Building a Better Response: Gaps & Good Practice in Training for Humanitarian Reform

Report commissioned by OCHA and USAID/OFDA

Andy Featherstone, April 2012
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction, Methodology & Limitations

Introduction
This research report is one of three outputs from a global mapping study of NGO participation in humanitarian reform training initiatives, the objective of which was to conduct a mapping and analysis of existing and/or planned training initiatives on humanitarian reform (which includes the cluster approach, pooled funding, humanitarian leadership and general coordination) that are accessible to and targeted at NGOs. There are 3 main outputs from the research; (i) a humanitarian reform training matrix; (ii) a gaps and best practice toolkit; (iii) a research report.

Methodology
The mapping study was undertaken as a desk-based exercise with an emphasis placed on gathering data on humanitarian reform training initiatives (past, present and future) which included the participation of NGO staff. In addition to email- and phone-based interviews with training providers and humanitarian staff, a literature search was undertaken to strengthen the analysis and inform the recommendations.

Limitations
While many of the global humanitarian reform components (such as the clusters, CERF Secretariat and the Humanitarian Leadership Strengthening Unit in OCHA) were able to provide consolidated training data, the lack of a mandated entity to coordinate country-level participation in humanitarian reform training meant that only in a few instances was country-level data obtained (from OCHA) which limited the level of analysis that could be undertaken. The importance of addressing this gap is one of the most important recommendations of the research. The desk-based nature of the study delivered poor results in terms of eliciting national NGO feedback and participation.

Mapping Exercise

While most agencies participate in humanitarian coordination mechanisms in their operations, the design and delivery of formal training initiatives tends to be undertaken by reform mechanisms themselves supported by a variety of training institutions. OCHA plays an important function in supporting the roll-out of training and in providing general humanitarian coordination training (which generally includes an overview of reform). Interagency initiatives (such as the ECB, CBHA, ACAPS and HAP) provide training on specific issues related to response (such as accountability, communication and needs assessment). While a few NGOs with formal cluster or surge capacity roles support training efforts most international NGOs tend address humanitarian reform through internal training programmes and staff inductions although many staff must learn on-the-job particularly in times of rapid scale-up. National NGO staff tends to rely on participation in formal training events to meet their learning needs although most staff learn-on-the-job.
Gaps and Good Practice

The importance of identifying training needs and coordinating initiatives

There is no country-level analysis of learning needs and much of the training that is provided is based on decisions made at a global level. Good practice dictates that training should be based on an assessment of learning needs (at country/cluster-, organisation- and individual-level) to ensure that the most appropriate training is directed to those who need it the most. Given the significant investment made in training on humanitarian reform, the lack of a comprehensive country-level overview is a concern. It is essential that there is a mandated entity (be it OCHA or the HCT) which can play a coordination and oversight role.

| WASH cluster capacity mapping | http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project4CapacityMapping.aspx |
| Education cluster capacity mapping | http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Education/Pages/Resources%20and%20Tools.aspx |

The use of appropriate training methodologies and the need to strengthen accountability for participation in training

In many cases there is a mismatch between humanitarian reform training methodologies and the preferred learning style of humanitarian workers. Furthermore participant accountability for using the learning from training is generally poor. Learning-by-doing and simulations were found to be the most valuable training methods. The general lack of participant accountability and follow-up makes it difficult to gauge the impact of humanitarian reform training.

| ECB Simulation Tool | http://www.ecbproject.org/simulations/simulationpackage |
| The rapid e-learning blog | http://www.articulate.com/rapid-elearning/ |

The need to focus greater attention on neglected stakeholders

Feedback from NGO participants in the research and analysis of the matrix suggests that training isn’t evenly spread across different partners in the humanitarian community; national staff of international NGOs and national NGO staff participating at a sub-national level are the groups that are most often overlooked despite the fact that they comprise the bulk of humanitarian capacity.


The need to focus greater attention on neglected themes

Partnership, accountability and leadership were the issues which the research highlighted as some of the most important training gaps which if addressed could have considerable impact on NGO participation in humanitarian reform and on the quality of humanitarian response more generally. Appropriate training will go some way to fostering greater participation although this will also be dependent on progress being made at a policy level.
Partnership: Perhaps the greatest challenge for the humanitarian community is how to most effectively contribute to the active and effective participation of all partners in clusters and in humanitarian architecture more broadly; while the Principles of Partnership are increasingly included on the agenda of humanitarian reform training, there is still significant work to do to address attitudes and power imbalances between humanitarian partners.

| GHP on the future of humanitarian partnership | www.icva.ch/doc0004113.doc |

Accountability & Communication: While accountability has been addressed in humanitarian reform from a predictability perspective there was considerable concern from those interviewed that it had been insufficiently dealt with from a beneficiary perspective and while there are significant training and resources available in the sector, the clusters have been slow to address issues of collective accountability to crisis-affected communities and to incorporate this into their training programmes.

| WASH cluster accountability booklet | http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project14Accountability.aspx |

Humanitarian leadership: While greater attention has been given to humanitarian leadership in recent years, strategic country-level leadership by the Humanitarian Country Team remains a weakness and speaks to a failure of partnership and a lack of accountabilities between its members. While a solution will require the accountability deficit to be addressed, a process of teambuilding which seeks to build trust and develop a shared agenda may provide a platform for stronger collaboration.

| CBHA/ECB national staff capacity building programme | http://www.thecebha.org/what-we-do/capacity-building/ |
| ECB Building trust in diverse teams | http://www.ecbproject.org/building-trust-in-diverse-teams/buildingtrustindiverseteams |
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Humanitarian reform training matrix (separate document)  
Gaps & good practice toolkit (separate document)
### Acronyms

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACAPS</td>
<td>Assessment Capacities Project</td>
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<td>ACF</td>
<td>Action Contre La Faim</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALNAP</td>
<td>Active Learning Network for Accountability &amp; Performance in Humanitarian Action</td>
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<td>APS</td>
<td>Annual Programme Statement</td>
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<td>CBHA</td>
<td>Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDAC</td>
<td>Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (Initiative)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CERF</td>
<td>Central Emergency Response Fund</td>
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<td>CHF</td>
<td>Common Humanitarian Fund</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DRSS</td>
<td>Disaster Response Support Service</td>
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<td>ECB</td>
<td>Emergency Capacity Building Project</td>
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<td>ECHO</td>
<td>European Commission Humanitarian Office</td>
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<td>ELRHA</td>
<td>Enhancing Learning &amp; Research for Humanitarian Assistance</td>
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<td>ERF</td>
<td>Emergency Response Fund</td>
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<td>GHA</td>
<td>Global Humanitarian Assistance Project</td>
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<td>GHP</td>
<td>Global Humanitarian Platform</td>
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<td>Humanitarian Accountability Partnership</td>
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<td>HC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<td>Humanitarian Country Team</td>
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<td>HDLC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Distance Learning Centre</td>
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<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>ICVA</td>
<td>International Council of Voluntary Agencies</td>
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<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
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<td>IBLF</td>
<td>International Business Leaders Forum</td>
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<td>IFRC</td>
<td>International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies</td>
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<td>International Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>LINGOs</td>
<td>Learning in NGOs</td>
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<td>NHRP</td>
<td>NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
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<td>ODI</td>
<td>Overseas Development Institute</td>
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<td>Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance</td>
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<td>Principles of Partnership</td>
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<td>Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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Building a Better Response: Gaps and Good Practice in Training for Humanitarian Reform
Andy Featherstone, January 2012

1. Introduction

This report is commissioned by USAID/OFDA and OCHA in order to contribute to a better understanding of key training and capacity building initiatives within the humanitarian community – with an emphasis on NGOs. The report helps identify gaps in training provision and supports the design and implementation of more effective and targeted training programs for NGO staff and partner organizations. USAID/OFDA is a strong supporter of all pillars of humanitarian reform, including a number of capacity building initiatives and is working in close partnership with OCHA on these issues. An upcoming program will target NGO capacity building with the objective of strengthening NGO engagement in humanitarian assistance architecture by providing training and instruction to national and international NGOs. USAID/OFDA’s primary objective is to improve humanitarian response to disasters by fostering understanding of and securing expanded commitment to the internationally-recognized humanitarian assistance architecture, improving coordination and enhancing its performance.

1.1 Context of the Study

In recognition of the challenges that the international community faced in responding in a timely and effective manner to humanitarian crises and following the publication of the 2005 Humanitarian Response Review, humanitarian reform sought to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring predictability, accountability and partnership. The changes in humanitarian architecture that followed, including the establishment of the cluster approach, the creation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and associated pooled funding mechanisms (Emergency Response Fund [ERF] and Common Humanitarian Funds[CHF]), the strengthening of the recruitment and deployment system for Humanitarian Coordinators (HC) and the focus on strengthening humanitarian partnerships through the dissemination of the Principles of Partnership (PoP) have made an important contribution to the effectiveness of humanitarian operations. Despite this progress, evaluations of the response to the Haiti earthquake at the beginning of 2010 and the floods in Pakistan later the same year have exposed continuing weaknesses and capacity gaps in humanitarian response architecture. To address these, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has identified five key areas for action which include leadership, accountability, coordination, global preparedness capacity, and advocacy and communications. Donors have also been increasingly involved in seeking to support coordination efforts between traditional and non-traditional humanitarian community.

1.2 Purpose of this report

This report is the final output from a global mapping study of NGO participation in humanitarian reform training initiatives the objective of which was to undertake a mapping and analysis of existing and/or planned training initiatives on humanitarian reform (including the cluster approach, pooled funding mechanisms, humanitarian leadership and general coordination) that are delivered by, accessible to and targeted at NGOs (the full ToR is reproduced in annex 2). Rather than focus on academic or university courses, the priority for the study was on practical courses which provide training for operational staff.

There are 3 main outputs from the research:

- Output 1: The humanitarian reform training matrix is presented in a spreadsheet and comprises a database of relevant training initiatives from across the humanitarian sector disaggregated by
Mapping of NGO Humanitarian Reform Training Initiatives

theme, geographic location, approach and participants. A brief description of each training initiative is provided along with a web link to training resources.

- **Output 2**: A toolkit which draws from the information collected in the matrix and provides guidance on gaps and best practices has been prepared as an operational guide for organisations seeking to provide training on humanitarian reform.

- **Output 3**: The research report provides analysis from the quantitative data contained in the matrix and summarises the qualitative feedback received from consultations with NGO staff on participation in humanitarian reform training initiatives.

Box 1: USAID/OFDA problem statement, scope and objectives

Because every disaster brings a unique combination of international, regional, and local players, and each country’s resources to address a disaster are distinct, instruction and training about how to improve the performance of the humanitarian assistance architecture continue to be one of the most prevalent needs identified in studies about international humanitarian response to disasters. High staff turnover is a frequent problem among INGOs and other international organizations particularly when conditions require a disaster response lasting more than several weeks; thus, the more NGO staff who understand the goals of international humanitarian assistance architecture and technical application of best practices, the more conducive the environment will be to achieving an effective response. Furthermore, national staff of INGOs may have limited exposure to the larger workings of the humanitarian assistance architecture, and have difficulty engaging with international staff from UN agencies and other multilateral organizations. International staff who respond to humanitarian emergencies frequently deploy from outside the affected country with little prior knowledge of conditions on the ground. A broader understanding among humanitarian actors of the international humanitarian architecture and roles and responsibilities can help strengthen relationships in-country where such relationships often form the basis for collaboration and inclusiveness during a disaster.

### 1.3 Methodology

The mapping study was undertaken as a desk-based exercise with an emphasis placed on gathering data on training initiatives (past, present and future) which include the participation of NGO staff. In order to capture the data a matrix was developed in consultation with OCHA and an extensive list of agencies were contacted to build as comprehensive training database as possible in the time available (see annex 2 for a list of participants). The approach included several inter-woven strategies:

- Contact with global training programmes within the sector including the global cluster coordinators, OCHA’s HC Strengthening Unit, OCHA’s Funding Section, interagency humanitarian initiatives and NGO field, and headquarters staff to map training programmes within the sector;
- Contact with global training institutions to ascertain the breadth of humanitarian reform-related training programmes developed and implemented by professional providers;
- Contact with country humanitarian coordination and cluster staff to triangulate the global data and to collect country-level training initiatives on humanitarian reform;
- Contact with international and national NGO staff at headquarters and country-level for purposes of triangulation and to inform an analysis of gaps and best practice in training.

In addition to email- and phone-based discussions with training providers and humanitarian staff, a literature search was undertaken to strengthen the analysis and inform the recommendations (see annex 3 for a bibliography).

### 1.4 Limitations
Mapping of NGO Humanitarian Reform Training Initiatives

While many staff gave generously offered their time, there were some important omissions at both global and country-level which has resulted in gaps in the training matrix and subsequent analysis. While the mix of quantitative mapping and qualitative discussions with NGO staff will have minimised the impact of this on the gap analysis, it means that the picture of training initiatives remains incomplete. While a number of the global reform mechanisms (such as the clusters and the CERF Secretariat) were able to provide consolidated training data, the lack of a mandated entity to coordinate country-level participation in humanitarian reform training meant that only in a few instances was country-level data submitted by OCHA which was a significant limitation and compromised analysis of the data. The importance of addressing this gap is one of the most important recommendations of the research. The desk-based nature of the study delivered poor results in terms of eliciting national NGO feedback and participation.

2. Humanitarian Reform Training Practice

This section provides an overview of current humanitarian reform-related training practices for the key humanitarian stakeholders and draws extensively from the humanitarian training matrix. Despite gaps in the data submitted, it is adequate for some broad generalisations to be made.

2.1 Humanitarian reform-related architecture

The clusters
Data submitted by 7 of the global clusters revealed a considerable diversity in practice; while some of the more established clusters have already undertaken global capacity mapping exercises and have strategic plans which place an emphasis on capacity building of stakeholders across the diversity of humanitarian actors, including local authorities and national staff, for many the focus of attention continues to be on developing a cadre of cluster coordinators through the delivery of cluster coordinator training and ToTs. While some clusters were able to provide a detailed account of who had received training delineated by different stakeholders (NGO, UN, local authority) and the role that each played (leadership, front-line staff), others struggled to compile data on where training had occurred suggesting the lack of a consolidated database and gaps in training strategies.

Humanitarian financing
The CERF Secretariat has been entrepreneurial in its training efforts. While it has a regular set of annual training events (typically 6-7 each year), it also uses the opportunities afforded by cluster coordination training and in-country OCHA training events to provide information and guidance on pooled funding – the locations of which are not routinely collected. To help improve understanding of the different fund types and how they interact, the CERF Secretariat has included reference to ERFs and CHFs in its standard CERF training package and there are standardised presentations available on the CERF website.

Humanitarian leadership
Strengthening the humanitarian coordination system is a long-term endeavour and the collective responsibility of all Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) member agencies. A dedicated unit in

\[1\] Although a more recent 2011 presentation which includes reference to pooled funding is available at https://www.sheltercluster.org/Global/Meeting%20documents/Humanitarian%20Financing%20presentation.ppt
OCHA has been established to focus IASC efforts on four areas of activity, many of which are associated with capacity assessment, development and training. These include policy development, career development and the establishment of an HC pool, leadership development and performance appraisal.²

While the training provided by the HC Strengthening Unit is targeted at a small number of participants, with the HC pool now increasing its number of non-UN staff, there are greater numbers of NGO staff and an extensive set of leadership development resources have been developed including two relevant training programmes; the workshop on ‘Humanitarian Coordination’ is run twice a year and more recently a training programme on ‘Working with Partners in Humanitarian Contexts’ has been introduced.

2.2 OCHA country offices

Contact was made with every OCHA country office and regional offices. While a small number of staff made significant efforts to compile and consolidate data on humanitarian-reform-related training events, the general lack of response highlighted an important gap in information with no country-level entity responsible for mapping or recording humanitarian training. In instances where consolidated data was submitted, it is evident that there is a complex mosaic of training initiatives with a trend towards supporting training in countries hosting significant humanitarian response (Haiti being a good example).

Feedback from Regional offices (specifically the Regional Office for Southern and East Africa [ROSEA] and the Regional Office for Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia [ROMENACA]) highlighted the important capacity building undertaken by OCHA in countries outside of the humanitarian spotlight with the work of ROMENACA in particular focusing on delivering introductory training on humanitarian coordination including humanitarian reform to NGOs and governments across the Middle East.

2.3 NGOs

Feedback from INGO participants revealed a reliance on externally-run training initiatives to familiarise staff (both local and international) with humanitarian coordination architecture (including the clusters and pooled funds). While some of the larger NGOs (e.g. Care and Save the Children) addressed issues of humanitarian reform in internal capacity development initiatives, most expected staff either to bring this knowledge into the organisation, to provide a basic introduction as part of staff inductions or anticipated that staff members would learn on-the-job. The limited resources available for staff training was the reason given for the lack of attention to humanitarian reform; most of those interviewed considered there were bigger priorities for training.

NGOs have begun to focus more attention on trying to better understand the learning needs of their staff through conducting capacity and learning needs assessments, the results of which are used to target training and capacity development initiatives. This has been accompanied by broader efforts in the sector to understand organisational capacity and competence particularly for those organisations seeking to work more closely with their national partners. While training initiatives within NGOs cover a broad spectrum, in recent years, particular emphasis has been placed on strengthening leadership in the humanitarian sector in addition to more basic training to programme implementation and support functions.

The limited response received from national NGOs makes it difficult to speak authoritatively about approaches to training on humanitarian reform, however findings suggest that it is this group who

² For more detailed information on humanitarian leadership see http://oneresponse.info/Coordination/leadership/Pages/default.aspx
have the most limited access to training opportunities; many national organisations are often dependent on international NGOs for capacity development which most often addresses issues of project implementation (management and finance) rather than humanitarian architecture. For these organisations, knowledge of humanitarian reform is most often gained on-the-job.

### 2.4 Interagency initiatives

Over the last 10-years there has been a significant growth in the number and diversity of interagency initiatives, most of which seek to support humanitarian practice in areas of perceived weakness. While none provide training exclusively on humanitarian reform, many address some of the key humanitarian challenges and naturally promote and strengthen coordination between organisations across the humanitarian community. While one of the more established initiatives, the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)\(^3\) has developed resources to strengthen NGO practice in areas such as humanitarian leadership, joint needs assessments and has invested time and resources in developed training materials on methodologies such as simulations to strengthen preparedness for coordinated response, newer entities such as the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) and the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Initiative have significantly strengthened joined-up humanitarian practice through developing broad-based communities of practice and through targeted training efforts.

### 2.5 Training institutes

There are numerous training institutes who are involved in a range of training-related initiatives in the humanitarian sector. While there are a small number of providers who have been commissioned by the clusters to develop training courses on aspects of humanitarian architecture (many of which have been captured on the training matrix), there are many others who provide training on specific aspects of humanitarian response including humanitarian reform and have tailor-made courses which are regularly run and attract a growing number of practitioners, keen to develop their knowledge and skills.

While it is beyond the scope of this research, one of the most exciting initiatives has been the development in 2009 of a collaborative network, ELRHA (Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance)\(^4\) of institutions and humanitarian partners dedicated to supporting partnerships between the academic and humanitarian community and committed to enhancing the professionalization of the sector.

### 3. Gap Analysis

This section uses the data contained in the humanitarian reform training matrix and feedback provided by research participants to highlight specific gaps related to methodology, content and inclusion. In order to locate this in the broader context of NGO participation in humanitarian reform, the section commences with a review of recent literature which includes studies conducted by a number of NGOs\(^5\), inter-agency initiatives\(^6\) and the Cluster II Evaluation\(^7\) which provides important context to the research.

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\(^3\) The ECB is a consortium of 6 international NGOs. ECB field-based activities are delivered through 5 inter-agency consortia located in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Horn of Africa, Indonesia and Niger.

\(^4\) See [www.elrha.org/about](http://www.elrha.org/about)

3.1 A review of recent literature

There is a wealth of literature on the roll-out and embedding of the cluster approach in humanitarian response which has catalogued the successes and failures of the new ways of working. Cluster evaluations, leadership reviews and real-time evaluations have shown that while there have been tangible improvements in response, these have at times been modest and it has taken time for the humanitarian community to become familiar with the components of humanitarian reform.

The 2010 study conducted by Merlin on NGO participation in the health cluster in 10 countries is of particular interest as it speaks directly to the issue of NGO participation. The report highlights a considerable gap in knowledge about the clusters and humanitarian reform more broadly and found that very few NGO staff had attended either general or specific health cluster orientation sessions and as a consequence, their understanding was very patchy, even in those countries with a long history of cluster operation (including DRC, Pakistan and Somalia).

A 2010 lessons learned study by the education cluster in Somalia adds weight to Merlin’s findings, raising concern about ‘a fundamental lack of understanding among partners at the local level as to what the Cluster function is’ with many considering it a means to access funds and as a consequence, ‘participation wanes when this is not actualized’. The report speaks to a broader concern about the inclusiveness of reform processes at a sub-national cluster level.

While it reported some familiarity about the principles of partnership, the Merlin study found ‘a strong sense of hierarchy of humanitarian agencies – with UN, then INGOs and then NNGOs – rather than a sense of genuine partnership between these three groups’. The research also highlighted internal challenges to participation which included a lack of capacity, the limited prioritisation that some NGOs give to cluster participation and high staff turnover which undermines continuity in participation and learning.

Research by Oxfam in 2010 based on consultation with WASH cluster participants at global and country-level identifies a similar set of issues to Merlin concluding that;

‘After four years, there is evidence of a continuing lack of understanding among many actors regarding the rationale, objectives and structure of the cluster approach. These observations can be interpreted as either a refusal to ‘buy-in’ to the approach or a lack of belief in it. The resulting incoherence and inconsistency within organisations dramatically affect the chances of improved humanitarian responses through the cluster mechanism.’

While it was anticipated that this global mapping study would be primarily quantitative, qualitative discussions were held with NGO staff about their perceptions of gaps that exist in humanitarian reform training and many of these same issues were raised. Importantly the discussions also highlighted good practice which would go some way to encouraging greater NGO participation in humanitarian reform (see section 4).

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9 Out of 128 NGOs that were interviewed across the 10 case study countries, staff from only 18 organisations had attended humanitarian reform orientation training sessions and staff from only 16 organisations had attended health cluster orientation sessions.

10 See Somalia Education Cluster, Lessons Learned “Light” Review, March 2011
3.2 Highlights from the humanitarian reform training matrix

There was an aspiration to use the data in the training matrix to highlight geographic gaps and disparities to help target future training; while the matrix does permit a basic level of analysis (each of the fields can be sorted and/or filtered), the incomplete data set precludes detailed analysis. A basic analysis shows the following;

- Of the 405 training events listed, 162 are in Africa (40%), 62 are in Asia (15%), 49 are in Europe (12%), 34 are in the Middle East (8%) and 24 are in the Americas (6%).
- When this data is compared with estimates of global humanitarian funding there are some striking similarities; between 2000 and 2009 the Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) Project estimates that just under US$90 billion dollars has been spent on international humanitarian response\textsuperscript{11}; Africa received the largest share of this (46%), Asia received the next largest share (24%) - with Pakistan and Afghanistan receiving just short of half of this – the Middle East received 19% - with Palestine OPT receiving the majority of this – Europe, Americas and Oceania accounted for just 10% of the total.
- Of the training events listed in the matrix that have been held in Africa 35 out of 162, or 21% were held in the humanitarian (and UN) hub of Kenya. Of the training events listed in the Americas, 11 out of 34, or 32% were held in Haiti. No data was received from OCHA in Pakistan, Afghanistan or Palestine/OPT but between the clusters and training providers who provided data, only 2 humanitarian reform training events have been held in Afghanistan and 7 have been held in Pakistan suggesting a potential mismatch between humanitarian spend and investment in training for humanitarian reform\textsuperscript{12} (but there is insufficient data to confirm this);
- Just under one-third of all the trainings listed were provided by the education cluster reflecting the rigorous approach taken to data collection and the impressive effort made to ensure coverage.\textsuperscript{13} A further 12% of the total number of training events are provided by the camp coordination/management cluster meaning that just under half the total number of trainings listed are provided by just 2 clusters;

3.3 Staff development, capacity needs assessment and coordination of training initiatives

Country-level coordination and capacity needs assessment

One of the most basic gaps was the lack of a country-level analysis of needs with decision-making about delivery of training often being taken at a global level. While OCHA regional and country offices speak of a mandate to ‘promote regional and country-level progress towards humanitarian reform and create dialogue between policy-makers and practitioners on the reform’, there appeared to be very limited country-level knowledge about what training had been conducted and what the most urgent gaps were. This omission explains the difficulty the researcher encountered in collecting comprehensive data for each country.

A number of those interviewed talked of decision-making about cluster trainings being top-down; while this is often the case as training budgets are held centrally, there is also evidence that some of the clusters have sought to temper this with processes to ensure country-level input. Given the importance that the humanitarian architecture works during crisis there would be considerable


\textsuperscript{12} Haiti was the only OCHA office in the region to provide training information which likely skews this figure

\textsuperscript{13} While not all the clusters provided data (health and early recovery cluster didn’t participate in the study and the WASH response was incomplete), the Education cluster had achieved the greatest number of training events by far with a focus at sub-national as well as national level.
benefit to having country-level oversight of training initiatives which can support decision-making about how global training resources are used. This responsibility could either rest with the HCT or be folded into OCHA’s broader coordination role but of crucial importance is that a picture of humanitarian reform training needs can be developed that can help meet the greatest needs and ensure that scarce training resources are used most effectively.

A review of several cluster coordination training reports suggest that while standardised cluster coordinator training is often competency-based and has been successful in creating a cadre of cluster coordinators, there has not always been a corresponding effort to understand response capacity more broadly in the sector. One of the clusters that has made progress in this is the Global WASH cluster which has developed a series of tools which include a ‘guide to capacity mapping and assessment of WASH emergency response at the country level’ which is available on the cluster website and represents good practice.\textsuperscript{14} An assessment such as this provides the best possible foundation for tailoring and targeting appropriate training.

Agency-level staff development

Another gap was at the individual agency level. While many international NGOs had a core set of training courses available across a variety of themes, staff rarely had a capacity development ‘journey’ mapped out by their manager and participation on internal and external courses often comes about more by chance than by design. Some interviewee’s spoke of the problem of training courses being incentivised (with the payment of per diems and the promise of lodgings in expensive hotels) and as a result they are considered a ‘reward’ for staff rather than part of a learning journey. In such cases, accountability for learning was considered to be weak. Ultimately this speaks to agency approaches to staff development and while historical weaknesses are beginning to be addressed by some of the larger organisations, there is still significant work to do.

When combined, these three issues - the lack of staff development plans, the lack of country-level capacity assessment and the absence of a mandated entity to identify gaps and coordinate training – go some way to explaining the failure for some humanitarian partners to participate fully in humanitarian reform. The fact that most NGOs either don’t have the resources or choose not to prioritise training on humanitarian reform serves to underline the importance of having a more coordinated approach to delivering a more coherent humanitarian reform training programme.

3.4 Strengthening strategic leadership and teamwork within the HCT

Over the last 5-years there has been significant investment from across the humanitarian community to fill a perceived gap in leadership capacity and competence. The establishment of the Humanitarian Leadership Strengthening Unit in OCHA which has provided training to Humanitarian Coordinators (HC) and HC pool candidates has complemented a broader leadership development push within the sector. Competency frameworks have been developed and many of the largest NGOs and interagency networks now have programmes in place to strengthen leadership.

While evaluations have highlighted the importance of an experienced and competent HC for a successful humanitarian response, the process of humanitarian reform also established broad-based Humanitarian Country teams mandated to ‘agreeing on common strategic issues related to humanitarian action in-country. This includes setting common objectives and priorities, developing strategic plans, agreeing on the establishment of clusters and the designation of cluster lead agencies, providing guidance to cluster lead agencies, activating resource mobilization mechanisms,\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} The Global WASH Cluster Guide to Capacity Mapping and Assessment of WASH Emergency Response at the Country level has tools for assessing both agency and sector capacity (pp.25-pp.30). Available at http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20%5Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project4CapacityMapping.aspx
and advising the HC on allocation of resources from in-country humanitarian pooled funds, where they exist.  

While in theory HCTs have the potential to provide collective humanitarian leadership, in practice they have struggled to achieve this and often fail to live up to the mandate outlined by the IASC. This is hardly surprising given the gaps in mutual and collective accountabilities between HCT members and between HCT and the HC. HCT members are often also divided in how they work and particularly on sensitive operational issues such as humanitarian principles which serves to further frustrate efforts to collaborate.

Given the emphasis placed by humanitarian competency frameworks on collaborative relationship-building it’s puzzling that greater investment hasn’t been made to support HCTs as a team rather than focusing efforts on individual members, with a view to strengthening teamwork, building trust and seeking to build a shared set of strategic aims. This was felt to be one of the most important gaps by NGO and UN staff alike all of whom could see the potential return on investment from a well-functioning humanitarian leadership team. While a lack of mutual accountabilities between the different members of HCT has doubtless militated against the development of high-performing teams, efforts being discussed by the IASC to address this may be best complemented by providing targeted teambuilding work. Rather than a one-off training event, a pilot process of teambuilding which seeks to build trust and develop a shared agenda based on common humanitarian action plans may provide a platform for more successful collaboration between HCT members. That headway on realising this has been made in the December 2011 Principals Task Team Meeting, including a recommendation to strengthen mutual accountability between the HC and members of the HCT is encouraging.

3.5 Filling the partnership gap

Feedback from NGO research participants and analysis of the humanitarian reform training matrix suggests that training isn’t evenly spread across different partners in the humanitarian community with UN staff often comprising the majority of participants despite the fact that national NGO staff can often form the majority of cluster participants particularly at sub-national level. International NGOs have sought to address gaps in staff knowledge on humanitarian architecture and reform during staff inductions and through internal training programmes. Most of the large international agencies have some form of programme which includes elements of humanitarian reform (training initiatives by ACF, Save the Children, ACT Alliance are included in the matrix).


19 The ECB have a number of resources on building trust in the context of humanitarian response which are available at http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/17-building-trust-in-diverse-teams-the-toolkit-for-emergency-response
Where international agencies have established partnerships with national NGOs, particularly in countries which are considered particularly insecure such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Pakistan, training is often considered part of the partnership but this can be ad hoc and tends to focus on issues of programme implementation such as financial accountability, project cycle management and results-based management rather than on aspects of humanitarian coordination and architecture. While this is justified by the limited training budgets which organisations have and the importance of delivering quality programmes, in the absence of alternative avenues for learning about the humanitarian system one of the implications of this is that local staff participating in clusters have very limited understanding of their purpose. This is of most concern in rapid onset crises where international NGOs sub-contract programme implementation to new partners with very limited time or commitment to supporting learning – it is precisely these agencies that Merlin’s research suggests would benefit most from targeted training.

‘The importance of specifically building the capacity of local NGOs on the cluster approach and various technical aspects was repeatedly emphasized in all of the workshops.’

The challenge for the humanitarian community is how to most effectively contribute to the active and effective participation of all partners in clusters and in humanitarian architecture more broadly. Much has been written about the difficulties in translating the principles of partnership (PoP) from theory into practice and despite many training programmes related to humanitarian architecture including modules on the PoP real change requires attitudinal change that goes far beyond what can be learnt at a training event. Reference made by the Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) in 2010 to ‘A New Humanitarian Business Model’ which it defines as ‘building disaster response on local capabilities and capacities, support to local and national capacity, partnership between international and local and national actors, and sharing capacities between local/national organisations and international organisations’ still requires significant work if it is to be realised. The GHP speaks of the need for a fundamental shift in approach in order to place civil society, national NGOs and community organisations ‘at the centre of humanitarian action and reform efforts.’ While there is general agreement that incremental progress has been made, it has been limited in its extent and vision. Addressing these issues of power and partnership must continue to be a priority for the IASC, GHP at a global level and at a country-level the HC and HCT.

3.6 Engaging front-line staff

Discussions with NGO staff revealed a perception that many of the same people (middle managers and technical coordinators from UN and international NGOs) most often participate in training. This is supported by feedback from the education cluster in Somalia which noted that ‘the perception is that most training occurs for Nairobi level actors and more should be done to facilitate the work and support agencies at the sub National Cluster level.’

The training matrix has captured efforts made by many of the global clusters to cascade cluster coordinator training to country-level staff with the majority of training taking place across the more emergency-prone parts of the globe. While this has contributed to a cadre of cluster-coordinators-in-waiting and has also seen middle- and senior-managers and technical coordination staff skilled up there was broad concern that these trainings are most often focused at capital level and as such tend to omit front-line humanitarian staff many of whom interact with humanitarian reform mechanisms albeit at sub-national level. Discussions revealed concern that there weren’t more

training opportunities directed towards staff working in Pakistan’s flooded Provinces or Ethiopia’s drought stricken zones as the Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation (RTE) to the Pakistan Flood Response suggests;

‘In the aftermath of the 2007 floods, which affected Balochistan and parts of southern Sindh, recommendations focusing on developing national capacities as first responders have not been followed through and response as well as coordination activities have largely depended on surge capacity which, by many, has been considered to be insufficiently qualified and experienced.’

Recent crises have highlighted the limitations in the humanitarian response capacity across all stakeholders (UN, international NGO and national NGO) with large numbers of new staff being recruited into organisations, sometimes with very little prior experience. To make matters worse, the urgency of implementation means that agencies are far more reticent to release front-line staff for training purposes. One of the implications of this is that there is often a dearth of knowledge about humanitarian coordination, financing and leadership by those who have the most complex task – that of implementation. These people are also the most important advocates of assistance as they have direct interaction with those affected by crises.

Box 2: The humanitarian staffing pyramid

While including these cadres of new staff in appropriate training would represent a challenge there is the potential to have considerable impact on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of this important group if an appropriate and well-targeted sub-national-level training initiative could be designed and delivered. There is also concern that the penalties for failure to achieve this are not borne by agencies but by the people in need of humanitarian assistance.

‘After four years, there is evidence of a continuing lack of understanding among many actors regarding the rationale, objectives and structure of the cluster approach...The resulting

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incoherence and inconsistency within organisations dramatically affect the chances of improved humanitarian responses through the cluster mechanism.\textsuperscript{24}

The key question for the sector is how to effectively do this in the context of staff with limited organisational (and sometimes sectoral) experience and demanding workloads. Evidence from the 2004 ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action\textsuperscript{25} suggests that aid workers’ preferred method of learning is by doing which has led to suggestions that pairing staff for purposes of coaching and mentoring can be an effective way of capacity development in this context or investing in staff placements in humanitarian situations as part of training.\textsuperscript{26} While there are no easy solutions, existing knowledge certainly suggest the use of innovative and creative approaches to learning rather than formal techniques such as classroom-based methods.

3.7 The accountability gap
While accountability has been addressed in humanitarian reform from a predictability perspective, there was far more concern from those interviewed that it had been insufficiently dealt with from the perspective of accountability to crisis-affected communities. Despite significant headway being made in strengthening accountability between those providing and those receiving assistance and with many NGOs now having tangible processes to ensure participation and feedback, the position of the clusters was considered to be weak as noted in Oxfam’s paper on the WASH Cluster\textsuperscript{27} which echoed the findings of the Cluster II evaluation;\textsuperscript{28}

‘Except for some very notable positive examples, clusters have not been active or effective in strengthening participatory approaches, either by promoting participatory or community based approaches among their members, or through including affected populations in their own activities.’

In April 2011 the Principals of the IASC acknowledged the importance of accountability to beneficiary communities and agreed to strengthen collective accountability within the humanitarian system as part of a ‘transformative agenda’ and subsequently a Draft Operational Framework has been developed to summarise the key concepts for making programming at field level more accountable to affected populations. While discussions between global clusters, NGOs and UN agencies have made progress (some of which is reflected in the box below and highlighted in the good practice section), this continues to be a work in progress and at present there is no collective cluster position on accountability to crisis-affected communities.

The mapping study found many country-level and agency-level trainings on beneficiary accountability and a plethora of resources available; some research participants went as far as saying that there were too many different approaches and that the sector would benefit from a more coordinated approach which could be achieved through cluster-level oversight on accountability and associated training.

\textsuperscript{28} Streets et al (2010) IASC Cluster Approach Evaluation, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Phase: Synthesis Report, April 2010, Urgence, Rehabilitation et Developpement & Global Public Policy Institute, pp.58
Box 3: Agency and inter-agency initiatives to heighten accountability to crisis-affected communities

Agencies that incorporate Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) management and coordination systems within their own organisations, providing a complaints mechanism for SEA cases, encouraging prevention, and ensuring response to reported SEA cases. The 2010 Review of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN, NGO, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) Personnel resulted in more active engagement of the IASC in the PSEA Task Force.

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) field support missions in emergencies (12 deployments so far) with notably the setting up of a joint-complaint mechanism in Haiti and Dadaab.

The Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB) – a network of six humanitarian NGOs – has set up a system whereby ECB member agencies complete an annual self-assessment of their performance against key elements of accountability to people affected by disasters. Findings are benchmarked against a baseline and between agencies.

The Sub Group on Accountability to Affected Populations (part of the Task Team on the Cluster Approach) established to implement the recommendations made by the Cluster Evaluation II on accountability to affected populations will develop, through a process of consultation and consolidation of existing work, tools for clusters in the field to use to strengthen accountability to affected populations.

The Communication with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) network’s first operational deployment in Haiti led to the first systemic effort to coordinate information work in a major humanitarian emergency. CDAC partners, including OCHA, Internews, International Media Support, Reporters sans Frontières and IOM, worked together to improve access to lifesaving information and techniques for listening to affected communities during the response to the earthquake and subsequently the cholera and hurricane emergencies.

The Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response Peer Review on Accountability to Disaster-affected Populations, in which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees took an active part, has highlighted some of the lessons, gaps and constraints experienced by the participating organisations and provided specific recommendations to specific organisation.

The Infoasaid project, a partnership between the BBC World Service Trust and Internews funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), has been established to advocate for and support humanitarian agencies in mainstreaming meaningful communications into their emergency response work. Infoasaid, among other activities, is collating best practice, providing technical training in communication to operational humanitarian staff and mapping available communications networks in disaster prone countries. This work while still in its early stages aims to further the understanding of the critical link between accountability and effective two way communication as a means to achieve this.

4. Good Practice

This section seeks to draw out good practice collected during the research. Many of the examples given below address the gaps identified in the previous section and if replicated more generally by organisations across the sector, or more often in humanitarian crises, would go some way to strengthening the engagement of NGOs in humanitarian reform and in ensuring positive outcomes for those participating in the training. An emphasis has been placed on selecting a few good case studies rather than on providing a comprehensive list and it is important to recognise that there are many other sources of good practice that already exist across the sector (see annex 3 for the

29 These are taken from the paper prepared in response to the call by the Emergency Relief Coordinator to implement the Key Transformative Actions identified in the IASC Principals meeting held on 21-22 February 2011.
bibliography where reference is made to some of these and also the gaps and good practice guide which accompanies this report).

4.1 Supporting front-line staff and surge capacity
The massive scale-up in humanitarian staff to respond to the earthquake in Haiti precipitated innovative practice in delivering in-situ training. Bioforce and RedR worked together to address the problem of developing surge capacity and addressing skills deficits in the context of the rapid onset crisis. The aim of the disaster response support service (DRSS) was to help maximise the speed and effectiveness of the relief and rehabilitation effort in Haiti, through strengthening the operational capacity of humanitarian agencies. In the first 2-months of the project (March – April 2010) bespoke ‘on-the-job’ workshops were offered to address immediate agency needs. During this phase clients included DFID, Goal, International Medical Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children and Tearfund (and requests were received from others). In this initial phase, training was flexible and was tailored to meet agency’s specific needs by drawing on the extensive skills and experience of the training providers. In the second phase of the project (May 2010 – January 2011) a range of scheduled courses were offered for agencies to book places which provided a greater opportunity for more organised learning which targeted key skills gaps and specific staff members. Key sectors for which training was available included Security, Logistics, WASH, shelter and project management. While initial trainings were confined to the capital, Port au Prince, these were decentralised to include provincial hubs and field sites.

While the model wasn’t perfect and in the second phase suffered from a lack of funding, given the gap in training of front-line staff in large-scale, sudden-onset crises and the challenge of having to rapidly skill-up a large group of front-line responders, a country-based training capacity which has the potential to offer standard training packages in addition to designing bespoke programmes could play an important role in addressing skills and knowledge deficits in real time and would certainly be worthy of consideration and support in the future.

4.2 A sound approach to building regional and national staff capacity
The Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) consists of fifteen UK-based NGOs working to together to strengthen the ‘third pillar’ of humanitarian action and has been working in collaboration with the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB) and Oxfam GB on developing national leadership capacity. While the training programme doesn’t explicitly deal with humanitarian reform it does touch on some important aspects and more importantly establishes good practice in a number of the areas that research interviews exposed as weaknesses – including the use of baseline assessments and the targeting of national staff capacity.

In each of the four programme areas an assessment of response capacity was undertaken prior to running the programme so that the programmes could be adapted to the specific context (rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach) and to provide a baseline from which to measure performance. The learning needs assessment and the contextualisation of the training both constitute good practice in the context of humanitarian training and went some way to ensuring the relevance of the programme to its participants.

Programmes begun in the Horn of Africa and Bangladesh in early 2011 and were followed later in the year by Indonesia and Bolivia and which will run until the end of the year. Participants include existing staff in the target countries with some partners also being selected for the training. While

31 Baseline assessment reports can be found at http://www.thecbha.org/what-we-do/capacity-building/
the programme doesn’t address humanitarian reform and architecture explicitly, it does focus on an important skills deficit in the sector (leadership) and an under-served group (national staff members amongst others). It also addresses some of the more frequent criticisms of training in the sector, using a mixture of methods which includes learning-by doing through on-the-job coaching and distance learning. Methods have also been adopted to strengthen accountability of the individual for the use of the learning post-training by involving managers in facilitating and monitoring the participant’s self-development and by supporting the participant through the training process. These commitments are outlined in a ‘learning agreement’ that is signed by both the manager and the participant.

While the CBHA programme is a pilot and some of the techniques adopted above still require further development, it does provide an important contribution to learning about good practice in humanitarian training and the approach taken towards documenting progress means that there is a growing body of evidence about what works and where the challenges remain. Importantly there is a commitment to making the learning materials available to the sector more broadly.32

4.3 A high value placed on simulations

Simulations have found to be an effective method of providing humanitarian staff immersion in realistic emergency scenarios requiring real-time decision-making. While some participants in the research suggested that such methods are often seen as a training tool for junior or mid-level staff, the use of simulations at the highest level of humanitarian leadership and coordination suggests otherwise and many consider that if they are facilitated effectively they allow a greater depth of understanding and can provide a safe environment for failures and challenges to be addressed. They are often most effective when participation includes members from across the humanitarian community.

Resident Coordinator (RC) Regional Workshops on Humanitarian Coordination33 and the IASC HC Pool course on Working with Partners in Humanitarian Contexts34 have both used simulations as part of the training programme which are considered invaluable for exploring how different humanitarian stakeholders with different mandates work and has allowed participants to experience some of the challenges of coordination. By conducting simulations in remote rural communities, the IFRC Field School training has pushed the use of simulation to its limits with interesting results (see box 4 below). By using staff from a range of external partners efforts have been made to recreate the challenges experienced by humanitarian leaders in the field which can then be analysed as part of a process of reflection.

The ECB has also worked extensively on designing and delivering simulations in the context of humanitarian training. In its first phase the ECB developed a raft of tools for simulations which are available online35 and which have been extensively field-tested. Learning from the project highlighted the broad levels of participant satisfaction with the utility of the training and noted that simulations were of most value for ‘preparedness planning and teambuilding, developing a capacity

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32 The CBHA staff development programme has been renamed ‘context’ and materials from the training will be made available from spring 2012. They have been designed for easy information access, cost-effective use and simple copying and will include material design, workbooks, tools, templates, posters, banners, leaflets and certificates.

33 For a list of resources from 2007 – 2009 workshops see http://www.undg.org/?P=778

34 For a list of resources from the 2011 Geneva course including a simulation exercise see http://oneresponse.info/Coordination/leadership/Pages/IASC%20HC%20Pool%20Workshop%20on%20Working%20with%20Partners%20in%20Humanitarian%20Contexts.aspx

35 See http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/tag/Simulations+Materials
to coordinate, but most importantly to learn from mistakes and build relationships.\(^{36}\) Given the gaps identified earlier in this report about partnership – both between different members of HCT and between different humanitarian partners - there is certainly evidence to suggest that simulations can play an important role in strategies to strengthen understanding and trust between diverse members of the community.

**Box 4: Good practice in simulations - the IFRC Field School\(^{37}\)**

In 2007 the Norwegian Red Cross and IFRC developed a field-based training model based in remote rural communities with high rates of morbidity and mortality resulting from poverty and disasters. With a focus on learning by doing through ‘total immersion’ over a 2-week period, participants are placed in conditions of physical and psychological stress similar to those likely to be experienced in the early stages of deployment to major disasters. A diverse mix of international, regional, national, male and female staff are split into small teams and required to engage with communities in a ‘real’ disaster response. Improving communications skills and learning how to build trust with local counterparts are integral components of the curriculum.

The impact of the training on participants is monitored closely throughout the course and analysis of the initial 5 Field Schools (run between 2008 and 2009) indicate that while participants acknowledge some of the difficult personal and professional challenges of the training, they have been able to incorporate the skills they have acquired into their work in subsequent emergency responses. The ‘how to’ focus of the training and the mix of international, regional and local participants with diverse backgrounds were cited as two of the most highly rated aspects of the course.

### 4.4 The use of capacity assessment tools

Organisational assessments can be an important part of identifying gaps in staff/organisational/sector capacity and may be used as a basis for designing and directing capacity building activities. While the mapping study revealed numerous programmes on offer across a range of humanitarian reform-related components, it was often unclear the extent to which these training programmes were being coordinated at a country/cluster or inter-cluster level. However, interviews also revealed some good practice in capacity assessment at the cluster and organisational level.

**Capacity assessment at cluster level**

Several of the clusters have undertaken capacity assessments; the 2008 WASH cluster capacity mapping tool, capacity assessment inception report and result report are all available on the cluster website along with a series of recommendations for follow-up.\(^{38}\) The education cluster undertook a similar capacity mapping assessment the following year,\(^{39}\) the results of which have informed the 2011-2013 cluster strategy which has a specific outcome related to targeted capacity development.

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\(^{39}\) All the reports are available at [http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Education/Pages/Resources%20and%20Tools.aspx](http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Education/Pages/Resources%20and%20Tools.aspx). In particular see Houghton R (2009) *Education Cluster Capacity Mapping Global Study, February 2009*. 
with a ‘focus on the country level’ and also prioritises ‘the need for greater attention to partnership’. Both of these issues have considerable resonance with the findings of this research.

Capacity assessment at organisational level
The Act Alliance\(^{41}\) has developed an organisational capacity assessment tool\(^ {42}\) which is being rolled out to its members as part of an Alliance-wide system of self-assessment. The tool assesses organisational capacity in relation to 4 areas; (i) membership commitments, (ii) disaster preparedness and response capacities, (iii) general organisational capacities, and (iv) accountability, motivation and learning capacities. Each of these areas has a list of capacity elements each with four levels of development which describes the organisational capacity. While ‘humanitarian reform’ isn’t explicitly mentioned in the tool, elements of humanitarian coordination and humanitarian financing are present and it is anticipated that the process of self-assessment and subsequent analysis could potentially identify areas such as these as gaps for training to address.

Trainer competency framework
Developed jointly by RedR and Bioforce, the Trainer Competency Framework is designed as a capacity building tool for humanitarian organisations and provides a detailed guide for (i) assessing training needs (ii) designing training (iii) delivering training (iv) evaluating training (v) accessing learning. \(^{43}\) Supported by a growing number of humanitarian training institutes, the tool represents good practice in the design and delivery of training and provides a comprehensive framework for those undertaking humanitarian reform training to draw from.

4.5 Cascading training to front-line staff
From the responses received from global cluster coordinators, one of the most comprehensive approaches to capacity development has been from the education cluster whose training programme has been systematic in terms of its geographic coverage and in its commitment to targeting and training country-level capacity for response. This is in line with the 2011-2013 strategic plan which states as its objective;

In order to work towards achieving the Education Cluster’s goal, the overarching objective for the cluster’s three year strategy is to strengthen education capacities at country level to prepare for, respond to and recover from humanitarian crises...The cluster’s approach to strengthening capacity concerns two main groups of constituents. First, the capacities of existing stakeholders in the form of education authorities, disaster management authorities and other local, national and international education actors. Second, the capacity of country-level Education Clusters, including co-lead agencies, cluster partners and cluster coordination personnel. \(^ {44}\)

A detailed account of the trainings has been recorded in a training database which is disaggregated by training type and geographic location and is evidence of the efforts that have been made to attain

\(^{41}\) ACT is an alliance of 125 faith-based NGOs and churches that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development. The alliance works in 140 countries and mobilises US$1.6 billion annually in its work for a just world. The alliance has over 33,000 people working for it globally.
\(^{42}\) The tool and guidance note are available at http://www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/capacity-development/publications?b_start:int=10&C=
\(^{44}\) The Education Cluster’s Strategic Plan for 2011-2013 is available at http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Education/publicdocuments/Education%20Cluster%20Strategic%20Plan%202011-2013_Final.pdf
coverage both in countries where there are humanitarian responses ongoing and in countries yet to experience humanitarian upheaval. While one of the gaps highlighted in the mapping study has been a lack of training directed towards front-line staff, training data from the education cluster shows a sound approach to working to address this deficit with training being targeted at a range of front-line staff including NGO and Ministry of Education personnel.

4.6 Online Training repositories and e-learning

Despite the focus within the humanitarian community on professionalization in recent years, finding techniques that are appropriate for short-term front-line staff many of who may have time-bound contracts and yet have important operational roles continues to be a challenge. While learning-by-doing is the preferred learning style for many field staff, limitations on contract length time and training budgets and the large number of staff concerned means that the ‘best’ training solution may not be possible. Two potential stop-gap methods to address knowledge deficits are access to distance- or e-learning courses and at an even more basic level, availability of training materials via online repositories.

Online training repositories

The research highlighted a wealth of training information on humanitarian reform that is freely available to humanitarian staff. While efforts have been made to capture web links in the humanitarian reform training matrix and in the Gaps and Good Practice Toolkit which accompanies this report, there is an abundance of information which is rarely accessed and is a significant untapped resource. Several research participants requested information about training data on humanitarian reform which suggests that there is a problem in identifying and accessing relevant information. While the website most commonly referred to by NGO staff wanting to find information about humanitarian reform was the dedicated website set up in shortly after the reforms were rolled out (www.humanitarianreform.org) this has limited resources and large parts of the site are now out of date.\(^{45}\) Cluster websites (often, but not always hosted on the UN website www.onerresponse.info) have much more recent information and many had links to recent training data (the Gender-Based Violence [GBV] site was particularly comprehensive in the information it provides and links to training packages)\(^{46}\); there was also a wealth of data on agency and interagency websites. What is lacking is a single repository which has links to the most recent introductory presentations and training information which is easily accessible and which can be used as part of staff briefings or as part of humanitarian reform induction programmes.

In the NGO sector, one of the largest online learning portals is hosted by Learning in NGOs (LINGOs),\(^{47}\) a consortium of over 65 international humanitarian relief, development, conservation and social justice organizations that share learning resources and experiences. It operates a Learning Management System that contains hundreds of courses on leadership and management development, information technology, project management, stress management for humanitarian workers, personal safety and other topics which member agencies can access the content through custom branded portals or through a shared portal depending on their level of membership.

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\(^{45}\) One of the best self-learning modules on humanitarian reform discovered during the research is part of the global nutrition cluster nutrition in emergencies training package; the first 3 lessons on humanitarian coordination, humanitarian reform, financing and the cluster approach, and humanitarian actors and roles provides a very thorough overview. The modules are available on Unicef’s website at http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/training/list.html

\(^{46}\) See http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Protection/GBV/Pages/Tools%20and%20Resources.aspx

\(^{47}\) See www.ngolearning.org
E-learning

The research found very limited opportunities for e-learning courses that were directly related to humanitarian reform despite this being a rapidly-expanding medium for learning in the sector. There are a variety of different web-based e-learning portals; one of the most popular membership-based ones is LINGOs (see above). The Humanitarian Distance Learning Centre (HDLC)\(^{48}\) is a second provider who’s already provided distance learning in the sector; it was established in 2004 with the objective of providing accessible, creative and affordable vocational training to current and potential humanitarian professionals. Courses offered are competency-based and currently focus on security training and humanitarian logistics. The Peace Operations Training Institute offers a similar service, with a focus on providing globally accessible and affordable distance learning courses on peace support, humanitarian relief and security operations.\(^{49}\)

Within the sector, the IASC has recently launched an e-learning course to ensure aid workers understand and meet the differing health needs for women, men and children during humanitarian crises which is available on e-learning homepage\(^{50}\); UNFPA has an e-learning course on gender-based violence in emergencies\(^{51}\); the Cash Learning Partnership has an e-learning module on cash transfers\(^{52}\); INEE has an e-learning module which explores the minimum standards through a case study approach\(^{53}\); the global nutrition cluster has an e-learning course which includes a very good introduction to humanitarian reform,\(^{54}\) and; the global WASH Cluster have a variety of distance learning modules which it will be making available online in the near future. While no further courses were identified during the research given the considerable access that many front-line staff have to the internet, there is significant potential for using e-learning in the future. On the issue of potential for the future it is noteworthy that the United Nations Research for Training and Research (UNITAR)\(^{55}\) has almost ten years of experience in e-learning activities and its peace, security and diplomacy thematic area covers issues that touch on humanitarian response and certainly has the potential to host relevant e-learning modules in the future.

4.7 Good practice in humanitarian partnership

There is plenty of experience within the sector of developing partnerships which goes far beyond the scope of this report. In the humanitarian sphere, issue 50 of Humanitarian Exchange Magazine\(^{56}\) provides a wealth of material on building effective partnerships which includes links to the partnership brokering project, a collaboration between the UK’s Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the international Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) which offers professional development and skills training in building, managing and scaling up expertise in partnering.\(^{57}\)

Specifically related to humanitarian reform, The NHRP have developed a leaflet on practical approaches to implement the PoP\(^{58}\) which now is a standard part of most cluster coordinator trainings. However, effective humanitarian partnerships are about more than ‘mechanistic
relationships where actors come together to achieve a set of common objectives, dividing up responsibilities and planning joint work. They also involve underlying issues of power, attitudes and styles of working.\textsuperscript{59} It is this very complex area where success has been harder to achieve and which the GHP ambitions for a New Humanitarian Business Model speak to.

The recent study by Merlin on behalf of the global health cluster highlights the value of listening as an integral part of partnership (see box 5 below). While the study has provided significant learning for the cluster, transparency in how the recommendations are addressed will be of benefit to the humanitarian community more broadly.

**Box 5: Merlin’s NGO orientation and reflection workshops**

Merlin’s project was initially developed to address weaknesses in NGO awareness of and participation in the health cluster as identified through a variety of evaluations and assessments and the principal objective was to improve the international response to humanitarian needs through more effective NGO participation in the health cluster.

In each of the ten countries selected for the study an NGO orientation and reflection workshop was conducted. A generic agenda was developed which focused on the health cluster which was adapted as required depending on the country context and based on feedback with cluster partners. International and national NGOs were invited to participate alongside local Ministry of Health staff. While most of the workshops were held at national-level, a sub-national workshop was held in Goma, DRC and in Somalia the workshop content was adapted to include a session focused on sub-national co-stewardship. Before the workshops participants were requested to complete a questionnaire and a mapping exercise was conducted to gauge NGO knowledge of and participation in the health cluster which formed the basis for Merlin’s report.\textsuperscript{60}

Partnerships are best brokered outside of humanitarian response and to this end some of the work of OCHA Regional offices, particularly in the Middle East where introductory trainings sessions on humanitarian coordination have been held makes an important contribution to disseminating knowledge about humanitarian architecture. A second example worthy of note is the Humanitarian Partnership Forum held in Cairo in June 2011 between the HC for Libya, OCHA, the Humanitarian Forum\textsuperscript{61} and Arab, Islamic and Western NGOs; held in Arabic, the round-table was designed to strengthen partnerships, better coordinate the provision of aid and come up with results-orientated action plans.\textsuperscript{62} While these events have gone some way to building bridges between traditional and non-traditional humanitarian partners, the research suggests a more fundamental shift may be required.

One of the central issues highlighted in this research and echoed in the Humanitarian Forum’s article on cross-cultural collaboration\textsuperscript{63} are the implications of the changing landscape of international humanitarian assistance on humanitarian reform. The arrival of new actors (donors and


\textsuperscript{60} Forsythe V (2010) Learning from NGO Experience in the Health Cluster: ECHO Project – Effective NGO participation in Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms, Merlin, August 2010

\textsuperscript{61} The Humanitarian Forum is a family of internationally based organisations, committed to improving relationships between humanitarian actors. See [www.humanitarianforum.org](http://www.humanitarianforum.org)


humanitarian agencies) linked to high profile challenges to humanitarian reform architecture in recent crises such as Haiti and Pakistan have stimulated debate about the appropriateness of standardised reform coordination mechanisms and have emphasized the importance of humanitarian architecture being contextually relevant. While this theme has been included as part of the IASCs ‘Transformative Agenda’, this study suggests that success will be predicated on finding common ground between new partners in humanitarian assistance and working together to build an inclusive humanitarian response based on mutual respect and shared values.

4.8 Accountability to and communication with crisis-affected communities

Despite the lack of clarity within the cluster system on issues of accountability to affected communities, an accountability project was initiated by the global WASH cluster led by Oxfam which advocates for strengthened accountability mechanisms for beneficiaries within the sector. Using the work of various accountability initiatives the project has produced a practical toolkit and communication / awareness raising / training materials for WASH professionals that is easy to understand and has been made accessible to all via the global WASH cluster website.\(^{64}\) While this falls short of a negotiated benchmark, it does provide relevant materials some of which are highly relevant to training. Specifically, the WASH Accountability Resource booklet\(^ {65}\) includes a chapter on staff competencies and attitudes which is followed by a chapter on accountability tools. Together these provide rich source material on some of the softer skills required for accountable working and a series of checklists and exercises to foster and promote these.

Communication with crisis affected communities is an important part of accountability and an area of growing interest in the sector. A number of initiatives have been established to assist the humanitarian community in strengthening its practice in this important area, one of which is Infoasaid\(^ {66}\) which has recently published a best practice and lessons learned report on communication based on experience from Haiti.\(^ {67}\) The CDAC initiative has provided training on communication strategies and local media engagement in areas where it’s been operational.\(^ {68}\)

4.9 A proposal to strengthen strategic humanitarian leadership

At the time of writing the HC Strengthening Unit in OCHA is looking to develop a teambuilding programme for HCTs with a view to delivering a year-long process including a workshop, coaching and mentoring for the HC and key HCT members. A vacancy announcement has been finalised and a selection process will soon commence to identify a suitable service provider. While the lack of a robust accountability framework between HCT members will present a challenge to the process, the focus on supporting humanitarian leadership is timely and will present an invaluable learning opportunity.

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\(^{64}\) See [http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project14Accountability.aspx](http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project14Accountability.aspx)

\(^{65}\) Global WASH Cluster (2009) WASH Accountability Resources: Ask, Listen, Communicate, prepared by Oxfam on behalf of the WASH Cluster (internet). Available at [http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project14Accountability.aspx](http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project14Accountability.aspx)

\(^{66}\) Infoasaid is a collaborative project of two members of the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Initiative, Internews and BBC World Service Trust. See [www.infoasaid.org](http://www.infoasaid.org)


\(^{68}\) for Pakistan see [http://cdacpakistan.wordpress.com/field-staff-training/](http://cdacpakistan.wordpress.com/field-staff-training/)
5. Conclusion

Since the rollout of humanitarian reform there has been much progress made in equipping the humanitarian community to participate in the new ways of working; a broad-based portfolio of training programmes have been developed some – although not all - of which draw on good practice in capacity assessment and use of training tools to deliver highly relevant programmes. While humanitarian reform necessarily implies a collective effort much of the responsibility for developing these has been left to globally-mandated lead agencies albeit with some support from international NGOs, particularly in areas which were considered to have initially been given insufficient attention such as education, accountability and age. Aside from these, international NGOs and their national counterparts have tended to focus their limited training resources on other areas of their practice, addressing issues of humanitarian architecture through inductions, or expecting staff to bring knowledge into the organisation or learn-on-the-job. That is not to say that the NGO sector has been remiss in its training efforts – on the contrary, the last 5-years has witnessed a growth of interest in the professionalization of humanitarian training and a significant proportion of the good practice case studies highlighted by the research have come from either individual or collaborative NGO programmes.

While the study has covered significant ground, there are three issues which will make a significant contribution to fostering NGO participation in humanitarian reform – that of prioritising partnership, fostering a field focus and strengthening capacity assessment and coordination.

Prioritising Partnership and Collaborative Learning
While the focus of the study was on mapping training efforts and identifying gaps and good practice, it’s important also to acknowledge the reservations that many agencies still have about some elements of humanitarian reform which have their roots in issues of power relations and attitudes between different parts of the humanitarian community and which can’t be addressed through training alone. However there are some important lessons and good practices which the study identified which, if applied more rigorously and consistently in humanitarian reform-related training would certainly go some way to addressing some of the softer issues of trust and respect that are so important for collaboration on which the success of humanitarian response hinges. Targeted teambuilding intervention at the strategic level of the HCT and innovative ways to address power imbalances between partners at the field level both have the potential to have considerable impact on humanitarian response.

Fostering a Field Focus
One important headline from the study is to focus training efforts closer to the field. Knowing that so much of the responsibility for humanitarian response rests on the shoulders of national NGOs and front-line staff that often form the bulk of sub-national clusters and who are increasingly targeted by pooled funds suggests the need to re-focus training efforts on these often neglected members of the humanitarian community. This will require either a scale-up in formal training to provide basic messages on humanitarian architecture and coordination with a focus on learning-by-doing and/or the use of simulations or a commitment to expanding the range of training materials such as distance-learning and e-learning courses which can be easily accessed at low-cost to a far greater number of people. A commitment to developing a range of pick-up-and-go, self-learning materials on the most important aspects of humanitarian reform would represent important progress.

Strengthening country-level capacity assessment and coordination
At a more basic level, developing a country-level, contextually relevant analysis of learning needs in humanitarian reform and making a commitment to collecting, collating and organising the numerous training materials that exist would represent important progress for the many NGOs who are reliant
on internal training and inductions to address knowledge deficits on humanitarian architecture. Easy access to the wealth of knowledge and training materials would allow those who wish to self-learn or those who wish to design induction programme a far simpler entry-point.

While making headway in professionalising the sector is essential to make progress, a much smaller revolution in information management could go a long way to meeting the more basic training needs of the many thousands of humanitarian staff which the humanitarian community depend on.
Annex 1: Participants

The participants below either contributed by email or through discussion with the consultant. Many other people were contacted but were not available to participate. In all, 180 people were invited to take part in the study, of which the following contributed:

**NGO**
Anne Street, CAFOD
Dan Tyler, Norwegian Refugee Council
Jock Baker, Care
Linda Doull, Merlin
Megan Chisholm, Care
Anne Dominique-Israel, ACF-France
Diana Keller, Save the Children US
Barbara Wetsig-Lynam, ACT Alliance
Mary Pack, International Medical Corps
Paula Tenaglia, ACF-US
Catherine Russ, Save the Children
Mke Noyes, CAFOD
Jo Wells, HelpAge International
Sarah Lumsdon, Oxfam
Alistair Dutton, Caritas
Matt Brown, World Learning International Development & Exchange Programs
Abdurahman Sharif, Muslim Charities Forum
Ahmad Al Sharaji, Yemen Humanitarian Forum
Claire Messina, Humanitarian Leadership Strengthening Unit, OCHA

**Training Institutes & Training staff**
Charlie Dalrymple, RedR UK
Pete Sweetnam, RedR UK
Carmel Dolan, Nutritionworks
Marie Magrath, Emergency Nutrition Network
Rory Downham, Bioforce
Annie Lloyd, cluster training consultant
Christina Blunt, Advanced Training Program on Humanitarian Action (ATHA)
Pierre Brunet, Urgence, Rehabilitation & Developpement (URD)
Moses Thomson, Maizemoor
Matthew Serventy, Independent
Maja Edfast, Advanced Training Programme for Humanitarian Action (ATHA)
Dominic Bowen, RedR Australia

**Red Cross/Red Crescent**
Dr. Khaled Diab, Qatar Red Crescent Society

**UN**
Mark Prasopa Plaizier, HC Strengthening Project (formerly)
Pierre Gelas, Regional Disaster Response advisor
Knarik Kamalyan, OCHA Indonesia
Lisa Peterson, OCHA Libya
Ramesh Rajasingham, OCHA oPT
Peter Manfield, OCHA Yemen
Jean-Luc Tonglet, OCHA Regional Office
Dave Womble, OCHA Somaliland
Peter Ekayu, OCHA Yemen
Pierre Fourcassie, Unicef, WASH Cluster Coordinator, Middle East & North Africa Region (MENA)
Maria Rosario Bruno, OCHA Haiti
Mindaraga Rahardja, OCHA Indonesia
Karen Smith, CERF Secretariat
Abdulhaq Amiri, OCHA ROMENACA
Nororaisoa Rakotomalala-Rakotondrandria
OCHA Regional Office for Southern Africa

**Interagency Initiatives**
Patty McIlreavy, Interaction
Jodi Read-Williams, NGOs & Humanitarian Reform Project (NHRP)
Barb Wigley, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP - formerly)
Dave Hockaday, Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)
Judith Burchett, Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS)
Jess Camburn, Enhancing Learning & Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELHRA)
Katharina Samara, NGOs & Humanitarian Reform Project (NHRP)
Massimo Altimari, Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)
Sheila Waruhiu, Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies/Save the Children
Caroline Hotham, Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies/Oxfam
Ed Schenkenberg, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

**Global Cluster Staff**
Natalia Pascual, Norwegian Refugee Council, Global CCM Cluster
Josephine Ippe, Unicef, Global Nutrition Cluster
Edith Cheung, Unicef, Global Nutrition Cluster
Jane Lawry-White, Unicef, Global Coordinator, GBV AoR
Graham Saunders, IFRC, Global Shelter Cluster
Graham Farmer, FAO, Global Food Security Cluster Coordinator

Wendy Wheaton, Save the Children, Knowledge Management Advisor Global Education Cluster
Ellen Van Kalmthout, Unicef, Global Education co-lead
Franck Bouvet, Unicef, Global WASH Cluster Deputy Coordinator
Annex 2: Terms of Reference

*Mapping of NGO Humanitarian Coordination Training Initiatives*

*Consultant/Individual Contractor*

*Requesting Office: OCHA-HCSS*

**Objectives and Targets (Specific Functions of Consultant/Individual Contractor)**

**Overall Objective:** To contribute to a better understanding of key training and capacity building initiatives within the humanitarian community—with an emphasis on NGOs—that focus on strengthening capacity on humanitarian coordination architecture and mechanisms. The data will help identify gaps in training provision and allow humanitarian actors to design and implement more effective and targeted training programs for NGO staff and partner organizations.

**Specific Objective:** Undertake a mapping and analysis of existing and/or planned training initiatives on humanitarian reform (including cluster approach, humanitarian architecture and mechanisms, humanitarian leadership, overall coordination skills) that are accessible to and targeted at NGOs.

**Tangible and measurable outputs of the work assignment**

*Produce an easy to use and practical matrix outlining the main training initiatives on humanitarian coordination architecture and mechanisms delivered to NGOs (4-5 weeks)*

Data to be collected includes:

- main organizations involved in NGO humanitarian coordination training, including key contacts (individual international or local NGOs, NGO consortia, UN agencies, private consulting firms, etc)
- types and length of training (e.g. in person, web-based tools, etc.)
- whether training is on-going or ad-hoc (i.e. part of a stand-alone training program or provided)
- types of training materials developed (manuals, DVDs, web modules, etc)
- main themes being captured (4 key areas of focus in the trainings)
- locations of the training sessions (international, regional, local, sub-national?)
- beneficiaries (international NGOs staff, local NGOs staff, HQ staff, field staff)

Following compilation of data, produce concise and practical analysis on the key gaps in humanitarian coordination training (1.5 week)

- Analysis to include identified gaps regarding content, geographical coverage, beneficiaries

Produce summary analysis on “best practices” for training on humanitarian coordination architecture and mechanisms. (1.5 week)

- Analysis to include (key considerations in designing and carrying out NGO training on humanitarian coordination architecture and mechanisms, best practices for INGO and local NGO training)

**Key interlocutors**

- Key correspondents include OCHA-HCSS, Global Cluster Coordinators, Cross-Cutting Issues focal points, INGOs, INGO consortia, local NGO consortia, etc.
Annex 3: Bibliography


Global WASH Cluster (2009) WASH Accountability Resources: Ask, Listen, Communicate, prepared by Oxfam on behalf of the WASH Cluster (internet). Available at [http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project14Accountability.aspx](http://oneresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Water%20Sanitation%20Hygiene/Pages/Project14Accountability.aspx)


