TARY COORDINATION SYSTEMS
EFFECTIVELY / /IMPROVING / CLAR
OLES OF THE DIFFERENT ELEMEN
COORDINATION SYSTEM / INCRI
MOUNT AND QUALITY OF TRAINI
VE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SUBNAT
INATION / HUMANITARIAN/ INCRI
RTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE OF NAT
OCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATI
ITARIAN COORDINATION / IMPF
MATION MANAGEMENT CREATING CC
IC COORDINATION MECHANISI
ASING MUTUAL TRUST AMONG AGE
LOW FOR NON-DIRECTIVE, VOLU
INATION SYSTEMS THAT

Improving Humanitarian Coordination

Themes and recommendations from the ALNAP meeting
'Working together to improve humanitarian coordination',
July 2016

Paul Knox Clarke and Leah Campbell

ALNAPWORKINGPAPER
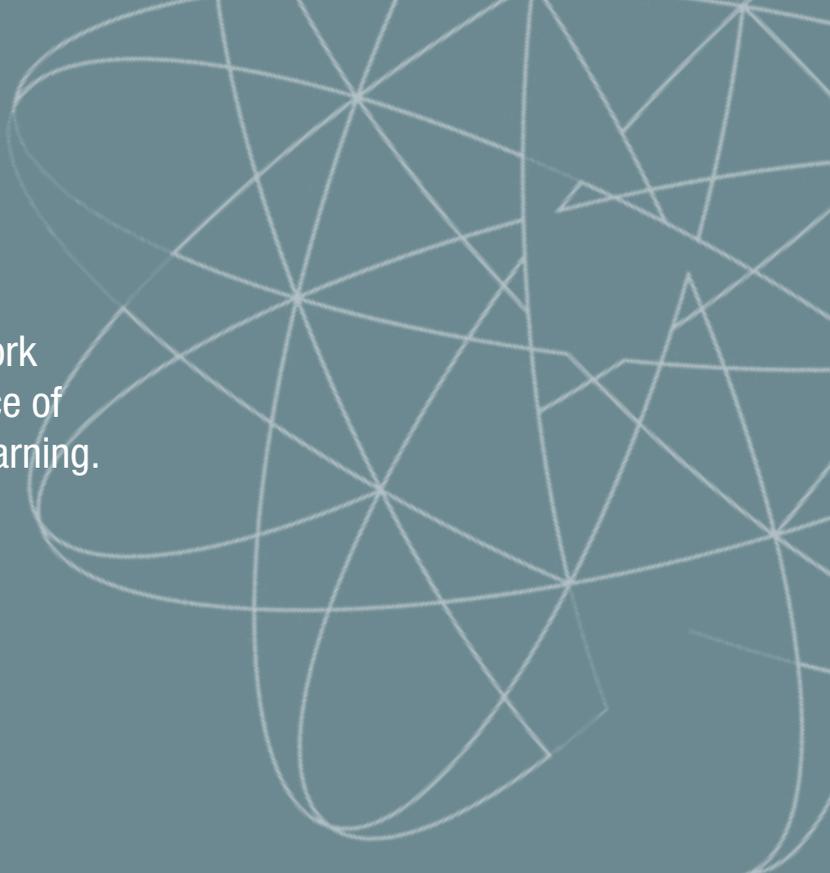
ALNAP is a unique system-wide network dedicated to improving the performance of humanitarian action through shared learning.

www.alnap.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
CAR	Central African Republic
CLA	Cluster Lead Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GPPI	Global Public Policy Institute
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
HXL	Humanitarian Exchange Language
IAHE	Inter Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICC	Inter-Cluster Coordination
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IM	Information Management
INGO	International NGO
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification System
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNGO	National NGO
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
SOHS	State of the Humanitarian System
SRP	Strategic Response Plan
UN	United Nations
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNMEER	UN Mission for Emergency Ebola Response
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About this report

This report is the output of the ALNAP meeting: '*Working together to improve humanitarian coordination*', held in London on 30 June and 1 July 2016. The meeting was part of a programme of research aimed at improving the effectiveness of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Cluster-based humanitarian coordination system. This report summarises the main themes and recommendations of that meeting, and is informed by additional interviews and literature review.

How effective is the current model of coordination?

At present, the coordination system seems to be fairly effective in enhancing cooperation to prevent gaps and overlaps, and at supporting good practice on the ground. However, it is less good at addressing 'strategic', response-wide issues. The Clusters are generally seen as being more effective than Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), Inter-Cluster Coordination (ICC) mechanisms and subnational coordination activities.

The overall design of the IASC Cluster-led coordination mechanism

The current model of coordination, as expressed in much of the formal guidance, aims to create and manage a single, overarching plan for humanitarian operations in a country. In this model, coordination is directive. It has a strong element of control, and the coordination mechanism aims to determine and regulate the activities of individual agencies. The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), in particular, tends to support this directive model of coordination. However, this directive coordination is difficult to achieve in a voluntary grouping of independent organisations, and in many places the coordination mechanisms appear to work best when they move away from a control approach to a more cooperative one: encouraging and supporting voluntary cooperation and alignment of activities around broadly defined common goals. The danger of this 'looser' approach to coordination is that individual agencies might base their activities on their organisational capacities and interests, rather than on the needs of the affected population.

> '...directive coordination is difficult to achieve in a voluntary grouping of independent organisations...'

This lack of clarity around the exact role and purpose of the coordination system as a whole is reflected in the various elements of the system. There is often a lack of clarity between the relative roles of the HCT, the ICC mechanism, Clusters and subnational coordination bodies. This can lead to duplication of coordination functions, key activities not being undertaken and conflict between different parts of the structure. The problem of role definition appears to be particularly acute at the inter-Cluster level. Subnational coordination, which has great potential to improve the effectiveness

of operations, is often an 'afterthought', and is particularly under-resourced.

There is widespread frustration that the coordination model is often applied mechanistically, and is not generally adapted to national contexts. Taking a 'cookie-cutter' approach to the coordination structure results in existing government and civil society coordination mechanisms being ignored, which in turn contributes to the exclusion and side-lining of national and local capacity.

There are also concerns that the sector-based approach to coordination, exemplified by the Clusters, is not the best method for addressing the complex, multi-sectoral needs of affected people. As multi-purpose cash programming (which is by nature cross sectoral) becomes more common, the sectoral approach becomes more problematic. Whilst there are still a number of compelling reasons for using a sectoral structure at national level, alternative structures may be particularly appropriate for subnational coordination.

'Existing country-level coordination systems are not good at facilitating the inclusion of national civil society actors.'

The role of national actors in the coordination mechanism

While there is general agreement – both from arguments of principle, and from arguments of pragmatism – that the 'default' model of coordination should be one that is led by the government of the affected state, this seldom occurs. Humanitarians may default to the model they know, or may try to avoid the state where it is contributing to the humanitarian crisis. However, states are not monolithic, and in many situations there are possibilities to work closely with line ministries or other parts of government, even where the government is engaged in internal conflicts. Where even this is not possible, coordination models should be designed to align with government structures to the degree possible, to allow for government ownership at a later date.

Where the state is willing to coordinate in an impartial way, but lacks capacity, a different set of challenges emerges. A key challenge is deciding who determines what 'capacity' means and measures actors against these criteria. It is important to separate capacity to respond from capacity to coordinate: even if the state cannot respond directly, it should still retain the right to oversee coordination.

Existing country-level coordination systems are not good at facilitating the inclusion of national civil society actors. There are a number of reasons for this, including a lack of understanding of the system on the part of national actors; limited incentives for national actor participation; concerns that national actors may not act in an impartial manner; location of coordination meetings and the language used at these meetings; and unclear membership criteria for Clusters and HCTs. It is not clear whether membership should be based on actual capacity to respond, or on potential, and what the role of the coordination system should be in building capacity.

Information management and coordination

A core activity for any coordination system is information management (IM). Currently, the IM activities that occur within the coordination system appear to fit the 'top-down' and directive logic (although, as noted above, this logic tends not to work in practice) of the IASC coordination mechanism. Information flows upwards, but does not generally flow well horizontally across the system. Much IM aims at meeting the 'high-level' information needs of those 'in control' (HCTs, HQs and donors). There is only limited focus on managing information that might be of 'operational' use, and that would allow organisations to cooperate more effectively in activities on the ground. This may be a result of 'powerful people getting what they want', or of information being 'tools-led' rather than 'needs-led', or of IM systems running on default, and not trying to identify the most important information for the response.

Despite the concentration on 'strategic information', a key type of strategic information is lacking. While the coordination system spends a significant amount of time collecting information on needs, it seldom updates this to see how activities are affecting needs, and how needs are developing over time. As a result, decisions at all levels are made without a good understanding of how well the response is working, what should be supported and what should be done differently.

Effective IM is made more difficult by the reluctance of many agencies to share information with one another. Even where information is shared, different agencies use incompatible formats: different definitions, levels of aggregation and indicators. Efforts to create joint IM tools that are used by all actors have not been particularly successful in many cases.
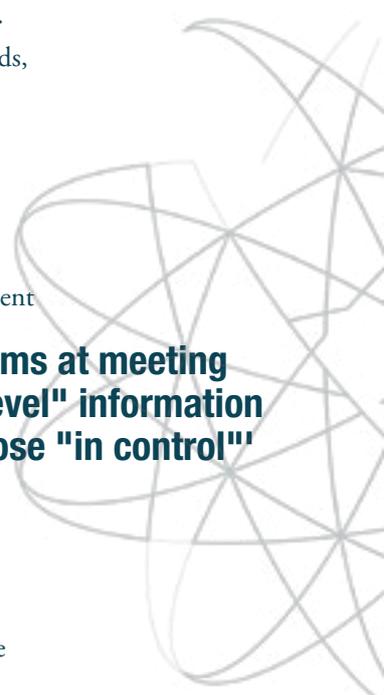
'Much IM aims at meeting the "high-level" information needs of those "in control"'

Constraints to change

Few of these observations are new. Participants suggested a number of reasons why changes and improvements in these areas have not already taken place. These include a disinclination to change a system that has already required so much investment to achieve its current levels of performance, and a desire among many humanitarians to create a more 'efficient' command and control-style system, despite the structural difficulties (some might say near impossibility) of doing so. There are also powerful organisational incentives for retaining the current system. The system is tied to funding: activation of the 'full' coordination system guarantees funding that may not otherwise be available. And a 'top-down' system is felt to serve the interests of the people 'at the top', who tend to have more power and influence. More prosaically, humanitarians at country level do not feel they have the time, or in some cases the necessary skills, to consciously design the coordination system and the IM mechanisms that support it to meet the country context, and so tend to default to the 'standard' model.

Recommendations

Participants at the meeting generated a number of recommendations to address the issues outlined above. They then prioritised these recommendations, and created more detailed recommendations for those seen as top priorities:

- creating context-specific coordination mechanisms

- increasing mutual trust among agencies, to allow for non-directive, voluntary coordination systems that work effectively

- clarifying the roles of the different elements of the coordination system

- increasing the amount and quality of training to improve the effectiveness of subnational coordination

- increasing the participation and influence of national and local civil society organisations in humanitarian coordination

- improving information management

See **Section 10** for further detail on these recommendations.

1. INTRODUCTION

In any situation where different organisations work alongside each other in emergency conditions, the potential for confusion, conflict and duplication is high. This is particularly true in the humanitarian system, where there are often a large number of different organisations, with differing mandates and missions, speaking a variety of languages, responding to the same crisis. As the number of actors in the humanitarian sector has grown, and the size, ambition and complexity of responses have increased, it has become increasingly important to establish ways of ensuring coordination among the many actors often engaged in a response. Given this, the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) made coordination one of the three pillars of the system-wide Transformative Agenda in 2011. Five years on, and in the wake of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), this paper considers specific areas related to humanitarian coordination conducted by the IASC Cluster-led coordination system at country level, and makes recommendations as to how to further improve coordination.

This paper is organised into 10 sections. Section 2 explores the process this paper fits into. Sections 3 and 4 examine whether coordination is effective in humanitarian crises today and what can be done to improve it. Section 5 explores ways to resource coordination. Sections 6 and 7 explore the role of government and national civil society in humanitarian coordination. Section 8 considers information management. Section 9 looks at challenges involved in improvement, and, finally, Section 10 presents recommendations and next steps resulting from this process.

2. PROCESS

Humanitarian coordination has been one of ALNAP's focus areas since 2013. The topic emerged as important in ALNAP's work on a number of issues, including humanitarian leadership, the role of national disaster management agencies (NDMAs) and the ongoing State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS). In 2015, we published our first research on coordination: the series *Exploring Coordination in Humanitarian Clusters*. ALNAP then presented and discussed this report at a number of meetings of the Global Clusters, and with a number of other colleagues closely engaged in humanitarian action, as well as with a number of experts with academic and emergency management backgrounds. As a result of these discussions, we decided to expand the scope of the work from the Clusters to the coordination system as a whole, and to focus on four areas of common concern:

• decision-making and the overall design of humanitarian coordination

• the role of national government, and of national civil society

• information management

• inter-Cluster and subnational levels of coordination

ALNAP then conducted interviews with 70 people and carried out extensive literature reviews on these topics. These fed into four briefing papers, five videos and three webinars in the first half of 2016 that explored these issues further, and identified specific challenges within these broad areas. At the end of June 2016, ALNAP convened the meeting '*Working together to improve humanitarian coordination*', at which 45 key thinkers, practitioners and decision-makers working on coordination within and beyond the humanitarian sector (see Annex B for a list of participants) discussed these four areas and made recommendations for improvement. During the meeting, discussions were recorded; they were later transcribed and coded using MaxQda software.

'This paper is based on that meeting, ALNAP's previous work on Cluster coordination, and on the additional interviews and literature reviews.'

This paper is based on that meeting. It also draws on ALNAP's previous work on Cluster coordination, and on the additional interviews and literature reviews. It quotes extensively from the meeting and the interviews.[1]

The paper outlines the current situation with regard to the IASC Cluster-based humanitarian coordination system, concentrating on the four areas of concern outlined above. It identifies constraints to change and presents the recommendations made by participants at the meeting.

---

1   As the meeting was held under Chatham House rules, and as the interviews were held on the understanding of anonymity, the quotes given here are anonymous. Where specific quotes are used, it is to illustrate a much larger number of quotes making the same point on the same topic.

3. OVERALL, IS HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION EFFECTIVE?

Given the number and diversity of humanitarian actors in many crisis-affected situations, the potential for wasteful duplication, confusion and contradictory approaches is obviously high: one meeting participant described this as a potential 'second emergency': 'There are two disasters – the earthquake, and the help [from poorly coordinated humanitarian organisations].' There seems to be a very good *a priori* case for some form of country-level coordination, and interviewees and meeting participants consistently underlined the need for coordination.[1] The question, then, is whether the current model of coordination is effective.

1   Although this admittedly represents a group of people who have an interest in coordination, and so who would be expected to support the broad principle of coordinated activity.
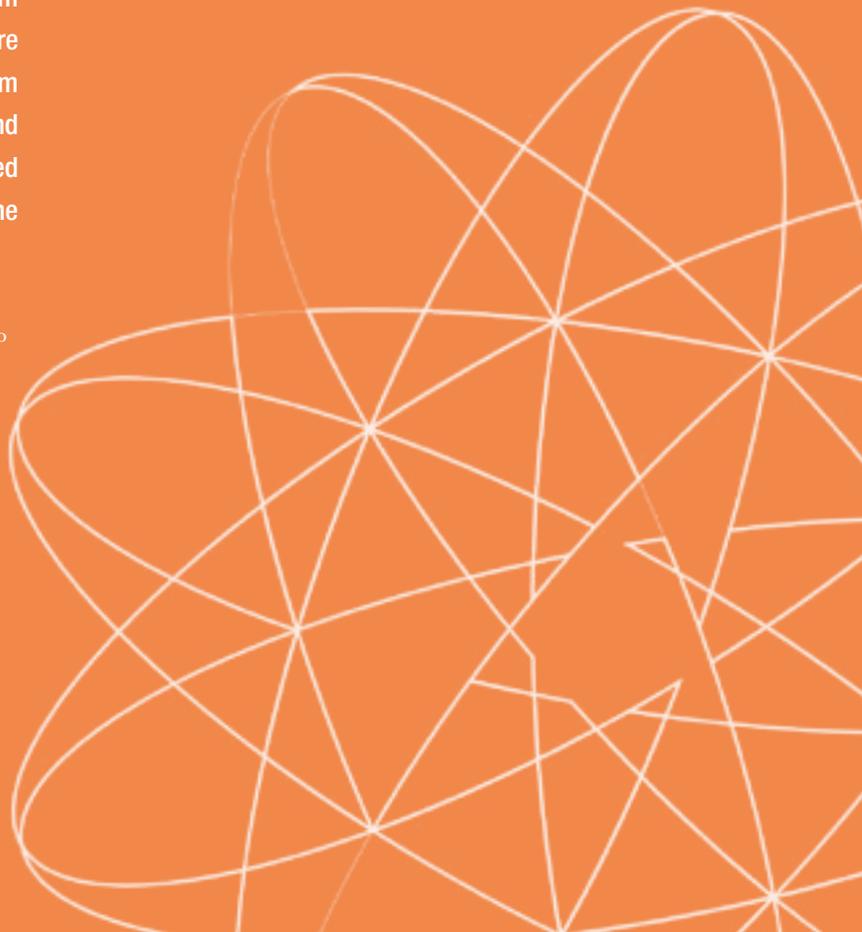
This research did not set out to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the current IASC coordination model, and so we have not collected data, for example, on the current financial costs of implementing the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)/Inter-Cluster Coordination (ICC)/Cluster model. However, as interviewees, meeting participants and recent evaluations all considered the issue to some degree, it is worth recording some observations here (while recognising that they are not based on a fully representative sample) to – at least partially – frame the discussion on improving coordination.

The picture on effectiveness is mixed. A number of interviewees suggested that, in situations where the Cluster-based system had not been officially instituted (such as Turkey), international actors had largely recreated it, suggesting it is an appropriate, 'best fit' model.

In addition, where an alternative approach was attempted in Sierra Leone in response to the Ebola crisis, coordination was described by one interviewee as 'awful... there are no words for how poorly it was being done'. Evaluations broadly suggested the Cluster-based system may have been more effective: the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Interim Ebola Assessment Panel concluded that the UNMEER (UN Mission for Emergency Ebola Response)-led system did not 'constitute the appropriate model mechanism for managing future large-scale health emergencies' (Stocking et al., 2015, p.24) and suggested that 'when a crisis is contained within a country then the current model of humanitarian coordination may be adequate' (ibid.). When the Clusters were instituted in Liberia, 'the response was tidier, more information flowed and everyone had a better sense of where they fit in' (senior UN staff member quoted in Dubois et al., 2015).

The great majority of evaluations that address the performance of Clusters suggest they are an effective mechanism for information-sharing, for disseminating good practice and for preventing duplication of effort in operations (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015).[2] A slightly smaller number suggest they are also effective in ensuring response gaps are filled. Interviewees generally felt that, while there was significant room for improvement and very great variation from one Cluster, and one country, to the next, the Clusters are fairly effective in this form of 'operational' coordination.

The other main elements of the IASC country coordination system appear to be less effective. Again, there was diversity of opinion on this topic, and there will be a lot of variation between one country and the next: one interviewee described his surprise at finding that the HCT was 'rather efficient', and other interviewees, albeit in a minority, shared this view. However, the general picture from interviews and evaluations is that HCTs are not identifying priority issues, and are not successfully providing leadership in 'agreeing on common strategic issues related to humanitarian action in-country' (IASC, 2009, p.2) or 'agreeing on common policies related to humanitarian action in-country' (ibid.). Discussions are often 'routine or mundane'. A review of recent Inter Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) of 'Level 3' responses suggests that the HCT in Somalia 'misread the crisis' and that this 'led to insufficient urgency, an inappropriate strategy and a late response' (Slim, 2012, p.5); the HCT in the Central African Republic (CAR) 'did not function well

2   Citing Jespersen (2009); Neseni and Guzha (2009); Achakzai et al. (2011); Beúnza (2011); Humphries (2013); Steets et al. (2014). See also Clarke et al. (2015); Lawday et al. (2016).

'Interviews and meeting participants tended to see formal inter-Cluster coordination structures as "weak" and "ineffective"'

for most of the period'; and the South Sudan HCT's 'leadership of the response was not sufficient' (Lawday et al., 2016, p.8). In the Philippines, while the HCT created and effectively advocated good humanitarian policies, it 'was slow to take action' (Hanley et al., 2014, p.ix). The majority of interviewees in a recent Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI) study 'questioned the effectiveness of the HCT as a strategic planning and decision-making body' and felt many HCT meetings 'were poorly facilitated and mainly served as information-sharing exercises' (Krueger et al., 2016, p.20).

Similarly, interviews and meeting participants (with only a few exceptions) tended to see formal inter-Cluster coordination structures as 'weak' and 'ineffective', too focused on bureaucratic processes and seemingly unsure of their function. Again, this view is reflected in recent evaluations and research (Clarke et al., 2015; Krueger et al., 2016; Lawday et al., 2016). Interviewees also suggested, however, that the inter-Cluster function was potentially the most difficult element of the coordination architecture to get right, because it works against the sectoral logic of the current system and because it can only be as good as its parts: in order to work well, all of the Clusters in the country need to work well, and this is not always the case.

The general picture, then, is that, while the current coordination system is often effective in enhancing cooperation and supporting good practice on the ground, it is less good at addressing strategic, response-wide issues. The elements of the system that address operational 'gaps and overlaps' – primarily the Clusters – work better than those with strategic roles across the response. While some expressed their frustration, having 'asked and asked' for improvements, and having concluded that these improvements were not going to happen, and others warned against expecting perfection from systems that operate in confusing, chaotic situations, the general sense of the meeting was that improvement is not only desirable but also possible.
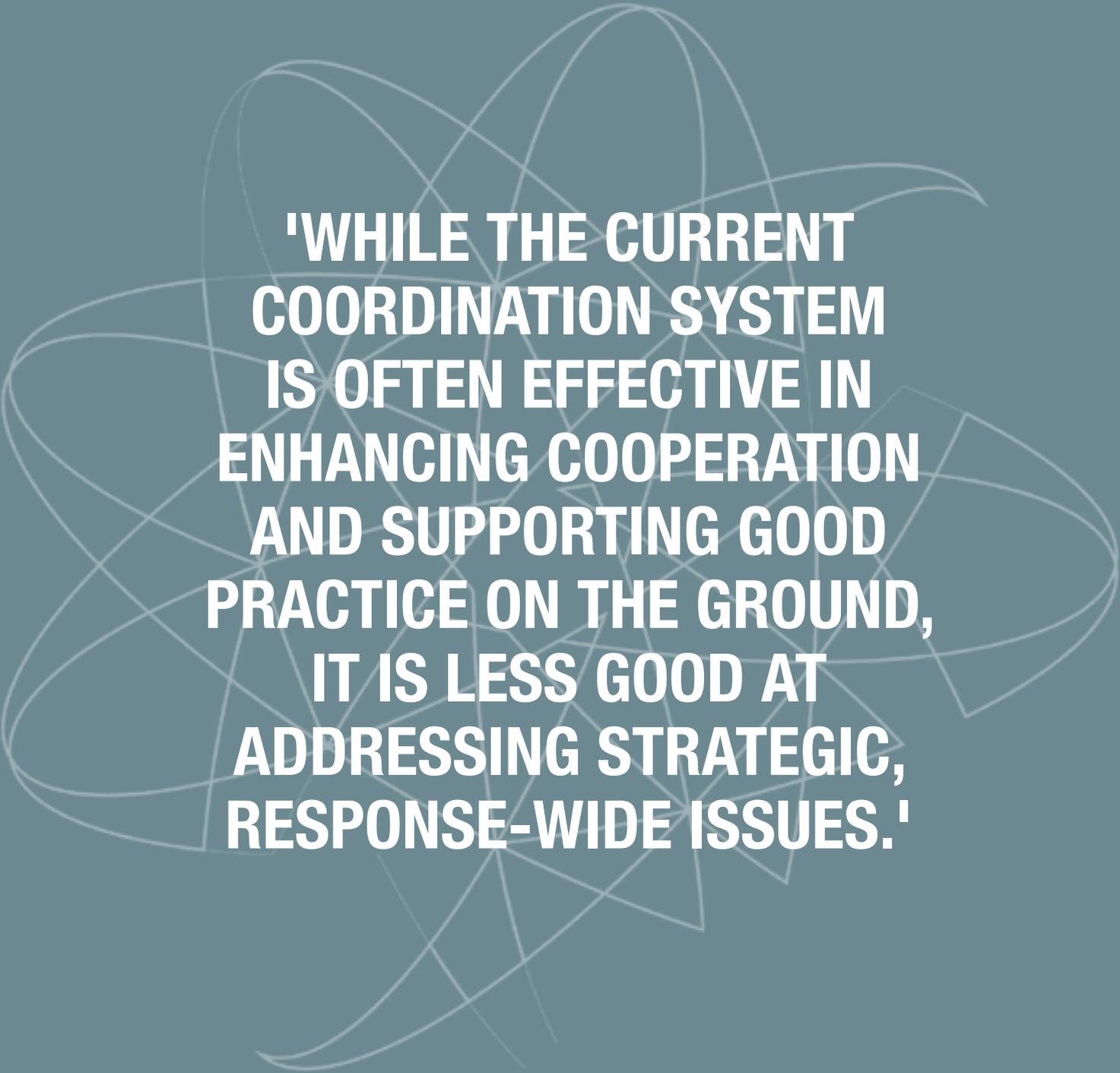
'WHILE THE CURRENT
COORDINATION SYSTEM
IS OFTEN EFFECTIVE IN
ENHANCING COOPERATION
AND SUPPORTING GOOD
PRACTICE ON THE GROUND,
IT IS LESS GOOD AT
ADDRESSING STRATEGIC,
RESPONSE-WIDE ISSUES.'
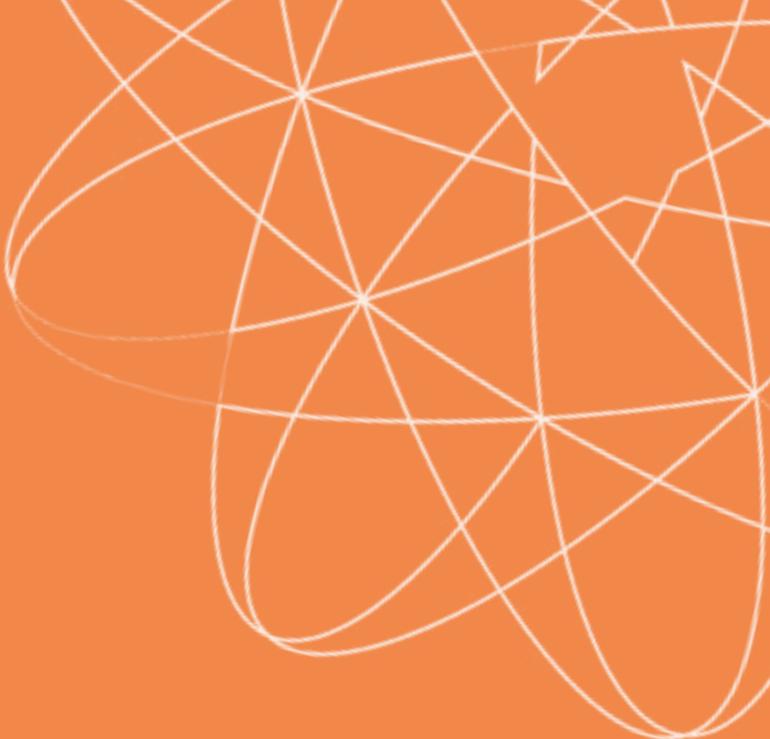
4. HOW CAN WE DESIGN A MORE EFFECTIVE COORDINATION SYSTEM?

The overarching message of the meeting was that, rather than using the current model for coordination in all circumstances, more attention should be given to the design of coordination systems, so that they:

- fulfil a clear and agreed role, based on a common understanding of 'coordination'

- are composed of elements (Clusters, ICC, HCT or similar) that have differentiated and complementary jobs to do, and that have clear mechanisms for communicating between themselves

- are able to adapt to different country contexts – and particularly to the presence of government coordination systems and to civil society mechanisms – and to different contexts over time

There was also some discussion as to whether the current design should be replaced by systems based on a non-sectoral, or non-centralised, logic.

4.1 Clarity around the meaning of 'coordination': what is the coordination system designed to do?

It is an oft-repeated truism of organisational design that form follows function – that the ideal shape of a structure depends on the job it is meant to do. In the context of humanitarian coordination, this should be simple: the coordination system exists to coordinate. The problem here is that, as meeting participants said, 'Coordination, that term, has gone through so many different kinds of definitions… it's taken on a life of its own'; 'Coordination means 100 different things to 100 different people.' Different stakeholders have different expectations of coordination, and subsequently different ideas as to how coordination structures can be improved.

Aligning disparate activities, or directing a single plan?

Previous work by ALNAP has considered these different meanings of coordination in the humanitarian context (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015). In particular, this work proposes

'Different stakeholders have different expectations of coordination, and subsequently different ideas as to how coordination structures can be improved.'

that there is a difference between 'alignment', which involves the coordination of autonomous projects, planned separately, through mutual agreement and negotiation, and 'collaboration', which involves the creation of a single, unified plan (generally in a fairly 'top-down' way) and the management of various agencies within this plan. The two approaches can perhaps best be understood by the difference between 'coordinating' and 'being coordinated'. The first tends to put a premium on autonomy and voluntary agreement, the second on direction and control.

A major challenge for the humanitarian coordination system is that it is not clear, or agreed, which of these forms of coordination it exists to support.

A system designed to create and direct a single plan?

Guidance issued by the IASC – on the functions of HCTs (IASC, 2009) and Clusters (IASC, 2015), and on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) (IASC, 2015) – suggests the current structure is expected to create and implement a single, centralised strategy – in other words, that 'coordination' is being interpreted in its more directive sense.

A number of meeting participants and interviewees suggested this was not the purpose for which the system had originally been designed: rather, it was created to 'fill some gaps. It was never created to coordinate the whole response, which it has become.' Several argued that the system should return to the 'original', looser approach: '[We should] not attempt to harmonise everything, because it's the nature of our work, it's based on diversity of organisations, of philosophy…'

At the same time, a minority felt strongly that 'You should have a central authority… making decisions for everybody' and that 'You can't have coordination in chaos; you need command and

control.' It would appear this latter view has also been the working assumption of at least some recent evaluations of humanitarian action: the IAHE of the Typhoon Haiyan response suggests that, in future, 'agencies need to maintain Cluster discipline within a collective response' (Hanley et al., 2014, p.60).

A more centralised approach also appears to be the working assumption on which the HPC has been established. In the HPC, information is provided to the HCT, which is then meant to decide the strategy and priorities for a joint response in the Strategic Response Plan (SRP). These priorities then guide agency programming and donor funding.

The drawbacks of a directive approach: directing without authority

The majority of participants and interviewees who discussed this question, however – including a number who favoured a more directive approach in principle – agreed that 'You'll never get everyone around one table following one song sheet. I don't think that's feasible, nor pragmatic.' Coordination is – and, barring huge structural change in the sector, will be – a voluntary activity. 'The HC [Humanitarian Coordinator] does not have power, authority over NGOs [non-governmental organisations] [or] UN agencies'; nor does the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) 'have the mandate or the authority to direct everyone to be part of a common system.' In situations where the government of the affected state has the capacity and willingness to make adherence to a single, common plan a condition of working in the country, a more unitary and directive form of coordination might be possible: however, this is currently uncommon.

'You'll never get everyone around one table following one song sheet. I don't think that's feasible, nor pragmatic.'

As neither the HC nor the HCT as a collective has authority over operational agencies, the strategic plan they develop often does not inform programming to any significant extent, and so is widely seen as an 'inefficient burden' (Lawday et al., 2016, p.v), 'completely nonsensical' and 'mechanical'. Among many interviewees, there was a perception that the processes of the HPC take up much of the HCT's time but are hardly used – echoing the findings of earlier ALNAP work, and of other research and recent evaluations on the topic (Clarke et al., 2015; Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015; Krueger et al., 2016; Lawday et al., 2016).

These strategies might be more effective in guiding operations if major donors were prepared to channel all funds through the agreed single plan, as this would create very strong financial incentives to follow the strategy and 'be coordinated'. One meeting participant explained, 'The only reason we do it [coordination], is because the donors told us they won't fund us unless we're part of a common something.' However, this happens rarely. 'The donors don't coordinate between themselves' and in some cases 'say, "Look, we just want you to bloody well do it, walk over others, don't worry about it, just push forward."' As a result, 'When you just go and look at the financial tracking and you

see that many operations, 50% is outside the HRP [Humanitarian Response Plan]… [you think], "Why bother? You want us to work together, 50% of the money goes outside this anyway, so why bother?"' Donors, for their part, report that they would in principle be ' willing to make sure that all of [their] funding goes through the HRP' but are often not satisfied with the quality or the timing of the common plans. It is possible that this situation may be addressed as part of the Grand Bargain, leading to greater alignment between donors themselves and between donors and country teams. But it is worth remembering that, just as with the operational agencies, donor organisations have their own priorities and their own accountabilities, and, just as with the operational agencies, their participation in any joint process is voluntary.

The 'reality' of coordination: aligning disparate activities?

At present, then, while some actors may want to see the coordination system exercise greater control, most also acknowledge that the HCT 'rarely if ever' creates a single plan that operational agencies then follow. Rather, the plan tends to reflect, rather than define, the priorities and programmes of UN agencies and NGOs. As one HCT member explained, 'I think at best we go for loose alignment… a number of agencies have their quite strong country programmes and direction, so the ability for us to shape and focus humanitarian action based on what's decided at the HCT alone… it's not really like that… To make an analogy, people are bringing their picnics to the meal and they're sort of, eating in front of us, and we're gradually driving it, rather than setting up the menu and the recipes.'

This very much echoes the findings of previous ALNAP work with the Clusters (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015). It also echoes one of the most highly rated recommendations of the 2015 Global Forum for Improving Humanitarian Action, that 'Donors and UN agencies incentivise enhanced communications within and between organisations, reciprocal learning and devolved decision-making authority' (Knox Clarke and Obrecht, 2015, p.100) In the previous paper, we also suggested that this 'bringing a picnic' approach is not necessarily bad – a strategy built up from the multiple

'...the HCT 'rarely if ever' creates a single plan that operational agencies then follow.'

interactions of different agencies with needs on the ground may be more relevant and flexible than one that is centrally determined and 'imposed down'. However, this is true only to the degree that the individual agency plans, projects and programmes *are* actually driven by needs on the ground and not by, for example, agency interests.

The drawbacks of an alignment approach: supply-driven responses

Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case in many situations. A large number of interviewees and participants made the point that, 'Even in establishing the broad response priorities… thinking is being driven by the mandate and the supply side of what the organisations can do.' Where resources

'Before investing more in the coordination system, it is important to clarify what this system is expected to actually do.'

are then put behind these objectives, they are often 'seen as a portion of cheese that we have to share [instead of] need-based allocation... it's become that, "Okay, my agency should have this level."' 'Agencies [often] do not challenge each other' on this; when they do, those agencies that do not receive resources are able to walk away from joint agreements –participants and interviewees suggested that in many Clusters and HCTs there is only limited tracking of decisions and action points, and little sense of mutual accountability. As a result, 'The mandates and the interests of the agencies unfortunately often prevail over the common vision.'

Under these circumstances, a strategy that reflects, rather than directs, response activities risks allowing 'a patchwork of activities which together make no sense, [and are] completely... convenience-led. Where is it easier to work? Where is it more politically relevant? Where is it more visible? And that may have nothing to do with where are the biggest needs.'

To a degree, this 'supply-driven' orientation reflects agency self-interest. However, it may also reflect a lack of information about needs, and particularly about evolving and emerging needs. While the quality of needs assessments has steadily increased over the past decade (Knox Clarke and Darcy, 2014), some donors remain wary of agency-led assessments, fearing they are based more on agency interest than on real need. Assessment quality can also vary across sectors. As a result, the Grand Bargain process aims at 'a single, comprehensive, cross-sectoral, methodologically sound and impartial overall assessment' (WHS, 2016, p.8).

However, this approach is still focused very much on the provision of information 'upfront' for programme design, and does not address the ongoing provision of information on how the response is addressing needs, how these needs are evolving and whether new needs are emerging. This is problematic, as it was precisely this latter type of information that several HCT members suggested was the key to making operations more needs-based: 'What we struggle to have is a kind of proactive analysis of the situation. We do a joint assessment and then it looks like, "Okay, we have done the assessment, each of the partners should go his own way and do his business," and we lack the sense of, "I should continuously check what is going on"'(see also Global Clusters, 2015).

'...thinking is being driven by the mandate and the supply side of what the organisations can do.'

Choosing the most realistic approach?

At present, it appears that the humanitarian system must choose between a directive model of humanitarian coordination that is not actually possible given the current structure of humanitarian action and a looser model based of coordinating autonomous activities that is not desirable because

it can be hijacked by agency interests, and so fail to meet real needs. Further, the humanitarian structure has increasingly been designed as if it were going to do the first, more directive, type of coordination, while in practice it actually does the second.

This is not an academic concern. The structures, processes and guidance required to successfully direct a single, unitary response are very different from those required to coordinate a looser alignment of programmes. Before investing more in the coordination system, it is important to clarify what this system is expected to actually do.

The majority of interviewees and participants in the London meeting who considered this question felt that, given current realities (humanitarian aid is provided by a large number of autonomous organisations, and is paid for by diverse donors), a unitary, directive approach to coordination was probably not possible. As a result, change efforts should be directed towards making the system better at coordinating diverse programmes. The preferred model seems to be one where agency programmes are based more closely on needs, and the country-level objectives, strategy and priorities are then developed to reflect these programmes. The outcomes of programmes are monitored, to identify whether needs are actually being met, and agencies – voluntarily – base their subsequent programming on the emerging country-level picture.

Related recommendations

The meeting developed the following recommendations to address the situation outlined above:

- **Recommendation set 5:** increasing mutual trust among agencies, to allow for non-directive, voluntary coordination systems that work effectively.

- **Additional recommendation 1:** reconsidering the HPC to make it 'lighter', freeing up time and resources for more operational coordination.

- **Additional recommendation 2:** developing approaches to monitoring context and outcomes – the ICC should collate monitoring data and have a continuously updated 'picture' of the response, showing what is working and what is not. This is fed to the HCT to help determine overall direction and priorities.

See **Section 10** for further detail on these and other recommendations.

4.2 Decision-making and roles across the coordination system

A further weakness with the design of the current system – pointed out repeatedly in interviews and at the London meeting – is lack of clarity over the respective roles of the HCT, ICC and the Clusters. This point has also been made in a number of research papers and evaluations (Bennett et al., 2006; Hobbs et al., 2012; Lawday et al., 2016). It is often unclear who should be providing information to whom, and which decisions should be made where.

Confusion over roles in the coordination system

This may well be – at least in part – a reflection of the confusion over the ultimate role of the coordination system (see Section 4.1). It is difficult to design the elements if the purpose of the whole is unclear. Meeting participants suggested this lack of clarity might also reflect:

- Lack of clarity within individual agencies: the organisations that participate in the coordination architecture lack clarity about roles and responsibilities within their own organisational structures, which is then duplicated in the Cluster, ICC and HCT

- differing structures: organisations have different decision-making structures, which makes it difficult to connect them to a single, common structure

- necessary ambiguity: in some situations, humanitarian actors may not wish other stakeholders (and particularly forces engaged in a conflict) to be clear as to exactly where decisions are made, to prevent unwelcome pressure being brought to bear on particular groups or individuals and

- avoiding blame: a desire to avoid being ultimately responsible for decisions that might have extreme consequences

The result is, 'The system still doesn't work as an integral system… the pieces are not to be made up as a parcel yet.' This can lead to duplication of coordination functions, key activities not being undertaken and conflict between different parts – and particularly between ICC and the HCT. In some cases, it is 'hard to discern what was driving the response; in other words, which single coordination body was actively in command'.

'...a weakness with the design of the current system... is lack of clarity over respective roles.'

The role of the HCT

While there is general agreement that the HCT should – in line with IASC guidance (IASC, 2009) – be 'strategic', it is not always clear what this means in practice. As noted above, a number of interviewees felt HCTs spent too much time on the SRP, which was not really strategic in terms of providing high-level guidance for action, and too little time on immediate and emerging issues that affected the activities of many of the agencies in the response. Interviewees also complained that some

'HCTs... spend too little time on immediate and emerging issues'

HCTs spent too much time on information exchange, and not enough making decisions, and that, particularly at the peak of crisis, some HCTs became too obsessed with detail that would be better left to ICC. Current and former members of HCTs suggested different members of an HCT might have very different ideas as to what the role of the HCT was.

To the degree that there was agreement on the role of the HCT, it was that they should:

- debate and agree on policy and guidance on issues that involved the response as a whole: these would typically be issues occurring across the country (rather than in specific areas) and/or affecting multiple sectors (and so going beyond the strategic competency of a Cluster) and/or related to fundamental humanitarian principles (e.g. access to crisis-affected people)[1]

- negotiate/advocate on these issues with central government, non-state authorities, donors and other international (peacebuilding and development) actors and

- develop some version of an annual/multi annual 'country plan' that was lighter than the current SRP

Some meeting participants and interviewees felt the HCT should also be clear that it did not aim to address all humanitarian issues in the country, nor to work as the 'highest authority', and that many issues (those that do not touch on principles or the overall response) would probably best be addressed bilaterally – between a particular donor and agency, or an agency and government, for example.

The role of Inter-Cluster Coordination mechanisms

Inter-Cluster Coordination (ICC) is a fundamental element of the effective coordination of any response: 'for ensuring cohesiveness of the humanitarian response, the relationships between Clusters are as important as the relationships within them' (Steets et al., 2010). It is also an area that has been identified in the literature as needing significant improvement (De Silva et al., 2006; Stoddard et al., 2007; Young et al., 2007; Kauffman and Kruger, 2010; Steets et al., 2010; Humphries, 2013; Darcy et al., 2012; Polastro et al., 2011; Campbell, 2015; Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015; STAIT, 2015; Krueger et al., 2016). Meeting participants agreed, with many sharing the sentiment that current ICC activities are 'duplicatory and unproductive'.

However, while it is clear that, in many cases, ICC is not working, it is not really clear or agreed what the role and priorities of ICC should be. This makes it difficult to determine what should be

---

1   Further examples of this type of issue include use of escorts; positioning of camps for displaced people; relations with *de facto* authorities; actions that might negatively affect the safety or welfare of staff of several agencies; rebuilding settlements; articulating humanitarian with development policy.

'...the key role of ICC was seen to be the provision of "big picture" information to the HCT'

improved, and how. Some guidance materials related to ICC do exist (OCHA, 2013; IASC, 2015): in fact the Cluster Reference Module makes clear that the ICC mechanism is the 'critical link' between the strategic HCT and the operational Clusters (IASC, 2015). However, rather than outlining the basic 'shape and function' of the inter-Cluster mechanisms in a response, the guidance suggests this be defined by the HC/HCT. In practice, this does not seem to be happening in all countries: 'The inter-Cluster… how does it work?... Look around in all this guidance that we have… It's nowhere'; 'So far, I think there are no terms of reference for inter-Cluster coordinators, which is really amazing.'

There was a high level of agreement across the interviews and meeting discussions that the ICC should not duplicate the work of the HCT – that is, it should not debate broad humanitarian policy issues, or produce guidance. Rather, the key role of ICC was seen to be the provision of 'big picture' information to the HCT – and specifically, information on:

- the current status of the operation as compared with plans (such as the SRP): sectoral and geographical gaps

- the current status of the operation with respect to existing and emerging needs: outcomes of the response, and the degree to which new needs are emerging

- key impediments and opportunities and

- forecasting – how needs, and the ability to respond to needs, might develop

ICC might also highlight the key issues that need to be addressed, and even provide a variety of decision options for the HCT to consider. This model, in which a formalised body maintains a constant and updated picture of the evolving situation but does not make decisions, while a leadership group makes decisions on the basis of this information, is similar to that of the 'planning section' in 'incident command' in many emergency management systems (as described in, for example, Howitt and Leonard, 2009).

In support of this function, an inter-Cluster body would need to develop approaches to harmonising assessment, monitoring and reporting activities across the Clusters, and possibly provide tools and support.

In order to fulfil this role, any ICC mechanism would require participation of the Cluster Coordinators and, presumably, capacity to undertake significant information management activities. Currently, OCHA has a formal role in 'supporting' ICC (IASC, 2015) and would presumably convene and facilitate this formal 'planning-style' ICC body. However, the fact that OCHA supports ICC does not mean it owns the process: Global Clusters and Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs) should

make it clear that Cluster Coordinators are co-owners of any ICC.

Mirroring the discussion on HCTs, some meeting participants felt formal ICC mechanisms should focus more narrowly on specific, agreed roles, and not aim to regulate or manage all interactions between Clusters. In some cases, bilateral discussions between Clusters will be more effective.

One such issue under debate is cash programming. At present, cash coordination is performed by different agencies/organisations depending on context, is *ad hoc* without predictable leadership and has varying levels of interaction with other humanitarian coordination structures (CaLP et al., 2015). Cash coordination groups are sometimes set up as a sort of inter-sectoral working group, while in other responses they form a sub-group of one particular sector. While these solutions are useful in the moment, they can also create confusion. In some cases, there has been a lack of clarity about *ad hoc/* sub-groups vs. issues tackled by the ICC group (Kauffmann, 2012).

In some ways, it may be an advantage to not have one designated place for these issues – Kauffmann

'So far, I think there are no terms of reference for inter-Cluster coordinators, which is really amazing.'

(2012) notes that having no predefined place for cash coordination provides 'flexibility to establish the most appropriate coordination mechanism depending on needs and the context'. However, there are also downsides, including the risk of either establishing duplicative coordination mechanisms or issues not finding a place, and thus not being coordinated, as well as the risk of accountability not being clear. A lack of consistency in how cash is coordinated also makes it difficult to understand who is responsible for making key decisions about the use or scale-up of cash in a response (CaLP et al., 2015).

'Local-level' coordination structures

Research and evaluations have consistently identified subnational coordination as an area in need of attention (De Silva et al., 2006; Stoddard et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2007; Young et al., 2007; Diagne and Solberg, 2008; Polastro et al., 2011b; Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015; STAIT, 2015; Krueger et al., 2016). In the consultations that preceded the London meeting, the issue of 'local-level' coordination was identified as a priority for action (Campbell, 2015).

Recent evaluations have concluded that there is significant benefit in investing in effective subnational coordination mechanisms: these investments have had 'considerable impact' (Clarke et al., 2015; see also Lawday et al., 2016), and interviewees and meeting participants gave a number of examples of clear benefits being provided by establishing local coordination mechanisms. By moving operational coordination functions close to the operations themselves, participants suggested decisions had been made more rapidly, and that these decisions had often been better and more relevant as a result of a better understanding of context. Coordinating closer to operations also had enabled greater

'...meeting participants repeatedly noted the difficulties of obtaining funding for coordination activities outside the capital city...'

participation by operational actors, and in particular by local civil society groups. The benefits of decentralisation in humanitarian action have often been noted in research (see, for example, Darcy and Hofmann, 2003; Houghton, 2008) and have been endorsed in the Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level (IASC, 2015).

Despite the visible benefits of investing in local-level coordination activities, meeting participants repeatedly noted the difficulties of obtaining funding for coordination activities outside the capital city: 'It's an interesting reflection on the system and the structures… in the sense that there's still a struggle… to have people dedicated at the field level'; 'It was the responsibility of the lead organisations to internalise that budget [but]… they keep pushing back saying, "Where are we supposed to take this money from?"', 'Can't there be some sort of pool of fund for subnational coordination that's just allocated to whoever steps up?' At the moment, many subnational coordinators are 'double-hatting', and often have only very limited time to devote to the coordination task (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015).

Beyond the challenges of securing funding, several people made the point that 'subnational', as a category, covers an extremely broad variety of situations: the populations of many countries are smaller than those in a single province of Pakistan, for example. As the IASC guidance suggests, subnational coordination mechanisms should 'not necessarily mirror those at the national level, but rather need to be adapted to the specific context' (IASC, 2015, p.31). The size of the affected population; the number of organisations responding; distance from the capital; and nature of government authorities should all play a part in determining the best approach to coordination.

And in fact, it appears there are currently a wide variety of different approaches in use. These include subnational Clusters being activated in some, or all, of the provinces/regions of an affected country; OCHA-led subnational coordination fora; support to sectoral line ministries to provide provincial- or regional-level coordination; the creation of multi-sectoral, area-based 'hubs'; and allocation of a 'lead agency' role to a single NGO or UN agency in a defined geographic area. Some (generally very large) areas have established provincial HCTs, as well as provincial Clusters. At the other end of the spectrum, where there are relatively few organisations present or the number of affected people is relatively small, participants suggested it was cheaper and more effective not to establish a type of formal subnational mechanism but instead to rely on informal coordination.

At the time of writing, OCHA has recently produced a mapping of various approaches to coordination structures globally, including subnational coordination. This work was strongly supported by participants, as was the idea that it lead on to a 'menu of options', with some guidance on which options were most effective in which contexts.

They also suggested that – as with the HCT and ICC elements of the country-level coordination system – it is important when deciding on the structure to clearly identify the role, priorities and key functions of any subnational coordination body as part of the broader coordination system. Currently, roles are not always clearly defined; as a result, decisions may be taken at both national and subnational levels, creating conflict; and time may be wasted pursuing discussion or action in more than one place, without those processes feeding into one another (Turner et al., 2008; Bennett, 2009; Buijsse, 2015). The general feeling was that subnational mechanisms should prioritise 'the delivery of the response, ensuring coverage and quality' and be less engaged in formulating common sectoral approaches, capacity-building and the other functions of the national Clusters. Where subnational mechanisms are area-based, rather than sectoral, it is particularly important to ensure they can access the technical expertise of the Clusters.

'Participants spoke of subnational coordination bodies being "completely detached" from the rest of the coordination system.'

A further challenge experienced by some subnational coordination mechanisms – and, again, one that occurs across the entire coordination system – is the way they communicate with other elements of the coordination structure. Communication between subnational mechanisms and national-level Clusters/the ICC mechanism is often poor (Turner et al., 2008). Participants spoke of subnational coordination bodies being 'completely detached' from the rest of the coordination system, or of it taking up to two months for information to get from the subnational body to the HCT, and vice versa. When designing the subnational elements of a coordination system, then, it is important to clarify how they communicate with other elements of the system.

Related recommendations

The meeting developed the following recommendations to address the situation outlined above:

- **Recommendation set 2:** clarifying roles and decision-making procedures in the coordination system.

- **Recommendation Set 3:** building subnational coordination capacity.

- **Additional recommendation 2:** developing approaches to monitoring context and outcomes – ICC should collate monitoring data and have a continuously updated 'picture' of the response, showing what is working and what is not. This is fed to the HCT to help determine overall direction and priorities.

See **Section 10** for further detail on these and other recommendations.

4.3 Designing for context

One of the areas that was most discussed at the meeting was the importance of designing coordination systems that would work effectively in the specific country context. Participants noted that, 'Every big response is different'; 'There's not one model that will fit all contexts'; and 'The best way to coordinate complex settings is to take the specific details about that particular event... answers that have been determined in another crisis… might not be appropriate.'

'...in most cases, a standard, 'cookie-cutter' approach of HCT, ICC and Clusters is put in place.'

How context-specific are current structures?

Some interviewees and participants felt there was already a fairly high degree of diversity in how humanitarian activities are coordinated – some countries use the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)-led coordination system; others 'run appeals, HNOs [Humanitarian Needs Overviews] and HRPs, but don't have an HCT, or… have an HCT but do not have the Clusters'. However, the majority felt that, in most cases, a standard, 'cookie-cutter' approach of HCT, ICC and Clusters is put in place as default.

Elements of context: local coordination systems and the nature of the crisis

This standard approach often fails to take account of existing government and civil society coordination mechanisms (see Section 7). It was also designed, primarily, as a short-term response to acute crisis, and is not necessarily as useful in the protracted humanitarian situations that now make up the majority of humanitarian work: '80% of our crises are protracted, 80% of our funding goes to protracted crises. So you have a short-term Cluster system that is basically becoming the way of coordination'; 'The model needs to look different in longstanding protracted crises.' Some of the particular challenges for humanitarian coordination in situations of protracted crises that were mentioned at the meeting include:

- articulating with development actors, and with development coordination systems – in terms of both 'transition' from humanitarian to emergency programming and addressing chronic vulnerability alongside longer-term 'humanitarian' caseloads, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees

- establishing information systems that are designed to monitor situations over time, and that articulate with national systems

- decreasing staff turnover and increasing continuity

- ensuring continued financial support for coordination activities once the peak of humanitarian response has passed

The issue of coordination in protracted (but constantly changing) crises also underlines the need for coordination systems not only to be designed to fit a specific context but also to be able to change as the context changes.

Why context matters

Where coordination models do not 'fit' the context, there is significant potential for duplication (particularly with pre-existing coordination systems) and increased confusion. There is also the possibility that, as the system is not performing a useful function, it will instead turns inwards, focus on formulaic procedures and 'aim only to be self-sustaining. They [the HCT and Clusters] do not ask themselves why they are there.'

'This standard approach often fails to take account of existing government and civil society coordination mechanisms.'

Current situation and challenges to context–specific design

While strongly supporting the principle of design for context, several participants also noted the importance of maintaining a degree of standardisation, for two main reasons. First, because people coming into a response need to recognise the model, and know how it works, and second, because designing a 'bespoke' model in each context would consume time and resources that are not available, particularly at the height of an emergency.

OCHA and IASC have, for some time, supported the idea of periodic coordination architecture reviews (see, for example, OCHA, 2015). In many places, however, these reviews have not been conducted; where they have, for the most part they have concentrated on the activation or deactivation of specific Clusters, rather than on more thorough consideration of the context, purpose and mechanisms of coordination as a whole. However, some participants noted that these reviews were now 'being done much more rigorously and with more intent'. The recommendations made by participants aim to build on this work.

Related recommendations

The meeting developed the following recommendations to address the situation outlined above:

- **Recommendation set 1:** developing context-relevant coordination systems that build on existing government and civil society coordination mechanisms.

See **Section 10** for further detail on this and other recommendations.

4.4 Changing the logic of coordination design: sectors and centralisation

The majority of discussion – and of recommendations – at the meeting centred around ways to improve on the existing design of country-level coordination: clarifying the functions of the coordination system, and of the various elements of the system, and adapting the system, or elements of the system, to better fit existing structures and long-term needs.

However, there were also some discussions of more radical improvement options that would entail changes to the fundamental logic of the coordination structure. In particular, participants discussed changing to a non-sectoral structure, and changing to a non-centralised, modular structure.

'...participants discussed changing to a non-sectoral structure, and changing to a non-centralised, modular structure.'

A non-sectoral design

A number of arguments were made for changing from a sector-based design (structured around sectoral Clusters) to some other form of coordination design.

Several of these arguments relate to the basic fact that the experiences of people affected by crisis, and their needs, are not experienced sectorally. By dividing the response into sectors, humanitarians artificially increase the numbers of assessments – and potentially programmes – that are required. Because needs seldom reduce to a single sector, many programmes in areas such as public health, nutrition and shelter and settlement are, by necessity, multi-sectoral, but this approach is made more complex, rather than simpler, by the current coordination mechanism. An increased move towards multi-sectoral working is reflected in the Secretary General's report *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility*, which highlights the need to avoid 'silos created by mandates and financial structures' but suggests humanitarian action work towards 'achieving sustainable, collective outcomes rather than coordination of individual projects and activities' (UNGA, 2016, pp.30–1).

The recognition that programmes need to be designed to meet multiple, overlapping needs is one of the key arguments for the increased use of multipurpose cash programming in humanitarian response. It has been difficult to incorporate cash programming into the current, Cluster-based coordination system, and there is evidence that this system actually 'hinders efforts to coordinate cash transfer' (Bailey, 2013, p.6; see also High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015; Truhlarova, 2015).

Similarly, some participants felt the sectoral approach to coordination made it more difficult to take a holistic approach in transitioning to development activities: 'One of the biggest challenges we face is [identifying] where are the boundaries of the crisis response versus the wider development initiatives?… I think that if you have area-based crisis coordination, you can have a more honest

conversation, rather than having that conversation of where the boundaries are in every single sector.' To a degree, this conversation also broke down along UN/NGO lines. Where UN agencies tend to be 'divided in sectors', 'most NGOs are working across sectors'. A Cluster system may be a better fit for UN agencies than for – at least some – NGOs.

At the same time, participants noted that, while the arguments – and particularly the one around cash – are powerful, there is likely to be a large amount of humanitarian work that continues not to use cash, and that, for at least some sectors, cash is likely to remain a fairly limited element of the response (Steets et al., 2016). Some participants also pointed out that the Cluster system had largely been developed because area-based systems did not work where there were large numbers of actors involved.

'...programmes need to be designed to meet multiple, overlapping needs...'

To a degree, it may be possible to square the circle by recognising that both the Cluster system – particularly if it is playing a technical support and normative role at the national level – and an area-based system for operational coordination at the subnational level could in fact be complementary: interviewees and participants gave a (small) number of examples of where this was already happening. It will be interesting to consider this idea in the light of the OCHA initiative to review current coordination structures.

A modular, 'bottom-up' design

In the research process that preceded the conference, and at the conference itself, a number of people suggested humanitarians should consider a radical redesign of the coordination system, which would begin with operational-level/local coordination systems and 'build up' from there, rather than 'building down' from the capital. Such an approach – which would put the subnational level at the centre of coordination activities, rather than seeing it as an afterthought – is already widely used in a variety of emergency management systems (Leonard and Howitt, 2010; Jensen and Waugh, 2014; Bigley and Roberts, 2016). These systems tend to be 'modular': inter-agency coordination is instituted at the scene of the crisis and additional layers are added, as necessary, as the size or scope of the crisis increases. In many cases, where there is higher-level (or national) coordination, this plays more of a support role than a pure 'leadership' role. The approach seems to be: 'as local as possible, as central as necessary'.

At the meeting, a number of NDMA and government participants explained how these decentralised systems worked in their countries, and there was some discussion on how the humanitarian system might restructure itself in this way: 'Ideally you would want to have a lot of your capability for response and for humanitarian assistance existing at the subnational level… During a response, the centre is going to have a role, it's going to defer to the locals… but that doesn't mean that the state level doesn't have some kind of important role. It has a role as a supply chain manager to

make sure the resources get there, it has a role providing information across local jurisdictions… to communicate information of the big picture. It's going to have to settle parochial priorities, because any given place is going to have a long list of things that it needs and those are going to be in competition with each other.'

Other participants, however, felt restructuring in this way would be effective only in places where there was strong local government, and where line ministries were present at a local level. In many – perhaps the majority – of countries where the international system is engaged in humanitarian response, this is not the case: 'If you're looking at who your counterpart is in government, your Ministry of Health counterpart is not going to be at the forefront of the earthquake, they're not going to be sitting with you in the tent. They are going to be in the capital.' Some participants also noted that this tendency of governments to use centralised structures often increased in times of crisis, particularly in many low-income countries.

Participants also pointed out that moves to decentralise in this way would require significant restructuring beyond the coordination system itself. Most humanitarian agencies are also fairly centralised, and decisions will be made in the country office, which is generally in the capital city. For a decentralised, locally led coordination system to work, the agencies participating would also need to decentralise their decision-making functions. While there have, in recent years, been increasing calls for humanitarian agencies to decentralise decision-making processes (Krueger et al., 2016), and while many operational humanitarians have attempted various levels of delegation and decentralisation within their own country offices, generally with positive results (Knox Clarke, 2014), there seems to be some way to go before a less centralised and 'top-down' approach becomes the standard design logic for international humanitarian organisations.
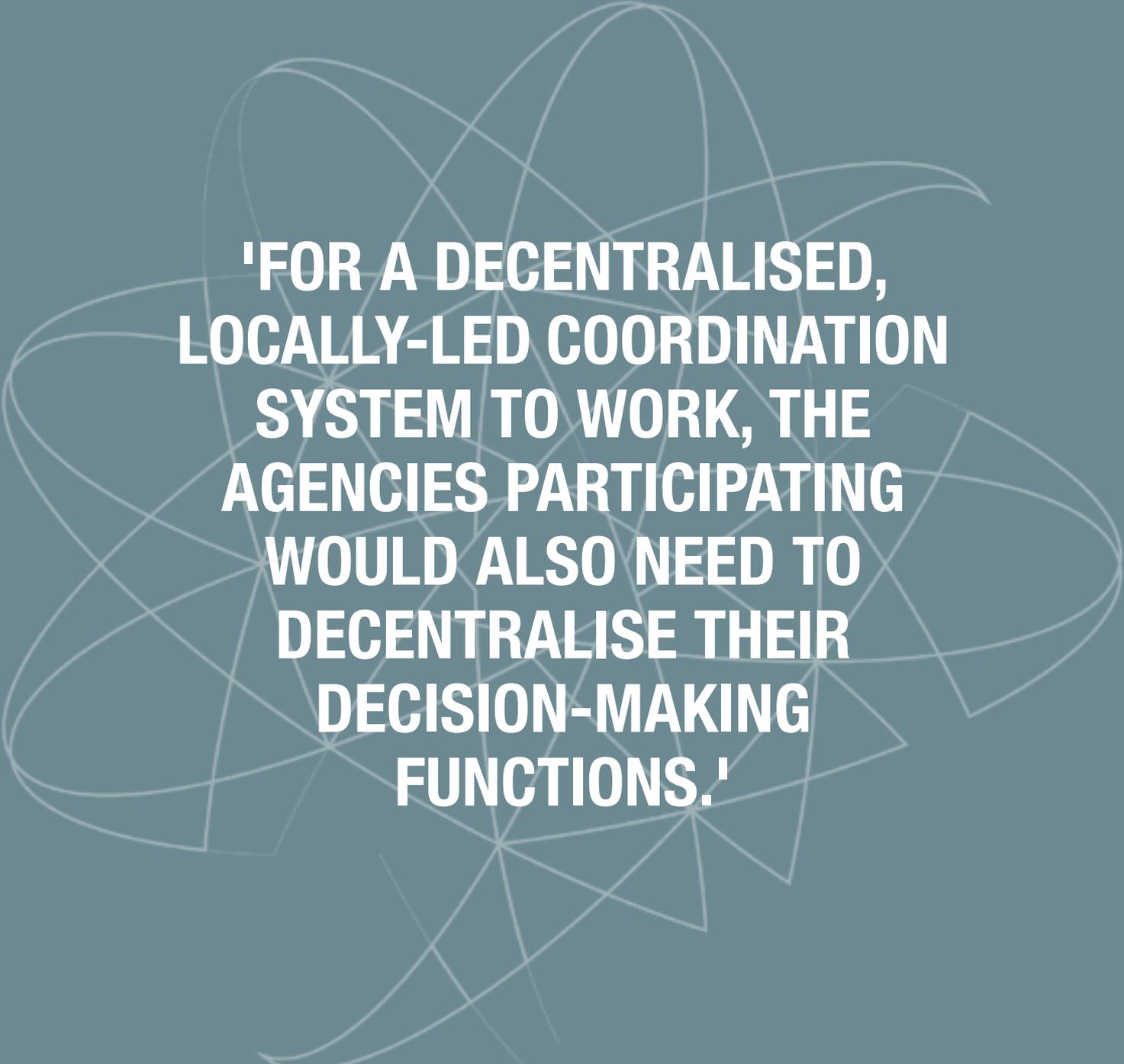
'FOR A DECENTRALISED, LOCALLY-LED COORDINATION SYSTEM TO WORK, THE AGENCIES PARTICIPATING WOULD ALSO NEED TO DECENTRALISE THEIR DECISION-MAKING FUNCTIONS.'

5. RESOURCING COORDINATION: WHAT DOES IT REALLY TAKE?

There is inconsistency and disagreement about the degree to which more resources for coordination are required. Clearly, in some responses, lack of resources and capacity represents a critical gap. The latest inter-agency evaluation of the humanitarian response in South Sudan noted that the biggest weakness in the response was lack of leaders and coordinators, and the response was hampered by high turnover and low capacity (Clarke et al., 2015; see also Salomons and Dijkzeul, 2008; Culbert, 2011). In other responses, participants at the coordination meeting felt there were 'more than enough' resources for coordination. Previous ALNAP research has highlighted the importance of adequate funding and human resource for effective coordination (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015).

Though not universally agreed upon, issues around resources for coordination, in particular training and capacity for those in coordination roles, were repeatedly raised during interviews and by meeting participants themselves.

The right people

Effective coordination relies in part on having the right people in coordination roles. During the meeting, participants highlighted a number of challenges in achieving this, including difficulty recruiting and retaining individuals, lack of local actors in coordination roles and challenges arising when individuals in coordination positions are unsuitable (because, for example, they lack the temperament or experience to perform well). One participant explained, 'We often find that people get hired [but] they don't really have that much experience in the humanitarian world… they might have technical capacities… but they don't know what to do.'

'Participants at the meeting discussed the potential for more coordination roles to be filled by local organisations.'

Participants at the meeting discussed the potential for more coordination roles to be filled by local organisations, who could be trained, mentored or seconded into leadership or co-leadership positions within Clusters, for example.

The right amount of people is also important as coordination is a team sport and cannot be achieved by one individual alone. Rather, it relies on a team of individuals with different roles, and the active participation of the wider coordinated group.

… with sufficient time

Part of the current coordination resource gap in many humanitarian crises relates to timing. Coordination roles often experience high turnover, creating inconsistency and gaps over time.

Those tasked with coordination are also often asked to do so on top of another role (so-called 'double-hatting'), which previous ALNAP research has found to be detrimental to successful coordination (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015).

Building local capacity could address the issue of longevity, as national staff and local organisations are less likely to be relocated to different crises. However, they may also be expected to double-hat, and once trained may move to different roles, though will often remain 'in the system' so the capacity will move with them.

… and relevant capacities

During the meeting, participants discussed the various current training and capacity-building programmes that exist. Each Cluster has its own training for coordinators. NGOs, rosters and universities also provide coordination training. There was much discussion about the potential for duplication and inconsistency, and calls for the 'development of some standard guidance of what goes into Cluster capacity development programmes… standard minimums that everyone agrees need to be covered, learning outcomes that need to be addressed'. Participants also discussed the lack of balance in current academic programmes for new humanitarians, which provide knowledge but no skill or practical learning applications, and suggested the possibility of bridging programmes to add these skills.
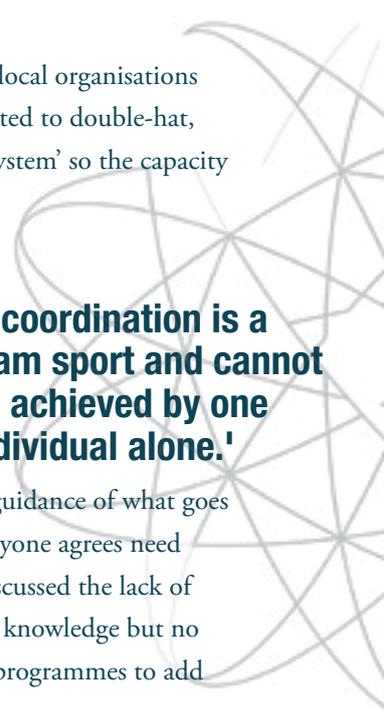
'…coordination is a team sport and cannot be achieved by one individual alone.'

One area where capacity is a critical issue is information management (IM). While there seems to be consistent agreement that such skills are important for coordination, this does not translate to the reality of what positions are funded and staffed. Recent Cluster mapping conducted by OCHA revealed that only 51% of active Clusters and sectors worldwide had dedicated IM capacity (OCHA, 2016). Participants and interviewees echoed this experience, one noting, 'In our context here almost none of the Clusters… have the required designated IM focal point so the capacity is just not there.' Another explained, 'That's really far too low to take on the burden… subsequently… quality suffers tremendously.'
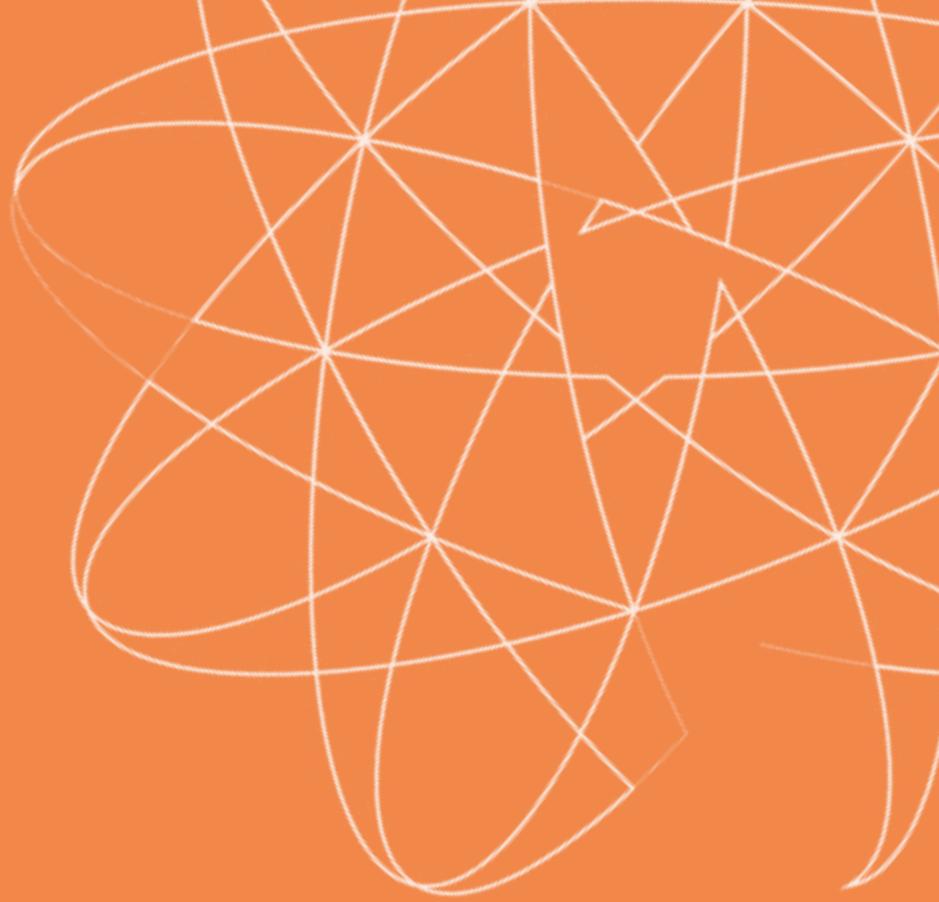
6. THE ROLE OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

As we have seen above, one of the most important elements in the design of an effective coordination structure is the context in which coordination takes place – and particularly the potential of government to coordinate and the capacity of existing governmental coordination systems. This was an area which was extensively discussed at the meeting.

6.1 The relative role of the state and the international system in theory

UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 46/182 makes clear that 'the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance', while at the same time recognising that 'Intergovernmental and non- governmental organizations working impartially and with strictly humanitarian motives should continue to make a significant contribution in supplementing national efforts.'

In addition to this *de jure* position, many people (and particularly those at the meeting involved in governmental or inter-governmental organisations) felt the primacy of the state was a matter of values: 'When we talk about a government to lead, it's not about the capacity issue, it's about a belief whether that is the right approach or not.' State sovereignty is an important value in itself, and states should be expected to coordinate humanitarian action almost irrespective of the circumstances.

For other humanitarians, the approach is, perhaps, more pragmatic, and the key argument for state-led coordination is one of effectiveness. State mechanisms can often respond more quickly to emergencies, and do so in a way that better articulates with long-term development activities (Knox Clarke and Obrecht, 2016). Indeed, participants at the meeting were able to catalogue a number of situations where government-led coordination mechanisms had proved extremely effective.

At the same time, failure to work within a state planning or coordination mechanism can lead to wasteful duplication, decrease the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the governed and the accountability of the state to the governed (De Waal, 1997; Ghani et al., 2005; Massing and Jonas, 2008) and result in a 'brain drain' of skilled staff to international organisations that further diminishes the ability of the state to respond to future emergencies (Pfeiffer et al., 2008).

All of this would tend to support the view that there is, at best, a limited role for international coordination mechanisms in any response – that the default position should be to participate in government coordination systems and that, where these are weak, the first response should be to second staff to them, or otherwise support the systems to function effectively.
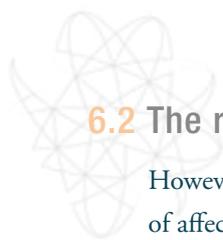
6.2 The relative role of the state and the international system – in practice

However, despite these arguments – from resolution, principle and pragmatism – the governments of affected states have often been marginalised by the international humanitarian response system, which can appear 'over-resourced, unaccountable, and donor-driven' (Harvey, 2010, p.11). While some scholars have argued that this marginalisation is by ideological design (see, for example, Duffield, 2001), others have concentrated on the relational, financial, technical and organisational factors that prevent effective articulation of international humanitarian organisations and affected

'...the governments of affected states have often been marginalised by the international humanitarian response system...'

states (Harvey and Harmer, 2011). Interviews and surveys for ALNAP's State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) report suggest this situation is slowly improving (Stoddard et al., 2015); however, significant tensions around the role of the affected state in humanitarian response continue to exist in many places (Knox Clarke and Obrecht, 2016). International actors are often not aware of the work of governments in humanitarian response, and routinely underestimate their roles and activities (Flint and Goyder, 2006; Swithern, 2015). The last three IAHEs of Level 3 emergencies have all noted that the international humanitarian system tends to exclude government: in CAR, 'Local leaders also expected greater involvement to improve the response. They at least expected to be informed of activities in their area… But aid workers rarely took an active approach to local authorities or nurtured relationships with them' (Lawday et al., 2016). Even in the Philippines, where there were 'many examples of excellent cooperation… there was also a strong sense that some international surge staff did not understand national systems or capacity and instead bypassed them' (Hanley et al., 2014).

Defaulting to the IASC model?

This is at least partly the fault of international humanitarian actors, and of the HCT-led model. The coordination architecture that formed an integral part of the Transformative Agenda was designed primarily as 'a response to deficits in the international agencies'(Foley, 2011, p.42). By concentrating almost exclusively on these agencies, it has, arguably, contributed to the separation between governments and international actors and to the exclusion of government agencies from humanitarian decision making (Morton and Mousseau, 2010; Patrick, 2011). Successive iterations of policy guidance have attempted to address this situation, with the latest Reference Module stating that Clusters should be activated only where 'existing national response or coordination capacity is unable to meet needs in a manner that respects humanitarian principles' (IASC, 2015, p.10) and that 'efforts should be made as soon as appropriate and possible to hand over coordination to the relevant authorities' (ibid., p.7). However, it is still the case that, for many, the HCT/ICC/Cluster model – rather than a government-led model – is the default – and, as more and more operational actors have become aware of, and worked within, this model, they may have lost sight of the central importance of the government.

Coordination where the government is a party to the crisis, or is otherwise unwilling to support humanitarian actions

A second challenge in making government leadership the 'default' for humanitarian coordination lies in the fact that, in many situations, the government may wish to deny that an emergency exists, or to deny aid to certain sections of the population, and may use control of coordination mechanisms to support its position.

This is particularly likely in the 'complex emergencies' that increasingly make up the majority of humanitarian work (Stoddard et al., 2015; Swithern, 2015). As the Reference Module for Cluster coordination suggests (IASC, 2015), international humanitarian organisations should be wary of government coordination where the government is party to a conflict and might use aid as to achieve conflict goals (Cosgrave, 2010; Cairns, 2012). This is not an abstract concern. Meeting participants gave a number of examples of situations where governments had used coordination mechanisms to deny aid to certain populations, to divert aid to other populations or even to obtain information that was later used to target aid convoys and facilities for military attack.

Even where governments are not engaged in a conflict, they may wish to deny that a humanitarian crisis exists, or that certain population groups are in need of aid, for political ends (Hedlund and Knox Clarke, 2011).

The potential for governments to challenge the humanitarian principle of impartial, needs-based assistance led some participants at the meeting to suggest a clear 'no government' line in conflict situations: humanitarians should not be coordinated by governments, and should not allow government actors into coordination fora. However, other participants felt humanitarian agencies did not always follow clear principles of impartiality themselves: it would be hypocritical to hold others to a different standard: 'Everybody makes a lot of compromises. There are no clear red lines.'

Moreover, a number of participants and interviewees pointed out that, in many situations, there would be sections of government with which one could work in a principled way. Government line ministries in conflict can often be less 'political' than government security agencies, offering possibilities to engage at Cluster level. Even in South Sudan, at a time when the government was 'iniquitous towards humanitarian efforts and sought to impede them or gain from them', a number of line ministries were 'dedicated and effective', and some local government officials 'displayed genuine leadership in terms of prioritization, involvement of affected people, rationalization of services and trouble-shooting' (Clarke et al., 2015).

Where it is not possible to find interlocutors, it is important not to ignore government entirely. Some authorities have suggested it may be possible to establish the coordination mechanism in such a way as to 'mirror' government structures, to allow for more successful integration at a later date (Massing and Jonas, 2008; Harvey, 2010).

In all cases, then, the message seems to be that it is important to understand government structures in situations of conflict, in order to be able to engage with them, or, failing that, in order to design coordination mechanisms to allow for future engagement.

'...it is important to understand government structures in situations of conflict, in order to be able to engage with them...'

Coordination where the government has limited capacity

In some situations – particularly given the very limited resources available to government agencies in the situations where humanitarian actors are typically involved – governments may not have sufficient capacity to coordinate the humanitarian response or to participate in coordination mechanisms. Government coordination is most likely to be successful 'in contexts characterised by chronic or recurring disasters, [where there are] governments with relatively strong capacities' (Steets et al., 2014, p.37).

Evaluations suggest that in a number of cases the desire of governments to coordinate relief activities has outstripped their capacity to do so effectively: coordination of multiple actors can be extremely resource-intensive, and often these resources do not exist, or are needed elsewhere. This lack of capacity has been particularly noticeable at a local, operational level (Salomons and Dijkzeul, 2008; Neseni and Guzha, 2009; Achakzai et al., 2011; Slim, 2012; Steets et al., 2010, 2014b).

These situations raise a number of difficult questions. The first – as one participant put it – is 'Who determines a country's lack of capacity… then how do we measure it? Who has the right to say so?' As we have seen, the IASC system is, itself, imperfect, and so government systems cannot fairly be compared against an 'ideal' system. Rather, this speaks again to the importance of understanding the possibilities and constraints, and working, wherever possible, to address these before replacing government mechanisms with international ones.

Moreover, a lack of capacity is fundamentally different to a lack of will, or a desire to frustrate or divert humanitarian activity. Even if the government does not have control of funds for the implementation of activities, several participants pointed out that the government still has the right to coordinate humanitarian action.

6.3 Important considerations for working with government

The discussions above all point to the importance of devoting resources to understanding, and creating relationships with government as a part of a broader consideration of context. Participants suggested that the following factors were particularly important to bear in mind when considering how best to work with governments.

Government organisational structures differ, and it may be hard to 'fit' the IASC coordination architecture into these systems

Government structures vary significantly from one country to another (and sometimes within one country). As a result, it can be hard for both parties to identify interlocutors in an emergency, particularly where government ministry structures do not follow the same sectoral divisions as the IASC Clusters (Achakzai et al., 2011; Beúnza, 2011; Maxwell and Parker, 2012), or where governments and humanitarians make decisions at different 'levels'. Similarly, the IM systems international actors use may not be designed to articulate with government systems. If international organisations wish to make a reality of increased government coordination, they will need to understand government structures, and need to be prepared to organise themselves in such a way as to better integrate with these structures.

'International actors need to recognise that there are a wide range of relationships between different elements of government and civil society groups.'

Governments are not monolithic, and may experience internal coordination problems themselves

In some cases, the challenges facing the international coordination system are mirrored by the affected state themselves, which can struggle to coordinate response across ministries and levels of government (Knox Clarke and Ramalingam, 2012; Featherstone, 2014). This can lead to situations where 'each different part of government demands that all efforts are coordinated with them and sometimes make contradictory demands of humanitarian actors' (Cosgrave, 2010, p.33). Participants gave a number of examples of government-led coordination being hindered by rivalry between ministries. They also noted that, in some cases, local government and national government may be controlled by different political parties, with different interests and priorities.

Government leadership of, or participation in, coordination mechanisms may be a disincentive to civil society to participate in these mechanisms

The transfer of authority and funding to civil society organisations (CSOs) in crisis-affected countries is a priority for many international organisations (see Section 7). The concept of 'national actors', which can conflate government with civil society actors, often hides significant differences of orientation between government and sections of civil society. Tensions between government and CSOs have been evident in a variety of responses (Beer, 2009; Donini and Brown, 2014; Saavedra, 2016), and civil society may, in some cases, mistrust government and even feel that 'The UN and some INGOs [international NGOs] [are] more impartial than government authorities in guiding and distributing aid' (Lawday et al., 2016). Participants spoke of situations where the government displayed 'strong suspicion and hostility towards NGOs', but also of situations where government and local NGOs had very close relationships: 'Most big actors might be close to the government otherwise they cannot be big in those places.' International actors need to recognise that there are a wide range of relationships between different elements of government and civil society groups.
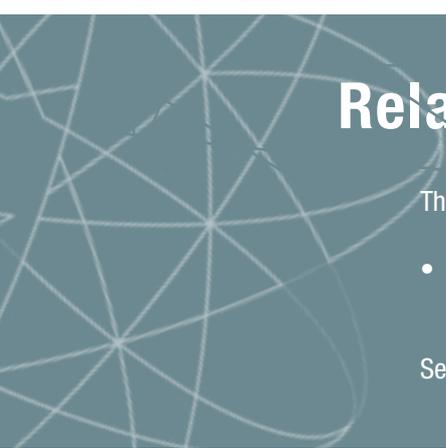
Related recommendations

The meeting developed the following recommendations to address the situation outlined above:

- **Recommendation set 1:** developing context-relevant coordination systems that build on existing government and civil society coordination mechanisms.

See **Section 10** for further detail on this and other recommendations.

7. THE ROLE OF NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY IN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

A growing body of evidence recognises the important role national civil society can play in preparing for, responding to and recovering from crises in the humanitarian sphere. The lead-up to the WHS in May 2016 has given momentum to this issue (UNGA, 2016), as have a number of key research initiatives and evaluations (including Cosgrave, 2007; Ramalingam et al., 2013; Featherstone, 2014; Poole, 2014; Cohen and Gingerich, 2015; Svoboda and Pantuliano, 2015; High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, 2016).

A great deal of this discussion has focused on funding of national CSOs – which is of course an important issue – but not the only one. Recent research by ALNAP (Saavedra, 2016) emphasises the complexity of the discussion on the engagement of national civil society in humanitarian action.

7.1 The involvement of national civil society in humanitarian coordination

Part of this complexity is around how national actors relate to and work in a coordination system that has been largely developed and maintained by international actors. There are many reasons why the failure to effectively engage national civil society is a problem for coordination. Ultimately, it results in the undermining of local ownership of the response (Steets et al., 2010) and is potentially a missed opportunity to make coordination more effective (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015). In particular, Clusters and ICC are unable to gain the broader perspective on the crisis that national civil society could offer (Steets et al., 2010).

The IASC-led Cluster-based coordination system has been criticised for the 'marginal' involvement of national actors (Steets et al., 2010). While the key guidance document for coordinated activities, the IASC Reference Module for the Implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, makes several references to the role and importance of national actors, this generally means government actors. The document does not specify how Clusters should engage with national civil society beyond a footnote suggesting they 'may need to' (IASC, 2015). Similarly, the guidance document for HCTs simply states that both national and international NGOs 'may' be HCT members (IASC, 2009).

It is, then, perhaps unsurprising that a significant body of research and evaluations suggests the current coordination system is not good at including national actors (including Patrick, 2011; Steets et al., 2014; Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015). This situation may be slowly changing: the evaluation of the Level 3 response in South Sudan suggested the coordination system took a 'balanced and appropriate approach' to the inclusion of national actors. Participants and interviewees described several situations where national NGOs were active members of HCTs and of Clusters (although national NGOs seemed to share the frustration of other HCT members that proceedings were often too tied to HPC activities, and not really relevant to them).

7.2 Issues faced in national civil society involvement

Participants, interviewees and research suggest that, if civil society engagement in coordination is to be further improved, the following issues will need to be addressed.

Existing coordination mechanisms used by national civil society are often marginalised when international humanitarian coordination mechanisms are introduced

In many places, national actors have their own pre-existing mechanisms for coordination.

As with government-led coordination mechanisms, international actors are often unaware of these networks and, rather than designing around them, tend to side-line them and instead impose 'their' coordination model. This approach can be duplicative and wasteful, and misses opportunities to support and build on what is already there (Scriven, 2013). It can also harm national civil society organisations in the long run by 'choking their potential' (GHP, 2010), because, when the 'external' coordination structure winds down, the pre-existing mechanisms may have lost their resources, connections and momentum.

The criteria for inclusion of organisations in the IASC coordination mechanism are unclear

IASC guidance suggests HCTs should be composed of 'organisations that undertake humanitarian action in-country and that commit to participate in coordination arrangements'; that size should be limited; and that the main criterion for inclusion in the HCT should be 'operational relevance' (IASC, 2009, p.2). The criteria for the inclusion of organisations in Clusters are less clear – there are no size limits (though strategic advisory groups (SAGs) are limited in size) and only an expectation that participants should meet a series of minimum commitments: in practice, participants said, these are not 'hard' commitments, and in many cases, 'Anyone who wants to come along can come.'

In a way, this is a positive thing: the more operational organisations involved in coordination, the more complete the coordination will be. But, at the same time, too many participants make coordination mechanisms unwieldy, requiring more time to exchange information and agree common positions.

'...some participants [questioned] whether the Clusters are, in fact, the right venue for capacity-building...'

This is not an issue that relates exclusively to national NGOs, of course. It can be unclear which international organisations should participate in coordination mechanisms, and on which basis. But the question is perhaps particularly acute for national NGOs for three reasons.

First, in many situations, there will be very large numbers of national NGOs and CSOs, and they may differ very significantly in scale and effectiveness. In South Sudan, for example, there was a small number of large national NGOS conducting high quality work, and a much larger number with 'limited capacity and ability to contribute' (Clarke et al., 2015). As with international organisations, it can be difficult to differentiate those making a significant contribution from those who are not, and the question will always arise – who makes the judgement?

Second, it is not clear that capacity or contribution to the response should be a criterion for deciding which national or local NGOs participate in coordination mechanisms. The terms of reference of the Clusters include 'capacity-building in preparedness and contingency planning' as one of the core functions of the Cluster. This suggests the Clusters should actively encourage the participation

of smaller or less experienced CSOs, and that lack of capacity should not be a bar to entry. This led some participants at a recent meeting between the Global Clusters and donors to question whether the Clusters are, in fact, the right venue for capacity-building, or whether other mechanisms should undertake this function.

Third, the question of 'who should participate' is further complicated by the fact that national civil society actors often work as funded partners of international organisations, who may themselves participate in the Cluster. It is not clear whether, in this case, the national actors, the international organisations or both should participate in coordination meetings, and who is ultimately responsible for ensuring activities do not duplicate or leave gaps, and are of acceptable levels of quality.

'...it can be very difficult to operate effectively in conflict areas without having some relationship and contacts with combatants.'

In the absence of clarity on who should participate in coordination mechanisms, there is often confusion or disagreement. Some interviewees felt the coordination mechanism was designed only to coordinate international action, and that, as a result, it should not include any national actors (IASC guidance suggests the opposite). In CAR, 'some international actors were critical of the presence, in Cluster meetings, of national NGOs with no active projects in the field. On the other hand, if NGOs do not participate in the meetings there is little chance of getting projects funded' (Lawday et al., 2016). Clearer direction on the criteria for inclusion in the Cluster – at a global or, perhaps more realistically, a country level – would be welcome.
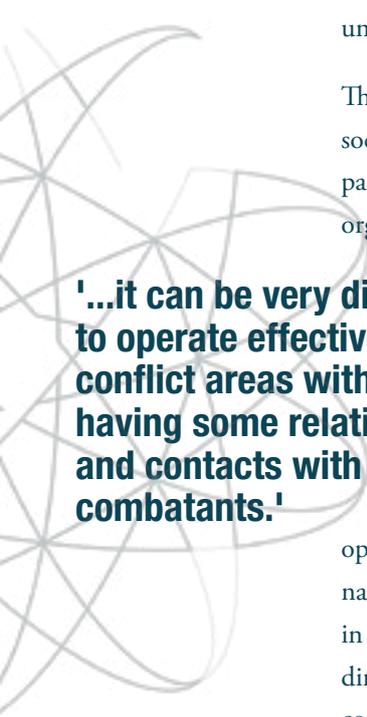
There is a perception that national or local NGOs can be partisan, and their inclusion in coordination mechanisms might jeopardise the impartiality of humanitarian assistance

Participants in several discussions suggested that, particularly in situations of conflict, some CSOs found it hard to be impartial – either because '[The] organisations are from within that affected population and therefore their support is for the group they represent' or because 'The local actors can't really escape the influence of the... men with guns.' It is not only international aid workers who can be concerned about the partiality of some local organisations: in CAR, members of the affected population questioned the integrity of national and local actors, and the extent to which… certain NNGOs [national NGOs] should be involved in the response' (Lawday et al., 2016). However, as several participants pointed out, it can be very difficult to operate effectively in conflict areas without having some relationship and contacts with combatants. In some cases, 'Nobody invites you into the coordination systems' because 'You are working in areas that might be considered too close to terrorist networks.' However, working in these areas, and negotiating access to them, does not necessarily mean the organisation is partisan, and the access that this allows is a powerful reason for ensuring these agencies are included.

'[There is a] disparity between national and international actors in terms of access to time, technology and transportation...'

The challenge here, of course, is that there is a wide variety of adherence to humanitarian principles among CSOs (just as, some would argue, there is, in practice, among international organisations). How to identify those organisations that are partisan? At the same time, failure to do so can, as the quote above suggests, lead people to question the impartiality of the response, and also 'put people at risk' when 'you discuss politically sensitive issues [and]… this leaks out'. At the same time, a number of participants and interviewees had experience of supporting national and local NGOs to become more impartial, through training in humanitarian principles and standards, and also by providing support to them in their dealings with government and other armed actors. One person explained, 'We train them and we brief them on some of the humanitarian mandate… and the things that they cannot disseminate, or cannot do, so to protect the others. So far it's going well.'

There can be a lack of understanding by national civil society actors of what the humanitarian coordination structure looks like, and how or why they might participate in it

In many instances, national civil society actors are unaware of the existence of the IASC coordination architecture. If they do become aware of such mechanisms, the potential benefits of participation may not be clear, or they may not be told how they might contribute: 'Civil society had absolutely no understanding and no clue what all this was about'; 'Many national actors don't really see what the benefits are for them in engaging' (see also Steets et al., 2014a).

There are often linguistic, financial and logistic constraints that prevent local or national organisations from participating in the coordination mechanism

A large number of evaluations and research initiatives[1] have commented on the language barrier that is almost always present at humanitarian coordination meetings. Conducting meetings exclusively in English (or sometimes in French) is a significant barrier to the participation of national civil society actors. Even those who do speak the 'international language' may not be able to keep up with fast-paced meetings containing people with different accents and using technical jargon: participants described many Clusters as feeling 'a bit cliquey' because of the shared language and references international agencies use. Documents circulated around Cluster and other coordination meetings are also typically not translated into national language(s). Although it is a fairly obvious point to make, in most cases this is not something that the Clusters have been able to effectively address.

Another perhaps obvious point is the disparity between national and international actors in terms of access to time, technology and transportation, which makes it very difficult for national and local civil society actors to participate in coordination mechanisms in the same way that international

1   For more sources, see Knox Clarke and Campbell (2015) and Steets et al. (2010).

actors can. National CSOs are more likely to have fewer staff, and therefore attending meetings uses proportionately more of their resources. They face further barriers when travelling to meetings, particularly those in cities/capitals far away from their offices, which are often located close to the communities where they work. 'There is a very low representation of local NGOs in all of these mechanisms… it's mainly a cost issue. It's because meetings happen in [the capital city], and local NGOs are based in country, so they don't have necessarily the costs and the means to attend these big meetings in [the capital].'

In some cases, local and – to a degree – national NGOs are less likely to have consistent and reliable access to the internet and are not always able to use online platforms to access information. In interviews prior to the meeting, many people suggested face-to-face meetings were the best way to communicate: however, some meeting participants suggested national NGOs might prefer to use these technologies as a way of decreasing the amount of travelling and time required for meetings.

Related recommendations

The meeting developed the following recommendations to address the situation outlined above:

- **Recommendation set 1:** developing context-relevant coordination systems that build on existing government and civil society coordination mechanisms.

- **Recommendation set 4:** increasing the participation and influence of national and local civil society organisations in humanitarian coordination.

See **Section 10** for further detail on these and other recommendations.

8. INFORMATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
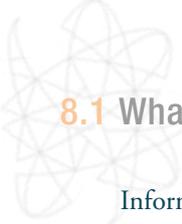
8.1 What is information management?

Information management (IM) is a central element of coordination and is critical for an effective response. Policy documents, evaluations, research and interviews related to international humanitarian activity (and to emergency management more generally) all underscore the importance of IM. Effective IM allows better decisions to be made faster. Poor IM, on the other hand, leads to poor decisions, slows the response and can undermine the credibility of humanitarian actors. IM is seen by many as the single most important function of the Clusters (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015).

Although there are many examples of effective IM within the humanitarian system, interviews, evaluations and reports suggest that, even in countries where the coordination architecture has been established for some time, there is often a lot of information available but limited capacity for IM, and activities do not meet needs. One recent report suggests key information on needs, response activities and gaps was not available (particularly at the inter-Cluster/whole response level) after many years of humanitarian activity in the country (OCHA, 2015).

Broadly speaking, 'The responsibility for ensuring appropriate IM needed for an effective and coordinated inter-Cluster response rests with OCHA' (IASC, 2008). OCHA can be seen as having responsibility for creating and maintaining the 'big picture'. Interviewees suggested this role was both vital and difficult, and that more attention was required for inter-Cluster IM.

'Poor IM leads to poor decisions, slows the response and can undermine the credibility of humanitarian actors.'

At the same time, 'The responsibility for ensuring appropriate IM needed for an effective and coordinated intra-Cluster response rests with the Cluster Lead Agency' (IASC, 2008). CLAs are expected to manage sector-specific information for their own members and contribute sectoral information to support the broader response. In practice, this responsibility is generally delegated to the Cluster Coordinator.

Cluster member agencies are 'expected to be proactive partners in exchanging information' and 'adhere to commonly agreed definitions and indicators for sector needs and activities' (IASC, 2008). However, as with all engagement with the Clusters, agencies are generally under no obligation to exchange information or adhere to common indicators or approaches: participation is voluntary.

What information is prioritised?

Information management activities in the coordination architecture concentrate on 'sending up' strategic information, with less emphasis on the management of 'operational' information.

In humanitarian operations, large amounts of information are required by a range of stakeholders (O'Donnell, 2014; UNHCR/DRC, 2015; Digital Humanitarian Network, n.d.). At the meeting, participants consistently stressed that, in the current coordination system, the focus of IM is overwhelmingly on aggregated, high-level data on the response as a whole. While this information is useful for providing a national overview for the HCT and agency headquarters, and can be used to request funding, it is of little use in planning and implementing operations 'on the ground'. As a result, the people collecting the information 'bear the costs but don't benefit from the end product', and many people see current information systems as an 'extra burden', 'a complete waste of time' or 'a big fat numbers game that tells us nothing'.[1]

There is a lack of clarity over which 'operational' information is needed

Many participants and interviewees felt there should be a significant reorientation of the IM function, to make it 'a service to practitioners on the ground to deliver an effective response'. This was often spoken of as a reorientation from meeting 'strategic' to meeting 'operational' information needs.[2] The information needed to design and manage specific programmes is already, generally, collected by individual agencies. It differs from the 'high-level' information in being much more detailed – specific to households or communities, rather than representative. It is also often multi-sectoral. In many cases, and particularly in cases where populations are moving, it also tends to change over short periods of time.

This raises important challenges. First, what is the value in sharing this data? Particularly if it has been collected to support a specific intervention, much of it may not be particularly useful to other agencies 'for operational information, you sort of have to have duplication, and you have to have different agencies doing different things' Second, how much IM capacity would be required to process, analyse and disseminate this information (particularly given the lack of standardisation in the sector – see below)? Is it realistic to imagine that this capacity could be made available?

---

1   Many people involved in the coordination system have been making this point for some time. See, for example, Global Clusters (2015).

2   Although not all participants agreed with this typology: in a classic command and control system, strategic information would be about what to do and operational information about how to do it. In the less centralised humanitarian system, decisions about what to do are made at a variety of levels, as strategy is decentralised. Information needs 'on the ground' or near the site of operations might also be strategic.

There is currently very little assessment of information needs, or planning to meet priority needs

There is little mention in most of the guidance of the planning element of IM:[3] determining 'what type of information decision-makers… need to know, at what level of detail, and why the information is needed' (UNHCR, n.d.). Nor do tools for planning seem to be available. As noted above, participants suggested most IM followed a default set of activities organised around the IASC HPC. Beyond this, there is little clarity over which information is a priority, for whom: information management is often seen 'as an all-encompassing system that can do everything for you… but it can't of course'; 'We struggle with… that pressure in terms of need to know, nice to know, and people are focusing or being pushed on the nice to know.' Many of the recommendations related to IM (as was the case with respect to the coordination mechanism as a whole) related to more conscious planning and design.

'There is little mention in most of the guidance of the planning element of IM, determining what type of information decision-makers need to know...'

Using 'default systems' means information that will not be useful is collected and analysed

High-level information on the overall response is, of course, important. At present, however, a number of factors amplify feelings of frustration. First, at least some of the information requested is perceived to be redundant, and so people spend time 'inputting data that never gets used'. This is partly a result of the information collection being driven by tools and processes, rather than by real needs. In an emergency, rather than deciding which information is a priority, humanitarians 'tend to select the systems [they're] familiar with', and may not think 'what are you trying to do? What's the problem you're trying to solve [instead they think]… "Okay we've got an iPhone, we can do digital surveys."' Several 'high-level' decision-makers suggested that the information they received from the system was not, actually, useful to them. So neither the providers nor the intended users of the information benefit.

There is a tendency to collect information that donors and HQs (might) want, rather than information that operations actually need

The concentration of power in the capital city, HQs and donor capitals creates 'an asymmetry between the people who bear the cost of producing the data and those who reap the benefits of them'. The result is that the system concentrates on information that is 'nice to have' for those at the top of the hierarchy, at the expense of 'need-to-have' information on the ground: 'As you're not paying any cost for it, whether it's useful or not, even if you just think that it might be useful someday, you can ask for it, because it's a low cost.' Information managers in the field, who are often relatively junior, find it difficult to 'push back' against these requests.

3   An interesting exception occurs in UNHCR guidance on creating an information management strategy (UNHCR, n.d.)

Scarce IM resources are spent on high-quality presentation

While the presentation of information is a key element of ensuring decision-makers use it (Knox Clarke and Darcy, 2014), some participants felt there was now too much emphasis on 'polishing' information products. Combined with the frequency and unpredictability of information requests by higher-level decision-makers, this led to a disproportionate amount of (already limited) time going to these activities. It might be more efficient to clarify which products need these levels of presentation, and which do not justify the time input.

Staff collecting information are often unaware of the way it is being used

Even where high-level information has been effective for raising the profile of an emergency or securing further funding, the staff collecting and reporting are often unaware, and so do not see the advantages of the IM system: 'Right now it's just a one-way street largely in many places where every month they have this burden of contributing information but they don't necessarily see anything coming back.' Some participants suggested colleagues might be more supportive of these activities if they were aware of how – and how successfully - the information had been used.

Agencies are reluctant to share information

A repeated theme at the meeting was the reluctance of agencies to share information with each other – a theme that has also recurred in evaluations (Alexander, 2009; Achakzai et al., 2011; Beúnza, 2011).

Participants suggested a number of reasons for this. In the first place, 'Information is power': agencies could use information to get funding, and in 'this highly competitive [funding] environment', they might want to ensure they have control of information to maintain control of access to funding. Sharing information could be perceived as a time-intensive activity, which would bring limited rewards and may even work against the interests of the agency: 'If we share, where will it get us?' Participants further made the point that information is not neutral – that the information collected is often determined by the interests and priorities of the group collecting it. 'People use the data to justify the approach, which is the approach that they want, or the approach that they think is best… it's not necessarily political, but people are collecting data and using data to justify certain modalities.' Under these circumstances, organisations would not necessarily want to open their data – and the choices behind it – to scrutiny. Where they do share this information, it is very often in a final report, rather than in the (generally more useful) 'raw' format.

'If we share [information] where will it get us?'

Agencies may also refrain from sharing information for reasons of security – an understandable concern in many contexts. In some cases, as noted above, the inclusion of civil society actors or – more – of government representatives in coordination activities may make agencies even more sceptical about making information public.

A number of participants at the meeting championed the Humanitarian Data Exchange (https://data.humdata.org/), which provides an open platform for sharing data. This useful common service addresses the technical challenge of where to put data so others can rapidly access it, but it does not – and does not attempt to – address the behavioural issues that lead agencies to 'hoard' information.

'...a very large number of different tools and approaches to information collection and management have been developed in different agencies.'

Experience suggests these can be overcome – or at least mitigated – by regular contact between agencies and coordination staff (Alexander, 2009; Verity et al., 2014) and more broadly by a focus on building trust in Clusters and ICC (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015): however, trust-building appears, very often, to be a function of long-term or pre-existing relationships (ibid.), and these relationships can be difficult to establish given the rapid turnover of many emergency staff.

Even where information is shared, humanitarian actors use incompatible tools and approaches, and so can't compare information

As humanitarian organisations have developed in size and sophistication, and as they have integrated information technology to collect, process and store data, a very large number of different tools and approaches to information collection and management have been developed in different agencies. Many humanitarian organisations have spent significant funds developing assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems that meet their specific needs and fit their resources, processes and culture. In some cases, these tools and approaches have been developed at the level of the individual country office, and so there may be a number of very different systems even within the same organisation. In addition, many of these systems have been changed and reinvented over time, and as a result have collected different datasets in different ways at different points in an emergency (Knox Clarke and Darcy, 2014).

As a result, and despite the general consensus that sharing information is at the heart of effective coordination, attempts to share information are bedevilled by 'formatting inconsistency and storage media misalignment' (Altay and Melissa, 2014, p.3); 'all too often, different actors use different measurements and definitions for data collection and analysis' (ibid., p.13).

Participants at the meeting pointed to a number of areas of incompatibility between data collected by different agencies. These included different definitions for units of analysis (such as 'household' or 'pregnant or lactating women'); different names for locations; collection of information at different levels of aggregation (households, communities, districts); different standards (around, for example, gender and age disaggregation of data); use of different indicators; different criteria for determining quality of information; and storage of data in different (and mutually incompatible) formats.

The IASC, Global Clusters and initiatives at country level have attempted 'common' approaches to information collection and analysis

A number of approaches have been taken to address these issues of incompatibility. IASC has issued guidance on common operational datasets that should be collected as part of contingency planning. Importantly, this guidance clarifies responsibility with respect to collection and storage of this data (Mcdonald, 2010). The dataset is fairly limited, however, covering basic information on populations, settlements, transport facilities and terrain. An active inter-Cluster information management group exists, and a number of Clusters and bodies have produced guidance and tools on IM, for use by agencies participating in that Cluster or sector (see, for example, O'Donnell, 2014; UNHCR/DRC, 2015; Global Food Security Cluster, 2015; UNICEF, n.d.).

These 'common' approaches seem to have met with various degrees of success. In several cases, they have not been as widely used as hoped because they were too complex and required too much training, or because they required reliable internet connectivity, or because (particularly given the high turnover of staff in operations) information managers in country offices were not aware of their existence. More generally, it may be difficult to introduce a common, single set of tools and approaches across multiple responses, because of the need to integrate humanitarian IM systems with those of government wherever possible, and because of the many and varied donor reporting requirements that require agencies to collect different data in different formats.[4]

At the same time, some Clusters – and some countries – have successfully managed to harmonise the information systems of key humanitarian actors working in a response. The importance of common platforms, and common approaches, was made evident at the ALNAP/US government/ Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)/WHS Global Forum, where one of the most highly supported recommendations was that, 'There should be a shared information platform of common code and data collection to which all agencies contribute' (Knox Clarke and Obrecht, 2015, p.85)

There are also a number of approaches to information-sharing that explicitly recognise the diversity between agencies or country contexts, and build on this diversity

Many participants were sceptical, however, of the ability of large numbers of different agencies, each working in different contexts, to move towards single common systems. There was a general sense that a common approach – enshrined in some form of data standards – might be introduced for fundamentals, but that the aim should be to look at ways to 'mush data together', and, rather than trying to develop single, common tools, 'let people use their own different tools, but make sure that the core data is done in such a way that we can share that on a platform afterwards'. This approach using diverse datasets, and establishing an expert group to assess them, has been used successfully in

4   Although this issue is currently under discussion as part of the Grand Bargain, and it is to be hoped that some harmonisation of reporting requirements will occur (WHS, 2016)

the Integrated Phase Classification System (IPC) for some time.

Two related initiatives in the humanitarian system recognise and build (to different degrees) on the diversity of agencies and approaches, rather than trying to develop a single, global approach. The first is the Humanitarian Indicator Registry (www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/applications/ir), which offers a 'menu' of different indicators by sector, along with related standard definitions. The idea here is that, at country level, agencies can agree on which indicators they will all use – so there is a common approach but only at the level of the individual country. Some participants suggested the registry includes too many indicators, particularly in certain sectors. The majority of participants who were aware of the registry, however, felt it was a positive development – although it did not seem to be particularly well known, even among those who had an interest in the collection and use of information. The second is the Humanitarian Exchange Language (HXL) (http://hxlstandard.org/), which allows information collected in different formats to be 'tagged', to allow for easier comparison between different datasets. Again, this was felt to be a promising initiative, but it was relatively little known by participants.

'Many participants were sceptical, however, of the ability of large numbers of different agencies to move towards single common systems.'

An alternative approach might be to 'outsource' information collection, analysis and presentation to a single third party

Several interviewees also mentioned that, in situations where it had been difficult to achieve a common picture of a situation (either for assessment or for monitoring purposes), there had been great value in working with a single, 'external' specialist organisation that provided information collection and analysis for all agencies in the response. Two organisations were discussed in particular: the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) and REACH. Again, the potential of non-operational, technical organisations to support responses by providing information was highlighted at the ALNAP/US government/OIC/WHS Global Forum in 2015 (Knox Clarke and Obrecht, 2015).

Related recommendations

The meeting developed the following recommendations to address the situation outlined above:

- **Recommendation set 6:** improving information management.

See **Section 10** for further detail on this and other recommendations.

9. CHALLENGES TO IMPROVEMENT

Many of the points made at the meeting have been made before, and a number of the recommendations included in the next section are not new. Given this, several discussions focused on why the coordination system has not changed on the basis of previous recommendations. These factors are important to bear in mind if the recommendations of the meeting are to be implemented.

One practical constraint is that of time. Redesign 'requires a lot of negotiation and a lot of discussion and I think most of the times that's a luxury we cannot afford'. Design activities could, conservatively, be one or two months of work, or '20% of someone's already 150% job'. Some participants, who had experience of this work, suggested it was nevertheless possible, provided the groundwork was laid before an emergency, and that it was a regular, ongoing process.

A second practical constraint is that of skills. Many of the challenges require an element of organisational redesign, or information system redesign. These are technical skills that not all country teams possess. Any attempt to make contextual design, or to make information management more 'operationally focused', would, ideally, require an element of training.

Beyond these immediate resource challenges, many participants identified a stronger, structural inertia, and a disinclination among senior decision makers to change the coordination system: 'The top-down approach is so strong now; even if a country team takes a decision they're told no, no hybrid models.'

'One practical constraint is that of time. Redesign requires a lot of negotiation and a lot of discussion...'

Participants also identified a variety of potential reasons for this inertia. Changes – particularly those that move away from a 'coordination as control' approach – would challenge the assumptions and beliefs that many senior decision-makers hold about the nature of coordination.

In addition, much of the current system has become focused around a specific process – the creation of the SRP (and, more broadly, a number of activities that form the HPC) – 'a global level approach where everybody in the world is expected to do their SRP in the same way so they're not empowered to come up with their own mechanism'. Context-specific redesign would tend to challenge this standard approach – one which OCHA in particular, and a number of other stakeholders, has put significant time and thought into developing.

A third reason suggested for the inertia is the self-interest of a number of agencies, and particularly the Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs). These agencies, it was suggested, obtain 'profile and visibility' from the current system (although it should be pointed out they also pay for much of it) and, as a result, in one case, 'You had an overwhelming number of actors who were recommending to merge and change the sector structure so that it better matched government structures… the reason why they didn't change was because agencies said, "We have the global mandate for this Cluster, that doesn't change."'

'Changes would challenge the assumptions and beliefs that many senior decision-makers hold about the nature of coordination.'

Under the current system, there are also financial incentives for agencies at the country level to implement the standard, existing model. One interviewee noted that, 'There are huge advantages for activating Clusters… the difference between Clusters and sectors is the amount of capacity and support you get from headquarters.' In one situation, a participant explained that, 'If they hadn't activated the Clusters they wouldn't have had access to funding and resources through the appeal process to fund these activities. And that's a very legitimate concern.' In another, donors reportedly said, 'We can't muster our resources if we don't have the Cluster system.'

Finally, as discussed above, there are perceived to be a variety of motives for international humanitarian actors being reticent about liaising more closely with existing coordination systems, or engaging local actors more closely. Some of these motives are self-serving, but others arise from real concerns around the impartiality and quality of humanitarian assistance (even if, in many cases, these concerns might be misplaced) and confusion over the degree to which the coordination system should prioritise capacity-building.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

During the June 2016 meeting, attendees participated in several rounds of discussion that resulted in the identification of concrete recommendations to address the coordination challenges discussed in this paper.

After these initial discussions, participants voted for the broad recommendations they most strongly supported. These recommendations were then further developed into the more concrete recommendations presented below.

All of the recommendations below were proposed by meeting participants. While the broad recommendations had been prioritised in the voting exercise, there were varying levels of agreement on the specific recommendations on these areas; some recommendations received nearly universal endorsement whereas others were more controversial. To ensure the recommendations presented are a clear reflection of the sentiments of the group, we have attempted to indicate where there was particularly strong support, and have supplemented the detail of the recommendations by reviewing transcripts of the meeting discussions and through one-to-one discussions with a sample of meeting participants during the drafting phase. We have also attempted to identify existing or emerging initiatives where the recommendations may be taken up.

The recommendations have been grouped into six areas, which roughly correlate to the structure of the paper. It is important to note the interconnectedness of many of the recommendations. Readers may find it easier to consider the recommendations in light of the paper as a whole, as this will provide further background, definitions and clarity.

Each set of recommendations addresses a common goal. We have presented the goal followed by specific actions, which, taken together, should help in achieving it. In most cases, action is required by more than one group in order to achieve the goal. In some cases, it was not possible to identify an actor to carry out an action, and in these areas in particular further work is required to identify concrete next steps.
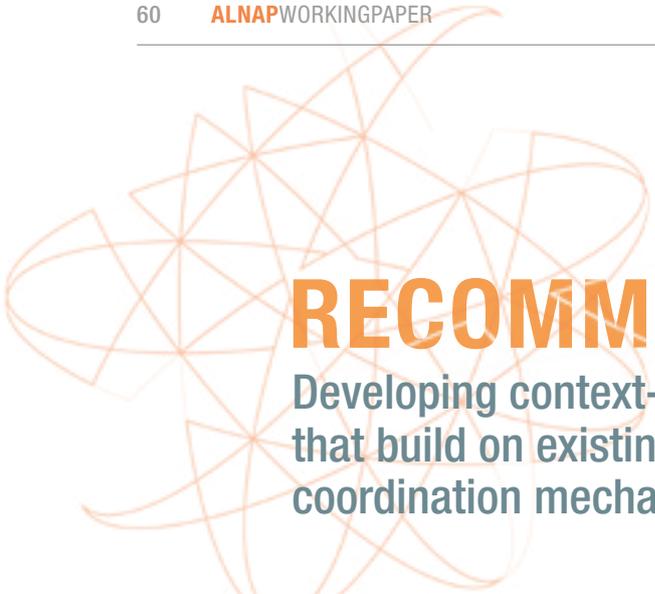
RECOMMENDATION SET 1

Developing context-relevant coordination systems that build on existing government and civil society coordination mechanisms

There was strong support by meeting participants for ensuring coordination is context-relevant and builds on existing coordination mechanisms put in place by governments and civil society.

In particular, participants strongly supported:

- the mapping of national response frameworks outlining coordination roles and responsibilities as part of standard operating procedures at the start of a response (15 votes)

- the need to focus on the principles and purpose of coordination, rather than adopting one-size-fits-all approaches (13 votes) and

- the need to support, not replace, existing coordination structures (11 votes)

The following specific recommendations and associated actions to achieve these goals emerged during the meeting:

Recommendation 1.1

Ensure coordination mechanisms are context-relevant and adaptable

1.1.1

IASC (supported by OCHA, IASC members) should clarify that adaptation to ensure context-relevant coordination is encouraged

1.1.2

Donors (supported by OCHA, IASC) should make clear, and take further steps to ensure, that funding is based on needs, not tied to the activation of Clusters.

1.1.3

Donors should fund and support adapted, context-relevant coordination mechanisms, as well as/instead of Clusters and sectors, where appropriate.

1.1.4

Academics (supported by OCHA, Global Clusters, UN agencies and international and national NGOs) should conduct research to document a range of potential models for coordination, particularly at subnational and inter-Cluster level, which includes case study examples. This would build on the recent Global Overview of Coordination Arrangements conducted by OCHA.

1.1.5

HCTs (supported by OCHA, Global Clusters) should conduct regular coordination architecture reviews to ensure coordination mechanisms are most appropriate for evolving contexts

1.1.6

OCHA (supported by UNSSC) should ensure adaptability, organisation and coordination design are included in training packages for HCT members (and Global Clusters should do the same for Cluster Coordinators).

Recommendation 1.2

Support and build on existing national and local coordination mechanisms rather than duplicating or replacing them

1.2.1

In advance of sudden onset crises, governments (with the support of the Global Partnership for Preparedness and UNCT) should map out who has responsibility for which elements of management, coordination and response. Maps should include the relative roles/responsibilities of government agencies, civil society, international actors and private sector; triggers for action; process for regular reviews; gaps in this system.

1.2.2

In protracted crises and complex emergencies, where governments are unable or unwilling, UNCTs/ HCTs should conduct the mapping described above. The mapping should describe current structures, identify how effective these structures are presently and determine what should be retained/altered to improve effectiveness.

1.2.2

All international organisations (including UN agencies, INGOs and donors) entering a country should agree to understand and engage with existing coordination mechanisms

Recommendation 1.3

Ensure coordination is part of preparedness and planning work

1.3.1

As part of their work, the Disaster Preparedness Partnership (supported by the IASC Preparedness Working Group, the Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network, the Network for Empowered

Aid Response and the World Bank) should ensure coordination issues are part of preparedness planning.

1.3.2

At a global level, actors should come together to agree on common standards for 'coordination capacity' (and potentially, and more broadly, measurable level of operational capacity required to participate in coordination systems) and work together to establish training and capacity-building programmes to address these gaps.

1.3.3

All actors conducting preparedness planning should aim to bring people and groups together to participate in simulations and similar exercises to increase understanding and agreement of coordination roles in crises.

RECOMMENDATION SET 2
Clarifying roles and decision-making procedures in the coordination system

At the meeting, participants recommended improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the coordination system. Specifically, recommendations in the area were around:

• improving role clarity in the coordination system (12 votes)

• refocusing HCTs on decision-making appropriate for the HCT level (11 votes)

The following specific recommendations and associated actions emerged during the meeting:

Recommendation 2.1
Improve role clarity in the coordination structure

2.1.1

Based on 'what works' at present, further reflections at global level should be undertaken by OCHA, Global Clusters and members on what the relative roles of the HCT/ICC/Clusters/subnational-level coordination *should* be, how the various elements should communicate with one another – particularly around linking strategic and operational work in a substantive way – and how these roles can be effectively implemented so they are used consistently, where context-relevant. Without pre-judging these decisions, the meeting recommended that:

• HCTs should concentrate on setting broad objectives, and making decisions that affect the entire operation in the country and political decisions that require liaison with government.

• ICC should not be a decision-making body, but should concentrate on establishing and maintaining the 'big picture' and presenting issues and options to the HCT and to Clusters.

2.1.2

The Global Clusters working group on coordination reviews and cluster transition should provide support and guidance to HCTs to ensure coordination architecture reviews are conducted regularly in every country where Clusters are active. Coordination architecture reviews should go beyond decisions on whether or not certain Clusters should be deactivated to include a broader review of the different components within the coordination structure and their relative roles and context-relevance.
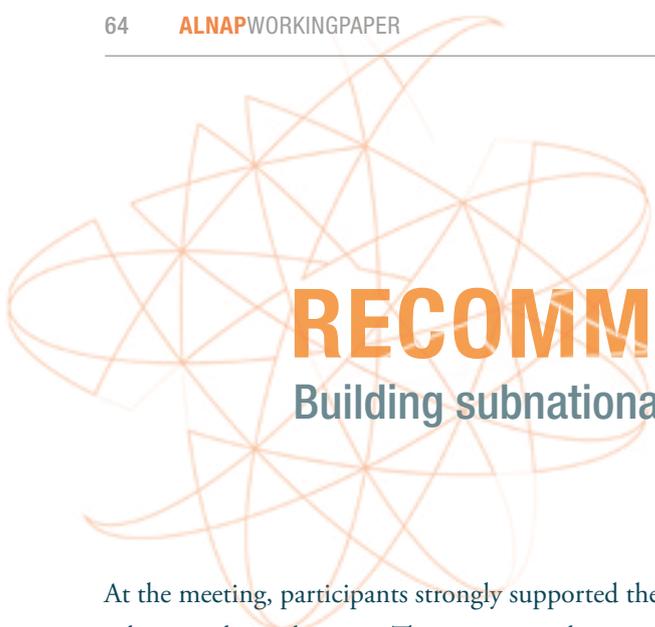
RECOMMENDATION SET 3
Building subnational coordination capacity

At the meeting, participants strongly supported the need to build capacity as a way to improve subnational coordination. This recommendation goes in tandem with the recommendations around context-relevant coordination structures with clear roles for different parts of the coordination mechanism. The following specific recommendations and associated actions emerged during the meeting:

Recommendation 3.1

Identify the competencies and knowledge required for subnational coordination

3.1.1
Training providers and researchers (with support of OCHA, Cluster leads and members) should conduct further research to identify the competencies and knowledge required for subnational coordination.

3.1.2
Global and national Clusters should support this work by documenting what works in their respective clusters at subnational level.

Recommendation 3.2

Build capacity for subnational coordination

3.2.1
Globally, an inter-agency learning provider or practitioner network (possibly as a working group within the IASC) should create a training package that is modular, that is developed by adult learning specialists and that uses a range of multimedia based on providing the needed competencies and knowledge for subnational coordination.

3.2.2
HCTs and Clusters in country should adapt this training package to the local context and advocate for its use.

3.2.3
Donors should support and fund the development of this training package and its delivery in crises around the world.

RECOMMENDATION SET 4

Increasing the participation and influence of national and local civil society organisations in humanitarian coordination

Meeting participants strongly supported the broad recommendation that:

- international organisations should identify and understand the priorities and interests of national NGOs, and use this to more clearly demonstrate the benefits of engaging with the coordination system (12 votes)

Related to this and other broad recommendations (see 1 above), the following recommendations and associated actions emerged during the meeting:

Recommendation 4.1

Increase the participation of national and local civil society in coordination mechanisms by ensuring they have the human resource to participate

4.1.1

All actors engaged in humanitarian coordination should recognise the existing coordination mechanism is heavy and consider the implications for actors with limited capacity.

4.1.2

Donors, including UN agencies and INGOs that work through partners, should provide sufficient funding for national and local civil society to participate in coordination mechanisms.

4.1.3

Donors that fund UN agencies and INGOs that then work through partners should require these funded agencies and INGOs to report on Action 4.1.2.

Recommendation 4.2

Increase the meaningful participation of national and local civil society by demonstrating the value of coordination mechanisms

4.2.1

National NGO forums, and possibly INGO forums, should act as facilitators, amplifiers and allies

for national and local civil society participating in coordination mechanisms.

4.2.2 Donors should invest in national NGO forums, networks and consortiums to enable them to carry out Action 4.2.1.

4.2.3

HCTs should reserve spaces for national NGOs using transparent selection processes and ensuring a diverse range of national and local NGOs are represented (not just large, familiar ones).

4.2.4

The Building a Better Response initiative, which uses e-learning and short training to explain the humanitarian coordination system to national and local actors, should continue to improve the coordination literacy of local and national civil society, and work more closely with Global and national Clusters in particular, to demonstrate the value of participation in coordination to national and local NGOs.

4.2.5

Global Clusters should take steps to better demonstrate the value of including national and local NGOs to their Cluster Coordinators and members.

Recommendation 4.3

Ensure the involvement of local and national civil society in humanitarian coordination mechanisms is meaningful, fair and transparent

4.3.1

IASC and Global Clusters should determine and provide outline guidance on membership of the Clusters. Options might include:

- Open participation: all local and national civil society organisations are welcome to participate. Some elements of cluster business are addressed by smaller SAGs and *ad hoc* working groups. Membership of these smaller groups would be determined by a transparent and fair elections process.

- Criteria for participation: organisations (national, local and international) are welcome to participate if they meet certain criteria (potentially around contribution to the response).

This guidance would be interpreted locally, with the HCT determining whether adaptions are required for the specific context.

4.3.2

At a global and country level, further reflection should be done to determine whether the Cluster is the best place for capacity building, and what alternatives there are.

4.3.3

Donors and international organisations should advocate for the reconsideration of anti-terror legislation, and consider their own risk aversion, which contributes to mistrust and reduced capacity of local and national civil society.

4.3.4

Clusters, with the support of the Global Clusters, should take immediate steps to address language barriers that limit the participation of local and national civil society, by providing translation at meetings and/or of documentation, summarising key points and providing multiple opportunities to engage.
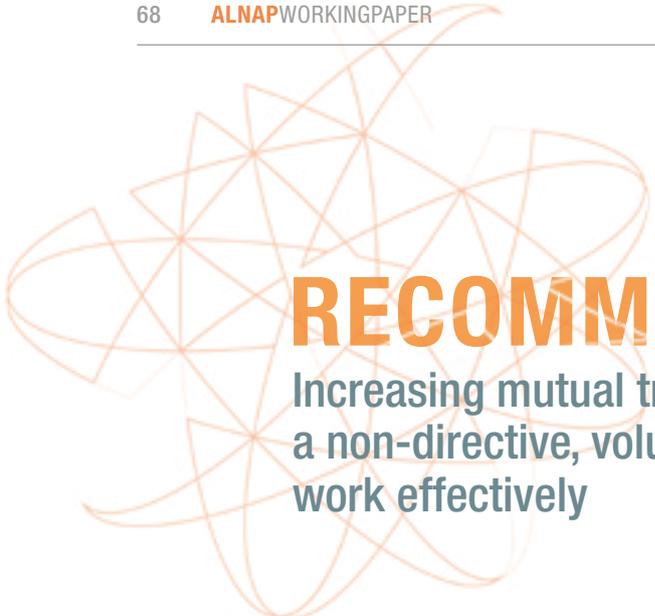
RECOMMENDATION SET 5

Increasing mutual trust among agencies, to allow for a non-directive, voluntary coordination systems that work effectively

Meeting participants strongly supported the recommendation to:

• increase mutual accountability among actors in the coordination structure (23 votes)

The following specific recommendations and associated actions emerged during the meeting:

Recommendation 5.1

Increase transparency of decision-making, prioritisation and funding

5.1.1
HCTs should encourage all members to contribute agenda items and commit to addressing any HCT member's priority items in the agenda, not leaving them to 'AOB'.

5.1.2
HCTs should create a light system of following up and reporting on commitments made in meetings.

5.1.3
As part of the Grand Bargain, donors should commit to putting a larger amount of funding through the HRP.

5.1.4
HCTs should consult donors during process of developing the HRP.

5.1.5
Donors should confront and question the HCT if the HRP is of poor quality, with the aim of improving the HRP rather than avoiding it.

5.1.6
Donors should recognise where the HCT has made difficult prioritisation decisions in the HRP by allocating funding based on this prioritisation.

Recommendation 5.2

Clarify expectations around coordination mechanism decisions and process

5.2.1

HCTs should clarify the expectations of each member on the deliverables of the HCT, including gender and accountability to affected populations, and make these issues a regular part of the discussion.

5.2.2

HCTs should clarify that, where decisions are made by the HCT, they are voluntary commitments reflecting each agency's programme and objectives, not 'top down' impositions.

5.2.3

Regular meetings should be held between the HCT and ICC, and should include discussions on expectations and role clarity.
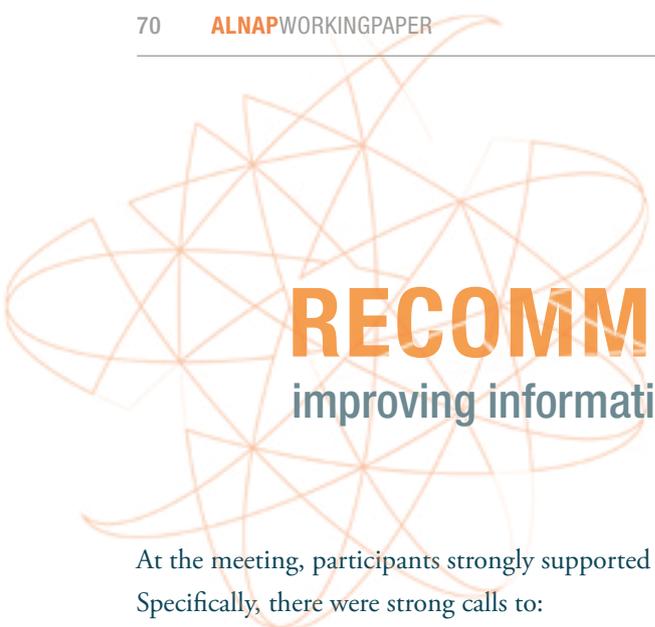
RECOMMENDATION SET 6
improving information management

At the meeting, participants strongly supported the need for a change of mind-set regarding IM. Specifically, there were strong calls to:

- fit IM processes and products more closely to operational needs (21 votes)

- increase the user-led design of IM systems (11 votes)

The following specific recommendations and associated actions emerged during the meeting:

Recommendation 6.1

Increase the use of common definitions and indicators within humanitarian information management

6.1.1
An inter-organisational body at global level (such as Sphere or the Core Humanitarian Standard) should develop (voluntary) information and data standards, for instance around common definitions for terms like 'household' and 'child' vs. 'youth', building on existing work in this area.

6.1.2
Country Clusters and their members (supported by OCHA) should increase use of the Humanitarian Indicator Registry

6.1.3
Country Clusters and their members should increase use of the humanitarian exchange language, HDX, to facilitate use of each other's information.

Recommendation 6.2

Fit information management processes and products more closely to operational needs

6.2.1
The Decision-Makers Needs Group should continue its work documenting the broad types of information needed for operational agencies to make operational decisions, and include within this which formats information is most usefully presented in.

6.2.2

The Global Clusters and OCHA should reconsider the information required to produce HPC products such as the HNO and SRP and identify the degree to which these needs can be met by aggregating operational information, rather than by collecting information specifically for the 'strategic' level.

6.2.3

OCHA (supported by the Global Clusters and operational organisations) should reflect on the operational utility of current HPC products and timeframes and adapt them to be more operationally useful – for example by reducing 'static' information products and aligning timelines to how data is used (in strategic and operational decisions).

6.2.4

All operational organisations should have dedicated IM specialists as part of their response.

6.2.5

Within INGOs and UN agencies at country level, managers and IM specialists should work together at or before the onset of a crisis, and over the course of the crisis, to identify data needs for their organisations, including priority needs.

6.2.6

IM specialists at country level (with the support of their agency headquarters) should, through the Clusters or ICC, share their own agency information needs and plans to collect data. Clusters/ICC should use this information to identify common operational IM needs.

6.2.7

HCTs, ICCs and Clusters should map IM requirements to better understand IM needs of donors (to justify funding), Clusters (to coordinate the response) and operational organisations (to programme).

6.2.8

Operational organisations should find ways to better use data in their operational work, and communicate any data needs to OCHA and the Clusters.

6.2.9

Donors should encourage greater use of data for operational decision-making, and greater operational relevance of IM and data products going forward.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGING FROM THE MEETING

The following recommendations were also made at the meeting but were not addressed in the same detail as the recommendations outlined above. They are, however, important elements in any process to improve the coordination system:

1. Reconsider the HPC to make it 'lighter', freeing up time and resource for more operational coordination.

2. Develop approaches to monitoring context and outcomes: ICC should collate monitoring data and have a continuously updated 'picture' of the response, showing what is working and what is not. This is fed to the HCT to help determine overall direction and priorities.

NEXT STEPS AND TAKE-UP

The country-level coordination system, by its nature, is jointly owned by a wide group of organisations. A large number of the recommendations above refer to OCHA: indeed, several of them build on activities OCHA is already conducting. However, there are also recommendations that require initiative to be taken by a number of other actors and groups, including the Global Clusters and CLAs, the donor community, specialist training and learning groups, NGOs and NGO networks and a number of initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Preparedness, the Information Managers Group, the Decision-Makers Needs Group, the Building a Better Response initiative and the HDX project. In some cases, and particularly those that relate to changes to formal guidance, the IASC may need to take action if the recommendations are to be addressed. And of course, many of the most important improvements will be made by HCTs and Clusters working in countries affected by crises.

The ALNAP Secretariat, which convened and hosted the meeting, will make these various stakeholders aware of these recommendations by disseminating this report and, where requested, briefing on the results of the meeting. In particular, the Secretariat will update OCHA and the Cluster/donor consultation group on the recommendations.

At the same time, we hope the participants at the meeting, who represent a cross-section of the stakeholders, will also consider how their organisations and networks can incorporate their recommendations into existing work plans, or possibly initiate new activities to address priority areas.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Sara	Almer	Leonie	Oates-Mercier
Mehmet	Balcilar	Joseph	Pfeifer
Priya	Behrens-Shah	Jennifer	Poidatz
Florien	Bisimwa	Dominique	Porteaud
Michelle	Brown	Surya	Rahman Muhammad
Shon	Campbell	Raheela	Saad
Oenone	Chadburn	Matthew	Sayer
Samantha	Chattaraj	Abdurahman	Sharif
Jo	de Serrano	Julia	Steets
Annie	Devonport	Astrid	van Genderen Stort
Amos	Doornbos	Diego	Villegas
Linda	Doull	Sian	Watters
Said	Faisal		
Cyril	Ferrand		
Manu	Gupta		
Caroline	Haskins		
Arzu	Hatakoy		
Annette	Hearns		
Loretta	Hieber-Girardet		
Arn	Howitt		
Pia	Hussein		
Josephine	Ippe		
Arafat	Jamal		
Jack	Jones		
Amy	Keith		
James	Kisia		
Audrey	Laffitte		
Jorge Ivan	Lopez Jaramillo		
Jesper	Lund		
Isaack	Manyama		
Jorge	Martinez		
Rosa	Mata Frances		
Panos	Moumtzis		
Guelnoudji	Ndjekounkosse		
Flemming	Neilsen		
Nuno	Nunes		

INTERVIEWEES

|			
Manuela	Angel	Isaack	Manyama
Jean-Philippe	Antolin	Jorge	Martinez
Mohamed	Arai	Pablo	Mateu
Tyler	Arnot	Petro	Matiaszek
Rajendra	Aryal	Michael	Mcdonald
Charlotte	Ashley	Kevin	Misenheimer
Allegra	Baiocchi	Brett	Moore
Neil	Bauman	Sara	Moussavi
Edward	Benson	Maeve	Murphy
Eric	Besse	Anne	Muthoni Wachira
Mark	Bowden	Catherine	Mutwiri
Justin	Brady	Guelnoudji	Ndjekounkosse
Robert	Bristow	Lars Peter	Nissen
Wedad	Bseiso	Dominic	Parker
Laurent	Bukera	Caroline	Peguet
David	Bulman	Joseph	Pfiefer
Nan	Buzard	Phuong	Pham
Shon	Campbell	Dave	Polatty
Samantha	Chattaraj	Linda	Poteat
William	Chemaly	Don	Price
Zurab	Elzarov	Ferran	Puig
Said	Faisal	Daniela	Raiman
Fiona	Frazer	Anna	Rich
Martijn	Goddeeris	Kelly	Ryan
Manu	Gupta	Raheela	Saad
Randa	Hassan	Kathrine	Starup
Annette	Hearns	Sven	Schmitz Leuffen
Loretta	Hieber-Girardet	Jim	Schwartz
Arnold	Howitt	Abdurahman	Sharif
Jerri	Husch	Mulugeta	Shibru
Arafat	Jamal	Julia	Steets
James	Kisia	Ellen	Van Kalmthout
Steven	Lauwerier	Andrej	Verity
Jesper	Lund	Michael	Yao
Heather	Macey		
Barbara	Mansi		
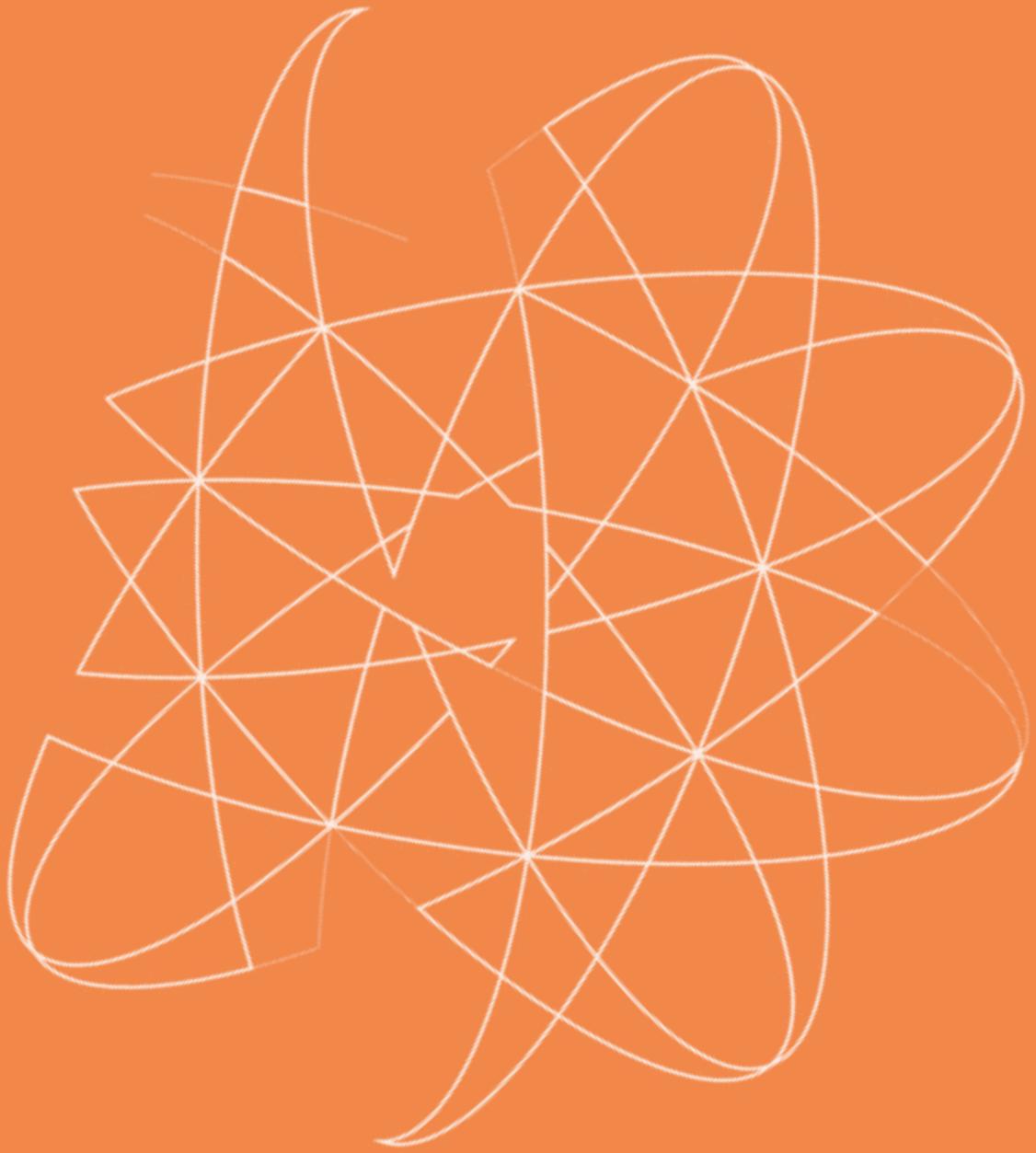
REFERENCES

Achakzai, B., Shepherd-Barron, J. and Bokhari, A. (2011) *Nutrition Cluster evaluation: Pakistan flood response.* Islamabad: Nutrition Cluster Pakistan. (www.alnap.org/resource/9578.aspx).

Alexander, J. (2009) *Emergency shelter Cluster review, Cyclone Nargis, Myanmar.* Geneva: IFRC. (www.alnap.org/resource/5667.aspx).

Altay, N. and Labonte, M. (2014) 'Challenges in humanitarian information management and exchange: Evidence from Haiti'. *Disasters,* 38(S1). (www.alnap.org/resource/10461.aspx).

Bailey, S. (2013) *Coordination and cash transfers*. London: Humanitarian Futures Programme, King's College. (www.alnap.org/resource/23599.aspx).

Beer, R. (2009) *Research to improve the effectiveness of INGO activities and future humanitarian coordination in Iraq final report.* Oslo: NRC. (www.alnap.org/resource/5817.aspx).

Bennett, N. (2009) *Missing pieces? Assessing the impact of humanitarian reform in Pakistan.* Oxford: Oxfam. (www.alnap.org/resource/11928.aspx).

Bennett, J., Bertrand, W., Harkin, C., Samarasinghe, S. and Wickramatillake, H. (2006) *Coordination of international humanitarian assistance in tsunami-affected countries.* London: TEC. (www.alnap.org/resource/3530.aspx).

Beúnza, A. C. (2011) *A review of the 2009 Tropical Storm Ida floods IFRC-led shelter Cluster in El Salvador.* Geneva: IFRC. (www.alnap.org/resource/10742.aspx).

Cairns, E. (2012) *Crises in a new world order: Challenging the humanitarian project.* Oxford: Oxfam GB. (www.alnap.org/resource/11961.aspx).

CaLP, SDC and OCHA. (2015) *Cash coordination learning event workshop report.* Oxford: CaLP. (www.alnap.org/resource/23619.aspx).

Campbell, L. (2015) *Roundtables on coordination.* London: ALNAP/ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/21594.aspx).

Clarke, N., Loveless, J., Ojok, B., Routley, S. and Vaux, T. (2015) *Report of the Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the response to the crisis in South Sudan.* Geneva: IAHE. (www.alnap.org/resource/22828.aspx).

Cohen, M. J. and Gingerich, T. (2015) *Turning the humanitarian system on its head.* Boston, MA: Oxfam America. (www.alnap.org/resource/20720.aspx).

Cosgrave, J. (2007). *Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, synthesis report: Expanded summary, joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami.* London: TEC. (www.alnap.org/resource/5536.aspx).

Cosgrave, J. (2010) *Inter-agency real time evaluation of the humanitarian response to Pakistan's 2009 displacement crisis.* Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/5880.aspx).

Culbert, V. (2011) *Protection cluster co-facilitation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: lessons learned for Oxfam's protection cluster support project.* Oxford: Oxfam. (www.alnap.org/resource/19369.aspx).

Darcy, J. and Hofmann, C. A. (2003) *According to need?* London: HPG/ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/10520.aspx).

Darcy, J., Bonard, P. and Dini, S. (2012) *IASC real time evaluation (IASC RTE) of the humanitarian response to the Horn of Africa drought crisis – Somalia 2011-2012.* Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/7506.aspx).

De Waal, A. (1997) *Famine crimes: Politics and the disaster relief industry in Africa.* London: African Rights. (www.alnap.org/resource/23600.aspx).

De Silva, S., Gotoh, K., Griekspoor, A., Hall, I., Hilfiker, C., Labovitz, J., Martone, G. and Zejjari, M. (2006) *Real-time evaluation of the cluster approach: Pakistan earthquake.* (www.alnap.org/resource/3454.aspx).

Diagn, K. and Solberg, A. (2008) *Lessons learned from UNHCR's emergency operation for internally displaced persons in Kenya.* Geneva: UNHCR. (www.alnap.org/resource/5635.aspx).

Digital Humanitarian Network. (n.d.) *The humanitarian decision makers taxonomy.* (www.alnap.org/resources/23601.aspx).

Donini, A. and Brown, D. (2014) *Rhetoric or reality? Putting affected people at the centre of humanitarian action.* ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/12859.aspx).

Dubois, M., Wake, C., Sturridge, S. and Bennett, C. (2015) *The Ebola response in West Africa.* London: HPG/ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/21357.aspx).

Duffield, M. (2001) 'Governing the borderlands: Decoding the power of aid'. *Disasters,* 25(4): 308–320. (www.alnap.org/resource/23602.aspx).

Featherstone, A. (2014) *Learning from disaster.* London: ALNAP/ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/10907.aspx).

Flint, M. and Goyder, H. (2006) *Funding the tsunami response*. London: TEC. (www.alnap.org/resource/3534.aspx).

Haver, K. and Foley, C. (2011) *'Regional and international initiatives, humanitarian outcomes' Background Paper 2. International Dialogue on Strengthening Partnership in Disaster Response: Bridging National and International Support'* London: Humanitarian Outcomes. (www.alnap.org/resource/10841.aspx).

Ghani, A., Lockhart, C. and Carnahan, M. (2005) *Closing the sovereignty gap: An approach to state-building.* London: ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/9370.aspx).

Global Clusters. (2015) *Enhancing operational coordination to improve humanitarian effectiveness.* Geneva: Global Clusters. (www.alnap.org/resource/23603.aspx).

Global Food Security Cluster. (2015) *Food security cluster IM tool introduction.* Rome: Global Food Security Cluster. (www.alnap.org/resource/23604.aspx).

Hanley, T., Binas, R., Murray, J. and Tribulano, B. (2014) *IASC inter agency humanitarian evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan response.* Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/19318.aspx).

Harvey, P. (2010) *The role of national governments in international humanitarian response.* London: ALNAP/ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/5966.aspx).

Harvey, P. and Harmer, A. (2011) *International dialogue on strengthening partnership in disaster response: bridging national and international support. Building trust.* London: Humanitarian Outcomes. (www.alnap.org/resource/10204.aspx).

Hedlund, K. and Knox Clarke, P. (2011) *Humanitarian action in drought-related emergencies.* ALNAP Lessons Paper. London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/6156.aspx).

High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers. (2015) *Doing cash differently: How cash transfers can transform humanitarian aid.* London: ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/21084.aspx).

High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing. (2016) *Too important to fail—addressing the humanitarian financing gap.* New York: UN. (www.alnap.org/resource/21743.aspx).

Hobbs, C., Gordon, M. and Bogart, B. (2012) 'When business is not as usual: Decision-making and the humanitarian response to the famine in South Central Somalia'. *Global Food Security* 1(1): 50–56. (www.alnap.org/resource/23605.aspx).

Houghton, R. (2008) *Education Cluster: Country-level lessons learned review.* London: Save the Children. (www.alnap.org/resource/23606.aspx).

Howitt, A. and Leonard, H. (eds) (2009) *Managing crises*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (www.alnap.org/resource/12582.aspx).

Humphries, V. (2013) Improving humanitarian coordination: Common challenges and lessons learned from the cluster approach. Medford, MA: Tufts University. (www.alnap.org/resource/19375.aspx).

IASC. (2008) *Operational guidance on responsibilities of cluster/sector leads and OCHA in information management.* Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/23607.aspx).

IASC. (2009) *Guidance for humanitarian country teams*. Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/9565.aspx).

IASC. (2012) *Reference module for cluster coordination at the country level.* Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/19376.aspx).

IASC. (2015) *IASC reference module for the implementation of the humanitarian programme cycle: version 2.0.* Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/21724.aspx).

Jensen, J. and Waugh, W. L. (2014) 'The United States' experience with the incident command system: What we think we know and what we need to know more about'. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management,* 22(1): 5–17. (www.alnap.org/resource/23608.aspx).

Jepersen, C. (2009) Review of the Baluchistan earthquake response 2008-2009 IFRC-led emergency shelter cluster. Geneva: IFRC. (www.alnap.org/resource/8339.aspx).

Kauffmann, D. (2012) Review of cash-transfer coordination in Haiti following the earthquake of January 2010. Plaisains/Oxford: Groupe URD/CaLP. (www.alnap.org/resource/7068.aspx).

Kauffmann, D. and Kruger, S. (2010) *IASC cluster approach evaluation, 2nd phase country study, April 2010 – Myanmar.* Berlin/Plaisains: GPPi/Groupe URD. (www.alnap.org/resource/5948.aspx).

Knox Clarke, P. (2014) *Between chaos and control: Rethinking operational leadership.* ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/12671.aspx).

Knox Clarke, P. and Campbell, L. (2015) *Exploring coordination in humanitarian clusters.* ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/20360.aspx).

Knox Clarke, P. and Darcy, J. (2014) *Insufficient evidence? The quality and use of evidence in humanitarian action.* ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/10441.aspx).

Knox Clarke, P. and Obrecht, A. (2015) *Global forum for improving humanitarian action: results and analysis.* London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/20717.aspx).

Knox Clarke, P. and Obrecht, A. (2016) *Good humanitarian action is led by the state and builds on local response capacities.* London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/20243.aspx).

Knox Clarke, P. and Ramalingam, B. (2012) *Meeting the urban challenge.* London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/6606.aspx).

Krueger, S., Derzsi-Horvath, A. and Steets, J. (2016) *IASC transformative agenda: A review of reviews and their follow-up. Berlin: GPPI/Inspire Consortium.* (www.alnap.org/resource/22416.aspx).

Lawday, A., Adjibade, K., Dahrendorf, N., Kubwayezu, F. and Morinière, L. C. (2016) *Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation (IAHE) of the response to the Central African Republic's crisis 2013-2015.* New York: IAHE. (www.alnap.org/resource/23027.aspx).

Leonard, H.B. and Howitt, A. (2010) *Organizing response to extreme emergencies. The Victorian bushfires of 2009.* (www.alnap.org/resource/9608.aspx).

Massing, S. and Jonas, A. (2008) *Service delivery in fragile situations*. Paris: OECD. (www.alnap.org/resource/9318.aspx).

Maxwell, D. and Parker, J. (2012) 'Coordination in food security crises: A stakeholder analysis of the challenges facing the global food security cluster'. *Food Security,* 4(1): 25–40. (www.alnap.org/resource/19895.aspx).

McDonald, B. (2010) *IASC guidelines: common operational datasets (CODs) in disaster preparedness and response.* New York: OCHA/IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/23609.aspx).

Morton, J. and Mousseau, F. (2010) *Addressing chronic food insecurity in the Horn of Africa : Good practice identified, but commitment needed*. Nairobi: REGLAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/23610.aspx).

Neseni, N. and Guzha, E. (2009) *Evaluation of the WASH response to the 2008–2009 Zimbabwe cholera epidemic and preparedness planning for future outbreaks.* Harare: Zimbabwe WASH Cluster. (www.alnap.org/resource/12498.aspx).

O'Donnell, V. (2014) *WASH information management toolkit: Guidance note.* Geneva: Global WASH Cluster. (www.alnap.org/resource/23611.aspx).

OCHA. (2015) *Afghanistan coordination architecture review.* New York: UN OCHA. (www.alnap.org/resource/23612.aspx).

OCHA. (2016) *Global overview of coordination arrangements.* New York: UN OCHA. (www.alnap.org/resource/23613.aspx).

Patrick, J. (2011) *Evaluation insights: Haiti earthquake response*. London: ALNAP/ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/6125.aspx).

Pfeiffer, J., Johnson, W., Fort, M., Shakow, A., Hagopian, A., Gloyd, S. and Gimbel-Sherr, K. (2008) 'Strengthening health systems in poor countries: A code of conduct for nongovernmental organizations'. *American Journal of Public Health,* 98(12): 2134–2140. (www.alnap.org/resource/23614.aspx).

Polastro, R., Khalif, M. A., van Ebyen, M., Posada, S., Salah, A., Steen, N. and Toft, E. (2011) IASC evaluation of the humanitarian response in South Central Somalia 2005-2010. Madrid: DARA. (www.alnap.org/resource/9301.aspx).

Poole, L. (2014) *Funding at the sharp end.* London: CAFOD. (www.alnap.org/resource/12547.aspx).

Ramalingam, B., Gray, B. and Cerruti, G. (2013) *Missed opportunities: The case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses.* London: Christian Aid. (www.alnap.org/resource/8890.aspx).

Saavedra, L. (2016) *We know our wounds: National and local organisations involved in humanitarian response in Lebanon.* ALNAP Country Study. London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/22462.aspx).

Salomons, D. and Dijkzeul, D. (2008) 'Clusters or clutter: Structuring humanitarian space in Chad', in Hoebink, P. (ed.), *The Netherlands yearbook on international cooperation.* Assen: Royal Van Gorcum. (www.alnap.org/resource/19390.aspx).

Scriven, K. (2013) A networked response? Exploring national humanitarian networks in Asia. ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/8662.aspx).

Slim, H. (2012) IASC real-time evaluation of the humanitarian response to the Horn of Africa drought in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. New York: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/7761.aspx).

STAIT. (2015) *Humanitarian country teams & inter cluster coordination linkages.* [Webinar]. (www.alnap.org/resource/23620.aspx).

Steets, J., Grünewald, F., Binder, A. and de Geoffroy, V. (2010) *Cluster approach evaluation 2 synthesis report.* Berlin/Plasains: GPPi/Groupe URD. (www.alnap.org/resource/5986.aspx).

Steets, J., Darcy, J., Weingartner, L. and Leguene, P. (2014) *Joint evaluation of food security cluster coordination in humanitarian action.* Rome: WFP/FAO. (www.alnap.org/resource/19395.aspx).

Steets, J., Binder, A., Derzsi-horvath, A., Krüger, S. and Ruppert, L. (2016) *Drivers and inhibitors of change in the humanitarian system.* Berlin: GPPi. (www.alnap.org/resource/22488.aspx).

Stocking, B., Muyembe-Tamfun, J., Shuaib, F., Alberto-Banatin, C., Frenk, J. and Kickbusch, I. (2015) *Report of the Ebola interim assessment panel.* Geneva: WHO. (www.alnap.org/resource/20513.aspx).

Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., Haver, K., Salomons, D. and Wheeler, V. (2007) *Cluster approach evaluation.* New York: UN OCHA. (www.alnap.org/resource/3641.aspx).

Stoddard, A., Harmer, A. and Hughes, M. (2015) *The state of the humanitarian system 2015 edition.* London: ALNAP. (www.alnap.org/resource/21036.aspx).

Svoboda, E. and Pantuliano, S. (2015) *International and local/diaspora actors in the Syria response.* London: HPG/ODI. (www.alnap.org/resource/20835.aspx).

Swithern, S. (2015) *Global humanitarian assistance report 2015.* Bristol: Development Initiatives. (www.alnap.org/resource/20431.aspx).

Truhlarova, D. C. (2015) *Review of cash coordination in Ukraine.* Geneva: UNHCR. (www.alnap.org/resource/23615.aspx).

Turner, R., Baker, J., Oo, Z.M. and Aye, N. S. (2008) *Inter-agency real time evaluation of the response to Cyclone Nargis.* Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/8296.aspx).

UNGA. (2016) *One humanity: shared responsibility. Report of the Secretary General for the World Humanitarian Summit.* New York: UNGA. (www.alnap.org/resource/21845.aspx).

UNHCR. (n.d.) 'Information/data management strategy', in UNHCR, *Emergency Information management toolkit.* Geneva: UNHCR. (www.alnap.org/resource/23567.aspx).

UNHCR/DRC. (2015) *Protection information management (PIM). Working meeting outcome document.* Geneva: UNHCR/DRC. (www.alnap.org/resource/23616.aspx).

UNICEF. (n.d.) *Interview with Steven Mitchell on ActivityInfo system.* New York: UNICEF. (www.alnap.org/resource/23617.aspx).

Verity, A., Mackinnon, K. and Link, Y. (2014) *OCHA information management guidance: Sudden onset emergencies.* New York: OCHA. (www.alnap.org/resource/19898.aspx).

WHS. (2016) *The grand bargain – a shared commitment to better serve people in need.* Istanbul: WHS. (www.alnap.org/resource/23618.aspx).

Young, N., Khattak, S. G., Bengali, K. and Elmi, L. (2007) IASC inter-agency real-time evaluation of the Pakistan floods/Cyclone Yemyin. Geneva: IASC. (www.alnap.org/resource/3556.aspx).

ALNAP
Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T   + 44 (0)20 7922 0388
E   alnap@alnap.org
🐦   @ALNAP

www.alnap.org/what-we-do/leadership-coordination

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ALNAP