled funding boards and INGO network meetings. NGOs cited challenges and barriers such as: the use of UN-specific terminology and expressions that were not familiar to those working in a second or third language; the impression that NGO interventions and advocacy efforts were not respected; a perceived lack of trust in NGOs that prevented their meaningful participation; the time commitment required for travel and numerous meetings; late notice regarding meetings; and agenda items that were not relevant. There were also cases where NGO participation in reform-related fora was actively solicited but uptake was limited. NGOs did not offer alternative agenda items nor did they delegate staff to attend meetings on a regular basis, which led to limited representation from just a few NGOs.

INGOs were taking part in HCT meetings in all four countries but rarely managed to fill all their seats. They often lacked the ability to collectively influence processes, though in the instances when they did collectively organize to have a process changed, it was frequently successful. For instance, INGOs in Côte d’Ivoire successfully advocated for the UN to lift the requirement to have armed escorts in the western part of the country.

Based on the input received, NHRP II Country Program Managers provided support to NGO efforts to coordinate

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12 For detailed discussion see the Synthesis Report review of the engagement of NGOs with the Humanitarian Reforms, October 2009. www.icvanetwork.org

13 ICVA, InterAction and SCHR
their advocacy messages to influence reform mechanisms. The most important component of this support was the provision of tailored leadership training to the heads of NNGOs in all the focus countries.

A total of five leadership trainings took place:

Seven Somali NGO Heads, five Zimbabwean NGO Heads and five Ethiopian NGO Heads (despite the project withdrawing from Ethiopia) took part in the Nairobi 5-day Core Professional Training on Leadership and Management in Humanitarian Action organised by Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection in collaboration with the Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research (HPCR) at Harvard University. Topics covered included: Core management concepts applicable to international aid; Governance and accountability structures of humanitarian organizations; Coordination mechanisms and inter-operability with the UN system; Review of mandates of key agencies and non-governmental organizations; Strategic planning, evaluation, and communication; Leading change in humanitarian policies and operations; Concepts and tools for human resource management in humanitarian operations; Security and risk management approaches and methodologies; Mobilizing financial resources: tools and methods; Engagement with communities and accountability toward beneficiaries; Monitoring, reporting, and fact-finding methods and strategies; Evaluating output and impact in the humanitarian sector; Team management under stress.

26 Ivorian NNGO leaders participated in the 5-day 'Management and Leadership Skills Development program' organized by Bioforce Institute in Côte d'Ivoire, based on the 'Expanding National Humanitarian Ability' programme developed by the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project. Half the participants received follow up coaching for an additional six months. The programme was highly rated (92% overall satisfaction rate).

In Pakistan, there were two National Humanitarian Leadership trainings (NHLT) and one training for PHF leadership. All three workshops were facilitated by external expert consultants and the bespoke curriculum reflected the specific learning needs of the participants based on lengthy preparatory consultations.

23 out of the NNGO leaders who benefited from leadership training took part in the 2013 ICVA Annual Conference and subsequent Geneva symposium, where several of them led debates on innovative approaches to overcoming the challenges to NNGOs engagement with the humanitarian structures. All participants reported that they had greatly benefited from the meetings and established useful links with other consortia. They reported back to their NNGO peers and cascaded the training.

Overall NNGO participation in training and the Geneva conference led to a stronger advocacy role, relaying messages to their NNGO peers, advocating for greater coordination and programme quality, representing NNGO voices to international fora, facilitating working sessions, etc.

NHRP II also offered leadership training to INGO heads in Pakistan and supported their advocacy efforts in Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia. In addition, a humanitarian glossary was developed and translated (English, French and Urdu) as a reference guide to help familiarize NGOs with UN humanitarian terminology, and training was provided in the Principles of Partnership, humanitarian principles and standards, and accountability to affected populations.

NNGOs in Côte d'Ivoire became significantly more active after the leadership training, including through a new humanitarian NNGO network and a web portal for improved information sharing. In Pakistan, the NNGO leadership training was so heavily oversubscribed that additional places were offered and the training repeated. The National Humanitarian Network there is working with provincial chapters to develop a
strategic plan and increase shared advocacy opportunities with INGOs. In Zimbabwe, the NGO network NANGO was invigorated with a stronger coordination and representation role among NGOs. NGOs in Somalia have created local NGO networks in three regions and are taking a more active role in the Somali NGO Forum.

The demand for leadership training reinforced the need for NGO skill-building efforts in addition to technical capacity building in order to support NGOs to take on a stronger role in the humanitarian response, as equals of their international counterparts.

Looking ahead

Despite its uneven implementation, the Transformative Agenda potentially provides NGOs with important entry points to enhance their engagement with leadership and coordination bodies. Heads of NGOs must ensure that their organisations continue to pursue these opportunities, which include engagement with clusters and HCTs, and participation in HC evaluations.

As has been noted in other assessments and reports before this one, the UN must continue to improve ongoing information sharing and training for HCs and HCTs if they are to effectively lead and work together in humanitarian response. Observed by this project was a lack of understanding by HCs on the Transformative Agenda and the HC role in strengthening comprehensive humanitarian responses that include the full range of country capacity, knowledge and expertise outside the UN system.
Coordination

Background

The humanitarian reform initiative introduced the cluster system, and clusters have now become a byword for coordination. The Transformative Agenda was intended to make cluster coordination more strategic, less process-driven, time limited and results focused. Reference documents to better manage clusters were being produced during the implementation period of this project.

Other key elements of the coordination agenda include the Minimum Commitments for Cluster Participation, which were formulated by NGO consortia and adopted by the IASC, and strengthening NGO representation and influence in HCTs.

Coordination has strong links to partnership and leadership, and those sections of this report also cover some elements relevant to coordination, including clusters and Humanitarian Country Teams.

Humanitarian Country Teams

NHRP II Country Programme Managers in project countries observed that international NGOs had access to HCTs and clusters. A minority of local and national NGOs partnering with international actors had also gained some access to clusters, pooled funding and HCTs, but the vast majority remained outside the “inner circle” of decision-making and coordination.

In all project countries, international NGOs held from two to six seats in the HCTs (far fewer than the number held by the UN) but still regarded humanitarian reform and the Transformative Agenda to be UN-led processes. During interviews for this project’s baseline assessments, an INGO Country Director in Pakistan noted, “The heads of UN Agencies have not grasped or fully accepted the concept of the HCT being the entirety of the humanitarian community rather than a UN meeting to which NGOs are invited.”

In Somalia, one INGO head summarized a common perspective by saying, “A small group of forceful UN heads of agency tend to dominate discussions.” However, the same study noted that NGO weaknesses in collective advocacy and lack of influence in the HCT were also due to “inconsistent preparation by the NGO group, including consultation with the wider NGO community and agreement between NGO representatives on how to present their perspectives.”

National NGO participation in HCT meetings in the project countries was even more limited than INGO participation, both through the number of seats they had been granted (one in Somalia, two in Pakistan – an increase from only one at the start of the project, two in Côte d’Ivoire, and one in Zimbabwe) and through their actual presence. Given funding, logistical and other constraints, NNGO representatives seldom actually attended HCT meetings. Similar to INGOs, the NNGO perspective in the project countries was that HCT meetings were meetings of the international UN community to which NNGOs were invited rather than a meeting of the spectrum of the humanitarian community.

In all project countries, NGOs interviewed reported that HCT meetings were more a forum for the exchange of information than a strategic forum. INGOs in Cote d’Ivoire complained HCTs were not the place where decisions were often made. They felt UN heads of agencies meeting in UN-only forums such as UN Country Team meetings, or in UN-only working groups around transition issues for instance, had had time to discuss and exchange on issues, which INGOs, in one-hour HCT meetings, had little opportunity to influence. Procedural issues were also

seen as weakening HCTs in Somalia and Pakistan, for instance, where NGO respondents complained about the HCT failure to provide strategic leadership, meetings irregularly scheduled and announced with little notice, and agendas shared too close to the time to facilitate prior consultation of constituencies.

Clusters

NHRP II Country Programme Managers found that in countries where clusters were seen to be working well, NGO participation was strong, but where there were repeated weaknesses, participation was low and NGOs resorted to parallel channels. This was the case in Somalia where NGOs perceived clusters as wholly dysfunctional. A majority of NGOs interviewed in the country expressed frustration that the clusters delivered no perceived coordination benefits in return for the investment of time and information required. The role of clusters in reviewing Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF) and Emergency Response Funds (ERF) funding allocations was widely seen as having been fatal to the effective functioning of cluster coordination. Access to funds rather than operational and strategic coordination had become the main motivation for engagement, and meetings had become too large for strategic or even functional discussion.

It was also reported that clusters were failing to ensure adequate quality assessments of projects and NGOs.

NGOs acknowledged a low level of participation in the Somali clusters, where representation was often lacking in continuity from one meeting to the next and often by junior staff who had no decision-making power or were not fully informed of the organisation’s own programmes. Several NGOs accepted that their passive approach to clusters made cluster ineffectiveness and UN domination a self-fulfilling prophecy but also believed that the UN and donors needed to shoulder some of the responsibility of supporting meaningful NGO representation.

In Pakistan, one of the first countries in which clusters were rolled out in 2005, a flurry of monitoring, evaluation and real-time evaluations repeatedly identified the same problems but did not translate into more effective cluster functioning. However, clusters have been recognised as being a helpful addition to the coordination architecture and their purpose has gradually become clearer, with each cluster now having specific terms of reference and a growing familiarity with the system by all humanitarian actors. Cluster membership remains nebulous with no criteria for attendees. While this has been positive from the point of view of open participation, it has also led to some in the humanitarian community questioning the presence of armed forces as humanitarian responders. Questions were also raised by some on the role of government as co-chairs of clusters at all levels – especially in the conflict/complex emergency clusters.

The clusters in Pakistan have also been cited as being difficult for NGOs to engage with, both because there has been little concerted outreach but also because the meetings are all conducted in English. Where translation is provided, it is usually into Urdu, which is the mother tongue of only eight percent of the population. Several NGOs also faced the same time and resource constraints of small- to medium-sized INGOs.

In Pakistan as in Somalia, cluster involvement in pooled funding allocations was considered detrimental.

15 The 2012 IASC RTE report notes that giving clusters this role in relation to funding allocations “was felt by OCHA staff consulted to be essential to getting participation in the clusters.” There would seem to be a fundamental difference of understanding between OCHA and NGOs here that warrants discussion.

Transitioning clusters

Two out of the four NHRP II countries (Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe) were transitioning from humanitarian to development assistance. A third, Pakistan, prone to disasters, had experienced constant cluster activation and deactivation. The NHRP II CPMs found a lack of direction from global clusters on how to transition to early recovery and development coordination using mechanisms such as working groups. This was even more complicated for clusters where there was no line ministry or department to which a handover of coordination could occur. CPMs in Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe documented the processes, policies and systems put in place to enable a smooth transition of humanitarian coordination structures to recovery and development mechanisms that will be increasingly managed by local development institutions. Stakeholders in both countries observed that the transition was an opportunity for national actors, including NNGOs, to reclaim a space they had lost in the humanitarian crisis.

NHRP II activities in focus countries

NHRP II operated on the premise that cohesive NGO communities can engage in strategic policy discussions in favour of affected populations and influence coordination mechanisms. In all project countries, work started by mapping existing NGO coordination fora and identifying areas where they could be strengthened. Leadership training, as described in the previous section, was also an important part of building NGO capacity for coordination. Support to national forums in Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire was particularly welcome and fruitful since national NGOs had generally fewer funds or staff or fewer opportunities for generic training, particularly outside capital cities.

In Somalia, the 90-member Somalia NGO Consortium has been in existence for 14 years, promoting information sharing, cooperation and joint advocacy initiatives with national and international NGOs. On collective advocacy, however, NGOs in Somalia have been perceived as divided, and their advocacy limited in influencing issues such as structural integration of the UN mission, the relocation of IDPs in Mogadishu or engagement with the Somali government. To assess the root causes of this lack of advocacy effectiveness, NHRP II commissioned a study on behalf of the Somalia NGO Consortium,17 which showed that their inability to develop and relay coherent collective positions for the benefit of Somalis in need was due to a wide variety of factors, including: access constraints, insecurity, chronic lack of information sharing, inconsistent engagement at senior levels in the Consortium, competition between NGOs, UN-dominated coordination mechanisms, and a lack of regular engagement with potential allies such as like-minded humanitarian donor and UN representatives.

The preliminary findings of the research were reviewed and discussed with 20 country directors and their delegates, which resulted in a commitment by NGOs to participate in regular meetings of the Consortium. NGO representatives on the HCT agreed to meet ahead of HCT meetings to develop coherent positions and to provide regular two-way communication with the wider group of NGOs to ensure that collective positions were consistently represented. The study also informed the Consortium's new advocacy strategy.

NHRP II also reached out to national NGOs and umbrella organisations in South–Central Somalia and Somaliland and provided training for members of the Mogadishu–based Somali Humanitarian Operational Consortium (SHOC) on the

principles of coordination, humanitarian reform and the Transformative Agenda.

In **Pakistan**, the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) is a 50–member international NGO forum with a secretariat in Islamabad. The National Humanitarian Network (NHN) is a network of national NGOs that has gradually decentralised and established provincial chapters.\(^\text{18}\) NHRP II provided policy and coordination support to the PHF Executive Committee, as requested, and provided technical and financial support to the NHN forum to strengthen its provincial chapters and take on a formal representational role for the NGO community in Pakistan at high–level meetings. As a result of NHRP II support, the NHN started engaging more in strategy development. Since then, the NHN has advanced from a relatively inactive body with dispersed membership to a more coherent representative organisation with provincial chapters feeding in to the Central Executive Committee in the capital. Moreover they have hosted a series of consultations and events with the wider humanitarian community, thereby building their credibility with and access to other humanitarian actors. The work done in Pakistan also helped to increase coordination between the NHN and PHF.

In **Zimbabwe**, the National Association of Non–governmental Organizations (NANGO), established in 1962, suffered from a lack of influence in the humanitarian sector. In response to the need for regional NGO structures to enhance the representativeness of NANGO, the project established four regional coordination forums for NGOs and INGOs in Masvingo, Midlands, Manicaland and Matabeleland North regions of Zimbabwe to enable NGOs outside the capital to contribute to relevant national debates. Ten NGO representatives were also elected to a variety of national coordination fora where they had previously not been represented. In addition, the project supported the development of a communication strategy to guide the participation of NGO representatives in coordination forums.

In **Côte d’Ivoire**, since there was no forum for NGOs implementing humanitarian assistance programmes, NHRP II brought together about 30 Ivorian NGOs on a monthly basis to discuss ways to address their lack of influence in national coordination mechanisms. These NGOs later successfully advocated to be granted three seats instead of one in the new Enlarged Coordination Committee (CCE) transition body set to replace the HCT in Côte d’Ivoire as the country transitions from crisis to recovery. By the end of NHRP II, they had created a nationwide NGO consortium and an associated website for information exchange and communication purposes. Four months after project end, the network was still active, exchanging practices and opportunities, and attending humanitarian meetings. However, all members emphasized the need for their young structure to be further supported since they operated on a voluntary basis. Issues of leadership were also emerging.

**Looking ahead**

NGO coordination adds a lot of value to existing coordination mechanisms, so it could be good for donors to contribute to core funding to strengthen the Secretariats of national and international NGO networks. This will assist them to play a greater role in humanitarian coordination and preparedness.

Despite humanitarian reform having been in place for over eight years, coordination guidelines are little known in the field. For the newly developed manuals aimed at simplifying cluster management procedures to be well known in the field, dissemination, training and relevant tools are needed.

\(^{18}\) Hoppe K (2012). *An Example of Decentralised Coordination in Pakistan: The National Humanitarian Network*. Available at: [www.icvanetwork.org](http://www.icvanetwork.org)
The Transformative Agenda put an emphasis on L3 emergencies, but it was not clear during the implementation of this project which protocols could be applied to non-L3 emergencies. Yet all countries were in need of improved coordination. It is therefore important for the system to review current practices and improve upon them, looking at the humanitarian-transition continuum and preparing exit strategies from the onset.
Accountability to Affected Populations

Background

Just as partnerships were a late addition to Humanitarian Reform, accountability to affected populations was a latecomer to the Transformative Agenda, introduced on the strength of NGO and donor advocacy efforts. Beyond a traditional understanding of accountability to donors, governments and other stakeholders in a position of power, the accountability discourse includes and highlights accountability to affected populations. It is this pillar of the humanitarian architecture that serves as a reminder that Humanitarian Reform and the Transformative Agenda must remain focussed on outcomes for affected communities.

With donors requiring evidence of robust performance management and value for taxpayers’ money, the Humanitarian Reform process envisaged stronger financial and managerial accountability to peers, the UN and donors. This narrow understanding of accountability at the start of the reform process was at odds with the more inclusive definition that NGOs had been advocating over the previous decade.

The Transformative Agenda added accountability to affected populations (AAP) as a new and distinct pillar. In December 2011, the IASC principals endorsed five Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (CAAPs). The five commitments mirror the agreed basic requirements for humanitarian programmes that are accountable to affected communities. The IASC Principals agreed “....to incorporate the CAAPs into policies and operational guidelines of their organisations and to promote them with operational partners, within the HCT and amongst cluster members.” In July 2012, an IASC Task Force co-led by senior NGO and WFP representatives was created to take forward an action plan, steer the implementation of the CAAPs, and further develop and roll out the Operational Framework.

In October 2012, the AAP Operational Framework was tested in Pakistan. Pakistan was selected as it is one the most active countries in the area of AAP, with significant networks and activities already in place, in particular among and between the international and national NGOs. This was an opportunity to bring the UN and clusters into existing NGO-led AAP groups and allow for scaling up to more interconnected and inclusive models of AAP.

Activities in project countries

This project’s mapping studies revealed that many of the humanitarian stakeholders regard accountability to affected populations as the responsibility of individual agencies, which while critical also reveal the limits of an effective system-wide accountability framework.

At the start of the NHRP II in Pakistan, this project’s Country Programme Manager noted an impressive array of activities undertaken by various agencies to improve AAP in the country. For example, many individual INGOs and NNGOs had been improving accountability...
to affected populations through a set of institutionalised processes promoted by strong internal leadership on the issue; for such organisations, a culture of accountability was the norm rather than an add-on.

In the three other countries, AAP activities prior to the NHRP II project had been modest, and a number of organisations in the focus countries considered that, due to their direct relationships with communities, most of the AAP commitments were already “business as usual,” even if not formalised in frameworks and organisational processes. While a few INGOs had been implementing organisation-specific accountability frameworks, the overwhelming majority of NNGOs were not familiar with any accountability initiatives.

To address all this, the Country Project Managers organised training sessions on the Sphere Handbook, People In Aid Code, and the HAP Standard and a debate on how to streamline accountability into programming.

In Somalia, several INGOs have corporate accountability frameworks but insecurity makes it difficult to build the necessary close relationships with affected communities. With the exception of the Food Security Cluster, for which a Consultant developed a Targeting Handbook and a Somalia-specific monitoring and evaluation handbook for their implementing partners to ensure better accountability, there are yet to be discussions on translating accountability commitments into coherent AAP frameworks that bring in UN or inter-agency bodies.

Most cluster leaders recognise and encourage their members to be accountable to affected populations but view the interventions as joint only up to the point of delivery. It is then up to each organisation to monitor and evaluate according to its own standards or related donor requirements. Here, many cluster leaders said that they would like to know how to make a cluster response accountable to the local population and how to monitor and measure this. Almost all said that they do not have the time, knowledge or staff to do it themselves.

Due to their direct relationship with communities and long-term interest in the affected population’s real ownership of the projects, NNGO staff in all project countries felt that they were ahead of INGOs on this issue but lacked the right terminology to express their approaches.

Accountability Initiatives and the Transformative Agenda Disconnect

Neither the HC nor the HCT membership in project countries saw AAP as a priority for 2013 given the other pressing issues that they are managing. This is disappointing given that the IASC Guidance for HCTs notes that HCTs should design and implement appropriate and meaningful mechanisms to improve accountability to affected populations. This said, the ERC Valerie Amos’ recent commitment to accountability to affected populations as her “personal priority for 2013” is welcome. Leadership at all levels, from the ERC to HCs, to cluster leads and NGOs will be key to promoting AAP, if it is to move beyond individual organisations and permeate every aspect of humanitarian response.

Given that NGOs have significant AAP experience that dates before its inclusion in the Transformative Agenda, this is an opportunity for NGOs to play a stronger leadership role in order to improve AAP beyond their individual organisation, NGO sector and specific country level. NGOs, including NNGOs have a role in advocating for country assessments against the AAP framework, leading implementation of recommendations and ensuring reporting to and follow up by clusters, ICCMs and HCTs.

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22 Endorsed at the 75th IASC Working Group on 18 November 2009.
23 Opening Statement at the Global Leaders Conference in Copenhagen 11-12th March 2013.
Staff in the project countries noted a detachment between the various activities and discussions that take place within individual agencies and the sector-wide TA efforts to improve accountability to affected populations. It became apparent that neither the recent Joint Standards Initiative or Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response certification work were influencing the rolling out of the AAP pillar of the Transformative Agenda. In some project countries, INGO staff highlighted that there is also limited connection being made between AAP efforts at the headquarters and field level.

The role of donors in improving accountability

In addition to a lack of leadership on AAP, agencies in all focus countries pointed to the lack of sufficient resources as an impediment to embedding AAP in every day practice. There are costs associated with providing sufficient information to communities, ensuring adequate consultations and feedback systems are in place, complaints are solicited and responded to, communities participate in decision making and staff have the required knowledge and capacity to programme with an AAP lens. Donor support to organisations to become more accountable and responsive by dedicating financial resources to projects is important. Equally, humanitarian agencies should be evaluating how investments in developing and implementing projects through an AAP lens improves operational outcomes.24

Looking ahead

Despite increasing success in building individual organisational commitment to accountability to affected populations, AAP is not well understood at collective levels such as clusters and the HCT. NGOs can offer existing accountability frameworks as the basis for developing shared benchmarks and objectives for the wider coordination bodies but it is not clear this will change behaviour. Developing and linking AAP indicators into assessment and reporting tools, facilitating a coordinated and strategic approach to capacity building on AAP across the sector, and similar efforts are needed.

24 HAP report. Available at: www.hapinternational.org
Partnership

Background

Humanitarian Reform was premised on stronger coordination between humanitarian actors leading to more timely, effective and efficient humanitarian aid delivery. The process assumed that all actors shared the goal of coordinated response but did not acknowledge the competition (for funding, qualified staff, visibility, influence, mandate, space or credit for the outcomes of interventions) that exists between many humanitarian actors and that can hinder coordination.

In July 2007, the GHP endorsed the Principles of Partnership as the basis for partnerships in the humanitarian system. The Principles of Partnership are equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity. They were widely endorsed and partnership was added as the fourth pillar of Humanitarian Reform. Yet with the introduction of the Transformative Agenda, partnership was no longer a pillar and the agreed Principles received limited mention in the development of new Transformative Agenda protocols.

Given the critical importance of partnerships to implementing Humanitarian Reform and the Transformative Agenda, and humanitarian effectiveness in general, improving partnerships became a major focus of the NHRPII in all project countries.

Status of focus countries

Activities throughout the NHRP II revealed little common agreement on the meaning of partnership at field level. INGOs, NNGOs, UN and donors alike used the term to reference almost any type of engagement with others. A study on partnerships in Somalia\textsuperscript{25} identified three distinct models of engagement that reflect aid workers’ use of the term throughout the project countries:

Sub-contracting relationships, whereby usually local and national organisations deliver services to contracting agencies without being involved in planning and programming. Rather, they implement according to a given plan and timeline defined by the contracting partner (usually an international organisation) who provides technical, financial and supervisory support if needed. This type of engagement is characterised by limited dialogue and limited ownership by the sub-contracted organisation.

Implementing partnerships, whereby it is expected that the local or national organisation implements a specific project but has opportunities to participate in project design and to engage in an open dialogue with the international organisation. However, in practice, many of the projects are already defined by the time the local or national NGO enters the partnership, which gives little flexibility to make changes in design. The engagement is often relatively short and project-specific, but it can be longer term. Capacity building, if entailed, targets specific capacity gaps of NNGO/LNGO that may hamper the implementation of the project.

Strategic partnerships, whereby a longer-term agreement is reached to share physical and/or intellectual resources to achieve a jointly defined objective. In such instances, the partners jointly agree on roles and responsibilities and participate in all stages of the project cycle from needs assessment to evaluation. Capacity building of the NNGO/LNGO, if needed, is usually integrated in these partnership models, addressing areas that go beyond technical capacity.

In all project countries, NNGOs thought that strategic partnerships between themselves and INGOs were rare and, for the most part, saw INGOs and the UN as

\textsuperscript{25} Tsitrinbuam Y (2012). Aid Partnerships: A Vehicle to Strengthen NGOs in Somalia? Available at: www.icvanetwork.org
donors and their own role as that of subcontractor or implementing organisation. One NNGO leader in Zimbabwe described this as a “horse and rider” relationship.

A project study on practices and perceptions of partnership in Côte d'Ivoire showed that, despite the widespread use by UN agencies of the word “partners”, documents such as memorandums of understanding were often short-term subcontracting agreements seldom mentioning the Principles of Partnership. On the other hand, partnership documents used by INGOs usually reflected a willingness to reach agreement with local partners, but nevertheless ranged from short-lived contracts to longer-term partnership arrangements aiming to elicit complementarity. When sub-contracting to local or national entities, NNGOs also used simple contracts, not compatible with the notion of partnership as reflected in the Principles of Partnership.

Imbalanced "partnerships" between national and international organisations

At a Geneva meeting convened by NHRP II, senior managers of NNGOs expressed concern that their organisations are at a disadvantage when engaging with INGOs. The latter were perceived to be better resourced, to have more opportunities to access international funds and to be more capable of participating in key decision-making fora. This was seen to undermine stronger partnerships between international and national NGOs.

Senior NNGO managers reported that in Somalia, Pakistan and Côte d'Ivoire, relationships between international organisations and their national counterparts were characterised by a lack of trust. They indicated, for example, that international donors were not convinced that NNGOs were impartial or able to manage the risks of fraud and corruption. Moreover, donor and INGO representatives pointed to limited management and technical capacities as inhibiting equal relationships. For their part, NNGO leaders felt that INGOs did not respect the knowledge and understanding of the complex political and cultural environment that NNGO staff bring when working with INGOs. Moreover, they felt that the examples of a small number of untrustworthy or weak NNGOs were unfairly tarnishing the reputation of their wider community. When INGOs identified gaps in the technical or governance capacities of NNGOs, capacity-building opportunities were rarely forthcoming (even when local capacity building was part of the INGO mission statement) thus making it difficult for NNGOs to improve. A number of donors’ preference to channel funds solely to INGOs registered and therefore liable in Europe was perceived by the overwhelming majority of NNGOs as unnecessary protectionism.

In Somalia and Pakistan, NNGOs are often better positioned than INGOs to maintain a field presence, particularly in times of increased insecurity. In these two countries and elsewhere, there have been recent circumstances when national governments restricted visas and work permits for international aid workers. As such, INGOs leave programme implementation to NNGOs, many of which may lack the experience or the capacity to provide services of the quality expected by their INGO counterparts. Without sufficient and appropriate efforts by INGOs to strengthen the capacity of their local counterparts, this situation is likely to self-perpetuate.

Partnerships and the capacity gap

An NHRP II Somalia study found that decades of humanitarian programming and so-called partnerships, often structured as sub-contracting relationships, had not been effective in improving the local NGOs’ capacities.

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26 NHRPII, ICVA meeting of national NGO leaders, Geneva, 28 February 2013.

27 As a result, they are more likely to channel funds to INGOs even if the INGOs may subcontract NNGOs to deliver programs.
Capacity assessment reports in Somalia and Côte d’Ivoire identified the following gaps:

- Financial management, reporting, auditing and basic monitoring and evaluation;
- Technical competences in sectors such as WASH and Nutrition; and
- Governance, management, strategic planning and leadership.

However, partnership surveys in Côte d’Ivoire and Somalia stated that, despite being very critical of international NGOs, often seen as direct competitors, NNGOs valued their technical and logistical collaborations with INGOs the most, and saw the INGO – NNGO nexus as the area where the most progress could be made.

The NHRP II project highlighted the fact that, in all countries, while acknowledging their capacity gaps, NNGOs strongly resented their international counterparts’ tendency to put all NGOs in the same light and reproach their lack of capacity. Yet a number of NNGOs have made progress in their organisational development and programme implementation capacity, to the extent that some of them are now operating regionally.

Throughout project meetings, local and national NGO staff emphasised the need for the humanitarian system to build the capacity of incoming international workers to understand the context in which they operate. In Somalia, the NHRP II staff acknowledged this deficit and helped develop the curriculum for a two-day course for the NGO consortium in partnership with the Rift Valley Institute for future ongoing training in the sector including a component on coordination structures and pooled funding.

In the four countries, NHRP II placed a strong emphasis in building the capacity of NGOs, in particular local and national, to engage with Humanitarian Reform and Transformative Agenda mechanisms. Related training sessions on the Principles of Partnership, humanitarian principles and standards, leadership, management, and advocacy skills were offered.

NNGOs in Côte d’Ivoire resented the usual one–off short–term training they had been offered until then and emphasized the need to get follow up. This led the project to organize week–long training sessions (on leadership, NGO coordination and management), individual mentoring and distance coaching when possible, but the latter proved difficult for small local organizations based in far away villages with little Internet connection. Peer teaching and direct participation in international meetings were widely acclaimed by participants.

During the training, it became obvious that NGOs were not the only ones in need of improved knowledge and understanding of reform processes; staff from UN agencies and national authority representatives also recognised the value added of the NHRP II learning events that they attended in various countries.

Clusters seen as a good partnership and capacity–building vector

Clusters, in project countries, were open to all actors and therefore registered strong local and national participation. A majority of INGO and NNGO staff interviewed in the Côte d’Ivoire study on perceptions of partnership highlighted that clusters had brought together local, national and international actors, thereby prompting direct collaboration. This factor, they found, was much stronger at the local than at the national level.

The NHRP II Pakistan assessment July–August 2012 NGO Baseline Analysis Executive Summary28 noted the role of the clusters in technical capacity–building of cluster partners was appreciated by many,

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though the frequency and coverage of trainings varied between clusters. Inter-cluster capacity-building efforts were particularly appreciated, and many interviewees expressed their frustration that successful training initiatives had not been repeated on a regular basis, or expanded in their geographical coverage.

Looking ahead

Given the fluid and tenuous nature of humanitarian response, the partnership deficit between international and national partners needs to be urgently addressed. Many believe the only viable future (ethically, financially and operationally) is to radically improve the process of strategically building capacities of NNGOs and LNGOs to fill the capacity gap before it becomes even more critical due to insecurity, visa restrictions or the phasing out of international humanitarian actors.
Humanitarian Financing

Background

The financing pillar of humanitarian reform was designed to ensure that humanitarian financing is adequate, timely and flexible. The Synthesis Report of the NHRP I noted that financing was the element of the humanitarian reform that had seen the greatest progress with the creation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). There were also challenges with the other reformed humanitarian financing elements – Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs), Emergency Response Funds (ERFs) and Humanitarian Response Funds (HRFs). Such challenges were primarily linked to the lack of transparency concerning the destination of these funds and whether they were allocated primarily on the basis of need. CERF funds were disbursed in Côte d’Ivoire, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. ERFs were operating in Zimbabwe and Pakistan. CHFs were active in Somalia.

Activities in focus countries

In their assessments, NHRP II Country Project Managers noted the same challenges as NHRP I concerning fund allocation, processes and transparency, so NHRP II focused on enhancing NGO representation to the Pooled Fund Boards, collecting NGO views on the funds and sharing them with at the global level, and working in-country to improve financing guidelines.

Emergency Response Funds (ERF)

ERFs were established to provide rapid and flexible funding to humanitarian actors. They are relatively small compared with the CERF and CHFs and are meant to provide small- to medium-sized grants, predominantly to NGOs. ERF boards determine fund allocation and comprise all humanitarian partner representatives.

In Zimbabwe, respondents to the NHRP II project baseline study said that the ERF mechanism was inappropriate to the country’s context, not functioning as a quick response fund but rather as a source to plug gaps in programmes. ERF funding processes were seen as unresponsive to the context and its strategy and criteria for support unclear. In Zimbabwe, the bulk of the 2012 ERF allocation went to INGOs and UN agencies, leaving a mere 8% of the allocation for NNGO projects.

The NHRP II Zimbabwe Country Project Manager focused on improving NGO representation on the advisory boards and steering committees that govern the ERF and supported the election of NGO representatives to the ERF board.

NHRP II in Zimbabwe also produced a guide to explain the ERF and other financing mechanisms available in the country and to provide recommendations on how NGOs could influence or access such funds more effectively. Reflecting on their lack of access to international funding mechanisms, NNGOs issued a position paper calling upon the humanitarian sector to change a policy framework that prohibits humanitarian

32 Chituri G. NGO Participation in Pooled Funds Advisory Boards in Zimbabwe: Overview and Recommendations. Available at: www.icvanetwork.org
funding to national NGOs and to provide direct humanitarian donor funding to national NGOs in-country.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite the fact that only 8% of ERF funds went to NGOs in Zimbabwe in 2012, the funding represented a significant proportion of income for some NGOs and has become a small but important mechanism for funding NGOs. Nevertheless, challenges in accessing ERF funds continue, and NGO difficulties echoed research by CAFOD\textsuperscript{34} that highlighted the problems faced by NGOs in accessing ERF funds. These included disbursement delays, lack of knowledge by national NGOs on how to apply for them, lack of updated application information in local languages, including key document requirements, minimum grant size requirements, which can exclude smaller NGOs, requirements for a US bank account, and audit requirements that withhold 20% of funds until a final audit has been completed. Finally, requirements to spend funding over a short period of time are particularly challenging for projects aiming to address resilience and disaster risk reduction.

ERF concerns in Zimbabwe and Pakistan were shared with the NHRP International Project Coordinator, and NHRP II in Geneva contributed to the drafting of new ERF guidelines, which were endorsed and signed into effect by Emergency Response Coordinator Valerie Amos in October 2012.

\textbf{Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF)}

Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs) are country-based pooled funds that provide funding to NGOs and UN agencies for their response to humanitarian needs. CHFs were intended to enable Humanitarian Country Teams to swiftly allocate funds and to fund priority life-saving projects as identified in a Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) or a similar humanitarian action plan.\textsuperscript{35}

CHFs are currently present in five countries with large, on-going humanitarian operations, including Somalia. CHF funding decisions involve cluster leads and other key humanitarian partners in an elaborate prioritization and allocation process.

National and international NGOs as well as UN agencies can access the CHF directly. Since the first CHF was established, UN agencies have received 58% of total CHF funding with international NGOs receiving 34% direct funding and national NGOs receiving 8%.\textsuperscript{36}

In Somalia, the CHF allocated and disbursed $90 million to various projects in 2012. Forty-one per cent ($37 million) went towards supporting 76 international NGO projects, 25 per cent ($22 million) to 65 local NGOs projects, and 34 per cent ($31 million) to UN projects.\textsuperscript{37} Throughout the project, the CHF was regarded as a good funding mechanism for NGOs, despite its complex prioritization and allocation process.

Following concerns raised by NGOs in several meetings about the Spring 2012 Standard Allocation Process of the CHF in Somalia, the Country Programme Manager partnered with the Somalia NGO Consortium to set up an online survey in mid-2012. Responses from 26 organisations confirmed great appreciation of the availability of pooled

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} National NGO Humanitarian Financing Position Paper
\item \textsuperscript{34} CAFOD (2013). Southern NGOs’ access to humanitarian funding: A CAFOD policy brief, April 2013. Available at: \url{www.cafod.org.uk}
\item \textsuperscript{35} OCHA (2013). Common Humanitarian Funds. Available at: \url{www.unocha.org}
\item \textsuperscript{36} OCHA (2013). 2012 CHF and ERF Funding Summary. Available at: \url{www.unocha.org}
\item \textsuperscript{37} OCHA (2013). Somalia Common Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2012. Available at: \url{www.unocha.org}
\end{itemize}
funding but noted room for improvement on a number of issues such as the clarity of the guidelines and the process for project selection and feedback.

The survey results and findings were followed up with OCHA for consideration in the next SAP round, leading to agreement from the CHF team to hold regular consultations with NGOs through the Somalia NGO Consortium.

The 2011 Synthesis Report of the Evaluation of the CHFs found that their greatest impact was for local NGOs, "for whom it is often now almost the only source of funding." Somalia has provided the highest proportion of funds to national NGOs, significantly increasing their access to international humanitarian funds. More than half of the total number of projects funded in 2011 were national NGO projects, accounting for 40% of the funding disbursed that year. The figure went down in 2012, but remained important.

The risk management approach used in the Somalia CHF uses a system of scoring against a set of risk management criteria applied to each national or international potential partner. Those that score 70 percent or above are considered eligible for funding. Those scoring less than 70 percent may at any time ask for a re-scoring and if their internal capacity changed their scores may also change. Any Somali NGO can apply to become a CHF partner, and under this system, 40 percent of the 157 eligible NGO partners are NNGOs. Whether an eligible organization actually receives funding depends on whether the Cluster Review Committees, which are largely comprised of INGOs and NNGOs, agree that a submitted project meets the criteria.

Research conducted by CAFOD identified two primary factors that contributed to low funding amounts received by NGOs:

- Limited knowledge by national NGOs about financing mechanisms and particularly CAP processes with resultant low level of involvement by NGOs in submitting projects to the CAPs or accessing a diversity of funding sources.
- Limited involvement by NNGOs in the clusters, which in many contexts coordinate allocation of funding.

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was the first concrete outcome of the humanitarian reform process. Launched in March 2006, it provides rapid initial funding for life-saving assistance at the onset of humanitarian crises and critical support for poorly funded, essential humanitarian response operations.

Direct CERF funding is not available to either international or national NGOs, who must access the funds through UN agencies or the IOM. Because funds are channelled through other agencies, there are often delays in either approval or allocation, leading NGOs in project countries to question the process and its results.

NGOs in project countries continued to be dissatisfied with the CERF allocation process, but felt there was not much they could do to change the situation.

In Zimbabwe, where CERF, ERF, Multi-donor Trust Funds called Transition Funds managed by UN agencies and jointly controlled by UNICEF and Government of Zimbabwe operated, centralised funding streams such as the NGO Joint Initiative in Zimbabwe and UN–led pooled funds have


39 CAFOD (2013). Southern NGOs’ access to humanitarian funding: A CAFOD policy brief, April 2013. Available at: www.cafod.org.uk
provided a good alternative for direct financing to NNGOs, but have still failed to fully engage and utilise NGO capacities and their primary implementing role.

Looking ahead

As noted in CAFOD’s study, many national NGOs working in humanitarian response struggle to move beyond project-based funding in a way that will enable them to undertake long-term strategic planning, increase the skills of staff and undertake institutional capacity building. In addition, a web of restrictions and policies of many of the major donors means that much humanitarian aid is effectively directly inaccessible to national NGOs.

Common funding also brought about the use of common frameworks allowing implementing partners to be judged by the same standards, such as the Activity Info or SAP and risk assessment framework applied by UNDP in Somalia, as a step toward more egalitarian evaluations (versus prejudice or a priori).
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Action Contre la Faim</td>
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<td>CAFOD</td>
<td>Catholic Agency for Overseas Development</td>
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<td>CAAP</td>
<td>Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Consolidated Appeals Process</td>
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<td>CERF</td>
<td>Central Emergency Response Fund (since 9 March 2006; previously the Central Emergency Revolving Fund)</td>
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<td>CPM</td>
<td>Country Programme Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>DfID</td>
<td>The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development</td>
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<td>ECHO</td>
<td>The Humanitarian Office of the European Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERC</td>
<td>(UN) Emergency Relief Coordinator (the head of OCHA)</td>
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<td>ERF</td>
<td>Emergency Response Funds</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>GHP</td>
<td>Global Humanitarian Platform</td>
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<td>HAP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International</td>
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<td>HC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<td>HCT</td>
<td>Humanitarian Country Team</td>
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<td>HRFs</td>
<td>Humanitarian Response Funds</td>
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<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<td>ICVA</td>
<td>International Council of Voluntary Agencies</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>LNGO</td>
<td>Local Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NANGO:</td>
<td>National Association of Non-governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>NHN</td>
<td>National Humanitarian Network</td>
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<td>NHRP</td>
<td>NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project</td>
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<td>NNGO</td>
<td>National Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
<td>(UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>PHF</td>
<td>Pakistan Humanitarian Forum</td>
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<td>RC</td>
<td>Resident Coordinator</td>
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<td>SHOC</td>
<td>Somali Humanitarian Operational Consortium</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Transformative Agenda</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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# Annex 1: Key NHRP II Publications

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<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aid Partnerships – A Vehicle to Strengthen NGOs in Somalia</td>
<td>Yuri Tsitrinbaum</td>
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