

A Basic NGO Coordination Guide Version 1.0

ICVA — International Council of Voluntary Agencies
www.icvanetwork.org

April 2013

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Background to the Guide	4
Phase I – The Research Phase	5
Phase II – This Guide	5
The Guide’s Focus	5
Who Is This Guide For?	5
How to Use This Guide.....	6
The Term “NGO”	6
What This Guide is Not	6
How to Provide Your Inputs and Suggestions to the Guide	7
Acknowledgements	7
Section 1: Definitions of Coordination	8
Section 2: Why Coordinate?	10
1. What is humanitarian coordination?.....	10
2. Whose responsibility is humanitarian coordination?	10
3. Why should my NGO coordinate?	11
4. What are the benefits for my NGO?.....	11
5. What’s the role of the United Nations (UN)?	11
6. How does the UN coordinate?	11
7. If the UN is so active, why do NGOs need to be involved?.....	12
8. What is the role of NGOs in the cluster system?.....	12
9. How can NGOs engage with the clusters?.....	12
10. What is the mandate for NGOs to participate in coordination?	12
11. What issues does NGO coordination involve?	12
12. What does coordination entail?	12
13. How does NGO coordination fit into these categories?.....	13
14. Why do NGOs set up their own coordination bodies?	13
15. What makes NGO coordination bodies different?	13
16. How can an NGO coordination body be sustainable?	13
17. Why don't we see more NGO coordination?	13
18. How can my NGO support coordination?	13
19. How can my senior staff support coordination?	14
20. What are the benefits of NGO coordination for my staff?.....	14
Resource: Sphere Core Standard 2: Coordination and collaboration	15
Resource: <i>Principles of Partnership</i>	18
Section 3: The Context of Coordination	19
Section 4: Deciding the Appropriateness of Separate NGO Coordination	21
Basic Problem Analysis	22
Factors to Consider when Deciding NGO Coordination Priorities and Activities.....	23
NGO Coordination Mechanisms and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT)	25
When NGO Coordination has Unintended Negative Impacts: The Example of Haiti.....	25
Assessing the Need for NGO Coordination: The Example of NCCI.....	26
Common Pitfalls of NGO Coordination	27
Resources and Further Reading	27
Section 5: Possible Functions of an NGO Coordination Body	28
NGO Coordination and Advocacy: The Example of AIDA.....	30
Resource: Field-level Security Coordination Platforms.....	31

Section 6: Members of an NGO Coordination Body	34
Benefits of Coordination Between International and National NGOs in Humanitarian Response	35
Practical Examples of LNGO-NNGO-INGO Coordination.....	36
When is Exclusivity in NGO Coordination Justified?	36
Sample Elements of Terms of Reference of Inclusive NGO Coordination Bodies.....	37
References and Further Reading	37
Section 7: Five Elements of NGO Coordination Bodies	38
Resources and Further Reading	39
NGO Coordination Staff and Governance.....	40
Resource: How to Facilitate Coordination Meetings	41
Section 8: Developing Financial Sustainability for NGO Coordination Mechanisms	45
Durability Over the Years: The Example of ACBAR	48
Section 9: Good Governance and NGO Performance	49
The Importance of Good Governance in NGO Coordination	49
Examples of Good Governance Promotion.....	49
Key Considerations for Good Governance of NGO Coordination Bodies	50
Promoting Quality, Accountability, and Performance through NGO Coordination.....	51
Possible Ways that NGO Coordination Bodies can Promote Accountability	52
Reference and Further Reading	52
Section 10: Evaluating NGO Coordination	54
Evaluation Approach 1: Case Study	55
Evaluation Approach 2: Service Delivery (Logical Framework approach).....	57
Evaluation Approach 3: Adaptation of the OECD/DAC Evaluating Humanitarian Action Criteria (Systems Approach)	57
Evaluation Approach 4: Cluster Evaluation II, Adapted to an NGO Coordination Mechanism	59
Further Reading	60

Introduction

Welcome to a basic Guide on NGO coordination. This Guide is not meant to be a definitive “how to” manual, but it focuses on issues and areas to consider when undertaking NGO coordination and when setting up an NGO coordination body. It is an entry point into the world of NGO coordination – an area of humanitarian response that is vast in practice, but that is also quite limited in terms of documentation and available resources. The Guide is a contribution towards improving NGO coordination so that the wheel does not have to be reinvented by those embarking upon such coordination – whether they be local, national, or international NGOs.

NGO coordination is not an end in itself: it should be a means to an end, such as improving humanitarian response in some way. NGO coordination generally complements existing coordination mechanisms and should not seek to compete with them. It is meant to improve the quality of the work of NGOs, not a way to “tell” NGOs what to do. NGO coordination generally takes place because of a perceived need and often fills a gap that other coordination efforts do not address.

Background to the Guide

This Guide comes as part of a much longer effort that the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) has been undertaking to facilitate NGO coordination in humanitarian response. It is the product of several years of research and practical experience that the ICVA Secretariat and ICVA members have had with NGO coordination. There is a great deal of coordination taking place among NGOs, whether informally or through more formal NGO coordination mechanisms, within the broader context of coordination. However, much of what is learned from these coordination experiences has not been systematically documented. Lessons have been lost and efforts have been duplicated in different contexts because there has not been easy access to existing resources.

In 1992, ICVA undertook an NGO Coordination Project, which mapped 150 field-based NGO coordination bodies around the world, examined some in detail, and developed a handbook that took experiences and converted them into a “‘blueprint’ for setting up a field-based coordination mechanism.” (Bennett 1994). The landscape of humanitarian response, and of NGOs and NGO coordination in particular, has changed dramatically since the mid-1990s and ICVA’s earlier work.

Over the years, ICVA has also engaged in practical support to in-country coordination. From supporting NGO coordination in Guatemala in the early 1990s, ICVA Bosnia and ICVA Belgrade were created in the mid-1990s to support NGO coordination. In the late 1990s, ICVA moved to providing support to NGO coordination in various forms. An NGO Information Officer, Paul Currion, was put in place in Kosovo in 1999. Following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and earthquake, a consultant, Bill Canny, looked at how NGO coordination could be supported, producing a study that suggested a number of ways forward. An NGO Liaison Officer, Kerren Hedlund, was put in place in Myanmar in 2008, to support coordination following Cyclone Nargis. In 2009, interim support was given to the NGO Steering Committee in Khartoum, Sudan by ICVA’s Policy Officer, Manisha Thomas. In 2010, following the earthquake in Haiti, ICVA worked with InterAction to set up an NGO Coordination Support Office, by sending its Senior Policy Officer, Manisha Thomas, to Haiti to work with InterAction staff, as well as staff from the Sphere Project, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP), and People In Aid. Future support will be provided by ICVA to NGO coordination when requested and necessary. In addition, ICVA will be developing regional hubs in 2013 to ensure better NGO coordination at the country level. The first regional hub will be opened in Bangkok, Thailand in mid-2013, followed by regional hubs being established in East Africa, West Africa, and the Middle East.

Phase I – The Research Phase

In 2010, ICVA commissioned research to look at what works well and what does not work well when it comes to NGO coordination. Nine case studies¹ of NGO coordination bodies, along with an Overview Report, and a Lessons Learned document were published by ICVA in 2011 under the title *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*. Given that the case studies focused on more formalised NGO coordination attempts, the research could not fully address the range of less formal NGO coordination mechanisms.

Phase II – This Guide

The research from the first phase found that while NGO coordination takes place in many humanitarian contexts, there is very little practical guidance available for humanitarian coordination in general, and almost none for NGO coordination specifically. This Guide is intended as a starting point for developing this area of humanitarian endeavour. The idea of the NGO coordination work that ICVA has undertaken is to gather experiences, lessons learned, and to make as many NGO coordination resources readily accessible for NGOs – whether local, national, or international – so that they can ideally find whatever they need on NGO coordination in one place.

The Guide's Focus

This Guide centres on how to set up and manage an NGO coordination body, which includes local, national, and/or international NGOs. This focus was chosen because one of the trends identified in the research phase was that NGO coordination bodies are more common than generally recognised. These bodies are usually formed when informal coordination – based solely on personal relationships and casual meetings – are unable to address issues that affect the entire NGO community in a country.

The *Lessons Learned* document from the research acts as a companion piece to this Guide, while the *Case Studies* and *Overview Report* are supplementary reading that provides more detail on specific experiences in the field. The Guide also incorporates some of the critical material dealing with wider issues of coordination, such as security, sustainability and accountability, drawing on documents produced by the UN system, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, NGOs, and other research bodies. The Guide does not include a comprehensive discussion of these issues, but should hopefully help you to think more critically about them.

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide is for operational NGOs that wish to coordinate their activities with each other and with external actors, such as national and local governments; the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement; the United Nations; donors; and other actors during a humanitarian response. It is intended to help NGOs to establish their own coordination processes to complement, not duplicate or replace other coordination mechanisms – such as those set up by government or UN bodies or the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. It is focused on NGO coordination bodies and, as such, is limited in its scope for now. Future versions may expand the focus and content of the Guide (see further below).

It is intended as a resource for NGOs – whether they are local, national, or international. It is primarily focused on humanitarian response situations, but there are elements that are applicable in other contexts.

¹ The case studies cover: Afghanistan (1998-2010); Haiti (2010); Iraq (2003-2010); Kosovo (1999-2002); Myanmar (2008-2010); the occupied Palestinian Territories (oPT) (1967-2010); Pakistan (2002-2010); South Sudan (1996-2010); and Sudan (1999-2010).

How to Use This Guide

The Guide can be read in its entirety or you can look at the individual sections relevant to your work. Most sections have been drafted to stand alone, so that you can quickly access the information or resources that you need.

As the name implies, it is meant to guide your work – not provide definitive recipes for success in NGO coordination. Each context will be different and will require adaptation. The resources can help you to shape what you need for your NGO coordination mechanism. The Guide may also help you adapt an existing mechanism, as any coordination mechanism needs to change as the context changes.

Users of the Guide are encouraged to engage with the issues it raises and use the resources listed in the *Further Reading* section to develop their own perspectives.

The Term “NGO”

Whenever a reference is made to “NGO” in the Guide, it refers to local, national, *or* international NGOs. Local NGOs (LNGOs) and national NGOs (NNGOs) are, in places in the Guide, grouped together as NNGOs, simply to save space; not to diminish the importance of LNGOs. When references are to international NGOs (INGOs), they are named specifically.

What This Guide is Not

The Guide does not provide all the answers to the challenges of NGO coordination. As noted above, it is also not a guaranteed recipe for a successful NGO coordination body. It tries to provide options, issues to consider, and possible solutions (or where such solutions may be found.) Each context will have its own challenges and the NGOs involved in coordination will often have to face tough choices. Hopefully, this Guide will be a resource to help in finding ways to meet some of those challenges.

It does not reflect the official position of ICVA or any of its members. It does not claim to provide the definitive perspective on other coordination mechanisms, such as the cluster approach.

The Guide is also not a final product: it is an initial attempt to provide a useful resource. It was felt that putting something out that is a “living document” for people to comment on would likely get more feedback than striving towards a definitive Guide. NGO coordination is constantly changing as humanitarian response changes and new lessons and practice need to be constantly gathered. ICVA is hoping that the Guide will be a tool and resource that will be added to by the NGOs that engage in coordination – whether local, national, or international NGOs – as they are best placed to point out what works well, what does not, and to provide useful resources for others to use in the future.

How to Provide Your Inputs and Suggestions to the Guide

This Guide is Version 1.0 – it is meant to be an initial offering to NGOs in the hopes that its contents will be useful. It is not exhaustive and definite improvements can be made to the Guide. Your experiences with NGO coordination and in reading and using the Guide will help to make those improvements, additions, and changes.

The Guide is being made available on ICVA's website (www.icvanetwork.org) and highlighted through various social media (such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook) in the hopes of sparking a discussion and encouraging comments and feedback.

The ICVA Secretariat will also collect input and comments sent by e-mail on the Guide and will look at potentially producing a Version 1.1 later in 2013: secretariat@icvanetwork.org.

Acknowledgements

The ICVA Executive Committee, in particular, provided invaluable feedback on initial drafts, with additional excellent comments from Aimee Ansari (Oxfam), Caitlin Brady (IRC), Fabrizio Carboni (ICRC), Vladimir Hernandez (CFSI), Edward Hew (MERCY Malaysia), Charles-Antoine Hoffman (SCHR), Takeshi Komino (CWS), Oliver Lacey-Hall (OCHA), Jemilah Mahmood (independent), Jean McCluskey (independent) and Mamadou Ndiaye (OFADEC). The Guide was also discussed at a meeting of NGO coordination bodies convened by InterAction in Washington, DC in May 2012, where further feedback was provided.

Development of the Guide was commissioned and managed by ICVA, drawing on funds from an earlier contribution by Church World Service-Asia/Pacific for NGO coordination work.

Research and Initial Draft by Paul Currion and Kerren Hedlund
Editing and final draft by Manisha Thomas

Section 1: Definitions of Coordination

While coordination is a commonly used phrase in the humanitarian community, there is no one agreed definition nor are there yet agreed principles for coordination. Included here are some of the definitions that have been proposed over the years.

Miner, L., U. Chellia, J. Crisp, J. Macinlay and T. Weiss (1992). *UN Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis 1990-1992*, Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies:

Coordination is the systematic utilization of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include: (1) strategic planning; (2) gathering data and managing information; (3) mobilizing resources and assuring accountability; (4) orchestrating a functional division of labour in the field; (5) negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities; and (6) providing leadership. Sensibly and sensitively employed, such instruments inject an element of discipline without unduly constraining action.

Donini, A. (1996). *The Policies of Mercy – UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda*. Institute for International Studies:

- a) *coordination by command—coordination in which strong leadership is accompanied by some sort of authority, whether carrot or stick;*
- b) *coordination by consensus—coordination in which leadership is essentially a function of the capacity to orchestrate a coherent response and to mobilize the key actors around common objectives and priorities. Consensus in this instance is normally achieved without any direct assertion of authority by the coordinator;*
- c) *coordination by default—coordination that, in the absence of a formal coordination entity, involves only the most rudimentary exchange of information and division of labor among the actors.*

Bennett, J. (1994). *NGO Coordination at Field Level: A Handbook*, ICVA:

Coordination is not a bureaucratic imposition designed to stifle the independence and imagination of individual NGOs; it is a tool for increasing the effectiveness of a collective endeavour. The challenge is to design a structure conducive to strengthening cooperation without limiting the freedom of any one participant.

Lautze, S. et al. (1998). *Strategic Humanitarian Coordination in the Great Lakes, 1996-1997: An Independent Assessment*, OCHA:

the IASC [Inter-Agency Standing Committee] has not defined strategic coordination, but rather has instead listed functions that describe what it considers to be the composite elements of two related tasks, strategic and operational coordination. The composite functions of strategic coordination, according to the IASC, include:

1. *setting the overall direction and goals of the UN humanitarian programme;*
2. *allocating tasks and responsibilities within that programme and ensuring*

- that they are reflected in a strategic plan;*
3. *advocacy for humanitarian principles;*
 4. *negotiating access to affected populations;*
 5. *ensuring correspondence between resources mobilized and established priorities;*
 6. *monitoring and evaluating the overall implementation of the programme; and,*
 7. *liaising with military and political actors of the international community, including those of the UN.*

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (2011), *Humanitarian Coordination: What Do We Stand For?*, SCHR:

Humanitarian coordination should focus on peoples' needs, increase the scope and impact of humanitarian action, and allow for real accountability. Effective coordination is only possible when the diversity of the humanitarian community is respected and when it is acknowledged that this diversity is in fact an asset for the quality of the humanitarian response. Coordination should structure the humanitarian response according to the comparative advantages of each humanitarian actor in order to ensure complementary action.

Section 2: Why Coordinate?

“Why coordinate?” is an often asked question, especially if coordination is seen as taking up valuable time that could be used for running your organisation’s programmes and operations. While many coordination forums do take up time without much return, at least some coordination forums provide an added-value: otherwise, people would not keep coming back to them.

Coordination must have clear goals and be a means to an end, not an end in itself. As per the *Principles of Partnership*², effective humanitarian action “requires result-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.”

The following questions are addressed to provide some reasons as to why there is value in engaging in coordination:

1. What is humanitarian coordination?
2. Whose responsibility is humanitarian coordination?
3. Why should my NGO coordinate?
4. What are the benefits for my NGO?
5. What’s the role of the United Nations (UN)?
6. How does the UN coordinate?
7. If the UN is so active, why do NGOs need to be involved?
8. What is the role of NGOs in the cluster system?
9. How can NGOs engage in the cluster system?
10. What is the mandate for NGOs to participate in coordination?
11. What issues does NGO coordination involve?
12. What does NGO coordination entail?
13. How does NGO coordination fit into these categories?
14. Why do NGOs set up their own coordination bodies?
15. What makes NGO coordination bodies different?
16. How can an NGO coordination body be sustainable?
17. Why don’t we see more NGO coordination?
18. How can my NGO support coordination?
19. How can my senior staff support coordination?
20. What are the benefits for my staff?

1. What is humanitarian coordination?

There is no single agreed definition of humanitarian coordination, but the most durable has been “the systematic utilization of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner.” (Miner et al 1992). At its simplest, coordination is simply minimising gaps and duplications in emergency relief while promoting humanitarian principles and good practice.

2. Whose responsibility is humanitarian coordination?

The primary responsibility for humanitarian coordination always rests with the national government of the area affected by a humanitarian crisis. However this coordination may be complicated if the government is engaged in an on-going conflict, antagonistic towards the area affected, or simply too

² The *Principles of Partnership* (PoP) were endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007. The principles are: equality, transparency, result-oriented approach; responsibility; and complementarity. The PoP are included as a Resource in this section. See www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org for numerous translations of the PoP.

weak to provide leadership. NGOs, in particular, must stay politically informed in such circumstances.

3. Why should my NGO coordinate?

The Sphere Project notes that coordination is necessary “to make our responses more effective, appropriate and accountable.”³ OCHA states that “humanitarian coordination seeks to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability, accountability and partnership.”⁴ Coordination can increase complementarity in responses, reduce duplication, and bring about better aid for those with whom, and for whom, we work. There is broad consensus that these outcomes are clearly in the best interests of the affected populations.

Each NGO will take decisions about the coordination mechanisms in which it will participate, often based on operational priorities. Coordination mechanisms can help NGOs to be more effective in their operations. Partnerships are often created through coordination, which can lead to better humanitarian response. Sometime donors require NGOs to participate in coordination mechanisms, such as clusters, before they will provide funding to an NGO.

Participation in NGO coordination mechanisms will be based on concerns and priorities for your NGO. They allow for issues not covered by other coordination mechanisms to be addressed. NGO coordination mechanisms tend to allow for greater influence as a collective group of NGOs when raising concerns with other actors. NGO coordination mechanisms can also provide easier access to some external actors – such as government representatives, donors, or UN agencies.

4. What are the benefits for my NGO?

Participation in coordination mechanisms helps to ensure that your NGO’s views are represented in policy discussions, enabling you to raise critical issues (such as vulnerable populations and gaps in the response). Such participation is usually viewed favourably by NGO colleagues, government, and UN representatives, as well as the donor community, potentially creating opportunities for partnerships and funding.

5. What’s the role of the United Nations (UN)?

Within the UN, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs has a global mandate for humanitarian coordination and is supported by the [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#) in carrying out this mandate. In refugee situations, the [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) has a mandate to coordinate the response. In situations of internal displacement, the [cluster approach](#) has been adopted by the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#) to ensure coordination. Other UN bodies may have roles in some activities, such as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), facilitating access to populations in need of humanitarian assistance.

6. How does the UN coordinate?

The 2005 [Humanitarian Response Review \(HRR\)](#) led to the humanitarian reform, which created new coordination mechanisms in situations of internal displacement. Roles and responsibilities of UN [Humanitarian Coordinators \(HCs\)](#) were more clearly defined, UN agencies (and some non-UN bodies) were assigned as Cluster Leads with formal responsibilities agreed at a global level, and a Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established to improve rapid access to funding.

³ “The Humanitarian Charter,” *Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Relief*, 2011 Edition, www.spherehandbook.org/en/the-humanitarian-charter

⁴ www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination/overview.

7. If the UN is so active, why do NGOs need to be involved?

NGOs often carry out a large percentage of a humanitarian response in a country. It is important for NGOs to have their concerns about the response heard in formal coordination mechanisms. At times, the activities of the Humanitarian Coordinator or cluster leads do not always align fully with the interests or concerns of NGOs. Sometimes coordination mechanisms, such as the [Humanitarian Country Team \(HCT\)](#) or clusters do not address broader issues of concern to NGOs, such as humanitarian space. NGO coordination has a role in addressing these issues, providing accountability, and also addressing issues that may be of concern specifically to NGOs.

8. What is the role of NGOs in the cluster system?

Clusters are open to humanitarian actors willing to coordinate their actions and participate in complementary activities. NGOs engage with clusters based on their perception of the relevance of cluster activities to meeting their humanitarian response objectives, their own operational presence and capacity, past performance record and accompanying technical expertise.

9. How can NGOs engage with the clusters?

Involvement in cluster coordination can include: participation in cluster meetings; sharing information on programmatic activities; contributing to the three W's (Who does What, Where) database; and engagement in cluster functions such as needs assessments, planning, resource mobilisation, response delivery, monitoring implementation, and strategic priority setting.

10. What is the mandate for NGOs to participate in coordination?

Many NGOs now recognise that coordination is a responsibility for all humanitarian actors if they are to serve affected communities effectively. Key standards adopted by the humanitarian community (such as the [Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#)) also include coordination as a core standard. While there is no official “mandate” for NGOs to coordinate, NGOs generally understand that coordination can lead to better humanitarian responses.

11. What issues does NGO coordination involve?

While “NGO coordination” is not separate from humanitarian coordination, NGO coordination is usually concerned with issues that impact humanitarian aid, but have not come to the attention of (or may not be a priority for) UN agencies, national governments, or other actors. It also involves addressing NGO interests that will not be taken up by other actors. NGO coordination also provides a means for NGOs to come together and have a stronger voice on issues of concern. Such issues may include, *inter alia*, civil-military relations, NGO regulations, humanitarian access, quality of the humanitarian response, and accountability to affected populations.⁵

12. What does coordination entail?

There are three types of coordination approaches: top-down **command**, with strong leadership backed by some sort of authority, either carrot or stick; **consensus** leadership to mobilise key actors around common objectives, normally without direct assertion of authority; and basic exchange of information and division of labour by **default**, usually in the absence of a formal coordination entity. In recent years, there have been many attempts to improve coordination, particularly in situations of internal displacement – first with the humanitarian reform process (started in 2005), which introduced the cluster approach, and, more recently, with the IASC's on-going

⁵ For more examples of what NGO coordination entails, see the case studies that are part of [Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO coordination in the Field](#).

“transformative agenda” (started in December 2010) to ensure better humanitarian response. Coordination also takes place at the global level through forums such as NGO consortia ([ICVA](#), [InterAction](#), Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, and [VOICE](#)) and through the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#) (IASC).

13. How does NGO coordination fit into these categories?

These different approaches may co-exist at different levels in a response, and in some cases may work against each other. NGO coordination bodies usually begin through coordination by default – where NGO staff meet their counterparts in relatively informal situations – and develop into coordination by consensus, with a membership meeting regularly to address common concerns. Coordination between NGOs does not always result in a formalised mechanism. Coordination can continue very efficiently between NGOs informally.

14. Why do NGOs set up their own coordination bodies?

Most NGO coordination bodies are generally set up in response to one of three conditions:

- a) An attempt to externally impose coordination by the UN or government;
- b) A gap (or perceived gap) in existing coordination mechanisms; or
- c) A need to address NGO interests that will not be addressed by other actors.

15. What makes NGO coordination bodies different?

Government and UN coordination bodies, in which many NGOs participate, are often formed on the basis of pre-determined needs. For example, the clusters cover specific areas and sectors and so they are often set up if there is no pre-existing coordination mechanism in-country covering their sector/area. NGO coordination bodies usually operate based on needs identified within the community, being formed when there is a collective will to address those needs. Although common NGO aims can be addressed more effectively on a collective rather than individual basis, an element of leadership from within the NGO community is usually essential for the success of an NGO coordination body. Like other coordination mechanisms, NGO coordination bodies need to avoid similar pitfalls, such as becoming redundant, no longer adding value, or becoming ineffective.

16. How can an NGO coordination body be sustainable?

While it is the role of governments (and UN offices and agencies, particularly where government lacks capacity) to ensure that NGOs are included in coordination mechanisms, externally-led or imposed coordination mechanisms usually fail to take root. However councils, forums and consortia that are generated and supported by NGOs themselves tend to show great resilience.

17. Why don't we see more NGO coordination?

One weakness of NGO coordination is that it tends to be reactive. Resource constraints mean that NGOs can find it difficult to participate in coordination at the expense of their own operations, especially if coordination does not form part of their core mission. NGOs have become more engaged in coordination due to recent developments in the humanitarian sector, such as humanitarian reform, but there still will be cases where NGO coordination will be necessary.

18. How can my NGO support coordination?

Where appropriate, ensure that your staff have an understanding of what coordination involves, and a clear mandate to coordinate as part of their job descriptions. In some cases, NGO senior management have agreed that a specific percentage of their staff time will be spent on coordination activities, and have included coordination activities within performance evaluations.

19. How can my senior staff support coordination?

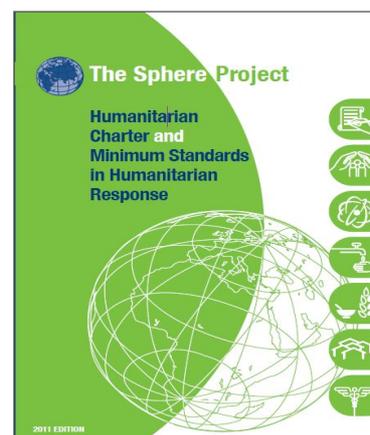
Where your staff are elected or selected to serve on governance bodies (such as Executive Committees of NGO coordination bodies), they should be given the authority to make commitments on behalf of the organisation. They should also be prepared for a reasonably high level of commitment, which may require them to create space to reach decisions away from their day-to-day responsibilities.

20. What are the benefits of NGO coordination for my staff?

While they should be realistic about how much time they can commit, this level of commitment can be balanced against the benefits that Committee membership brings: access to better information and greater influence at a higher level than they could achieve on their own; access to senior decision-makers in other organisations as peers; and visibility for their organisation in the wider humanitarian community.

Resource: Sphere Core Standard 2: Coordination and collaboration

Excerpt taken from *The Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, 2011 Edition
www.spherehandbook.org/en/core-standards-2-coordination-and-collaboration/



“Humanitarian response is planned and implemented in coordination with the relevant authorities, humanitarian agencies and civil society organisations engaged in impartial humanitarian action, working together for maximum efficiency, coverage and effectiveness.

“Key actions (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- Participate in general and any applicable sectoral coordination mechanisms from the outset (see guidance notes 1–2).
- Be informed of the responsibilities, objectives and coordination role of the state and other coordination groups where present (see guidance note 3).
- Provide coordination groups with information about the agency’s mandate, objectives and programme.
- Share assessment information with the relevant coordination groups in a timely manner and in a format that can be readily used by other humanitarian agencies (see Core Standard 3 on page 61).
- Use programme information from other humanitarian agencies to inform analysis, selection of geographical area and response plans.
- Regularly update coordination groups on progress, reporting any major delays, agency shortages or spare capacity (see guidance note 4).
- Collaborate with other humanitarian agencies to strengthen advocacy on critical shared humanitarian concerns.
- Establish clear policies and practice regarding the agency’s engagement with non-humanitarian actors, based on humanitarian principles and objectives (see guidance note 5).

“Key indicators (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- Assessment reports and information about programme plans and progress are regularly submitted to the relevant coordinating groups (see guidance note 4).
- The humanitarian activities of other agencies in the same geographical or sectoral areas are not duplicated.
- Commitments made at coordination meetings are acted upon and reported in a timely manner.
- The agency’s response takes account of the capacity and strategies of other humanitarian agencies, civil society organisations and relevant authorities.

“Guidance notes

1. **Coordinated responses:** Adequate programme coverage, timeliness and quality require collective action. Active participation in coordination efforts enables coordination leaders to

establish a timely, clear division of labour and responsibility, gauge the extent to which needs are being collectively met, reduce duplication and address gaps in coverage and quality. Coordinated responses, timely inter-agency assessments and information-sharing reduce the burden on affected people who may be subjected to demands for the same information from a series of assessment teams. Collaboration and, where possible, the sharing of resources and equipment optimise the capacity of communities, their neighbours, host governments, donors and humanitarian agencies with different mandates and expertise. Participation in coordination mechanisms prior to a disaster establishes relationships and enhances coordination during a response. Local civil society organisations and authorities may not participate if coordination mechanisms appear to be relevant only to international agencies. Respect the use of the local language(s) in meetings and in other shared communications. Identify local civil society actors and networks involved in the response and encourage them and other local and international humanitarian agencies to participate. Staff representing agencies in coordination meetings should have the appropriate information, skills and authority to contribute to planning and decision-making.

2. **Common coordination mechanisms** include meetings – general (for all programmes), sectoral (such as health) and cross-sectoral (such as gender) – and information-sharing mechanisms (such as databases of assessment and contextual information). Meetings which bring together different sectors can further enable people’s needs to be addressed as a whole, rather than in isolation (e.g. people’s shelter, water, sanitation, hygiene and psychosocial needs are interrelated). Relevant information should be shared between different coordination mechanisms to ensure integrated coordination across all programmes. In all coordination contexts, the commitment of agencies to participate will be affected by the quality of the coordination mechanisms: coordination leaders have a responsibility to ensure that meetings and information are well managed, efficient and results-orientated. If not, participating agencies should advocate for, and support, improved mechanisms.
3. **Coordination roles.** It is the affected state’s role to coordinate the humanitarian response of assisting organisations. Humanitarian agencies have an essential role to play by supporting the state’s coordination function. However, in some contexts, alternative coordination mechanisms may be appropriate if, for example, state authorities are themselves responsible for abuse and violations or their assistance is not impartial or if the state is willing to play a coordination role, but lacks capacity. In these situations coordination meetings may be separately or jointly led by the local authorities with the United Nations or NGOs. Many large-scale humanitarian emergencies are now typically coordinated through the ‘cluster approach’, with groupings of agencies working in the same sector under a lead agency.
4. **Efficient data-sharing** will be enhanced if the information is easy to use (clear, relevant, brief) and follows global humanitarian protocols which are technically compatible with other agencies’ data (see Core Standard 3 on page 61). The exact frequency of data-sharing is agency- and context-specific but should be prompt to remain relevant. Sensitive information should remain confidential (see Core Standards 3–4 on pages 61–65).
5. **Military and private sector:** The private sector and foreign and national military are increasingly part of the relief effort and therefore affect coordination efforts. The military bring particular expertise and resources, including security, logistics, transport and communication. However, their activities can blur the important distinction between humanitarian objectives and military or political agendas and create future security risks. Any association with the military should be in the service of, and led by, humanitarian agencies according to endorsed guidelines. Some agencies will maintain a minimum dialogue to ensure operational efficiency (e.g. basic

programme information-sharing) while others may establish stronger links (e.g. use of military assets). In all cases, humanitarian agencies must remain clearly distinct from the military to avoid any real or perceived association with a political or military agenda that could compromise the agencies' independence, credibility, security and access to affected populations. The private sector can bring commercial efficiencies, complementary expertise and resources to humanitarian agencies. Information-sharing is required to avoid duplication and to promote humanitarian good practice. Private–humanitarian partnerships must strictly be for the benefit of humanitarian objectives.

Principles of Partnership

A Statement of Commitment

Endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform, 12 July 2007

The *Global Humanitarian Platform*, created in July 2006, brings together UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations on an equal footing.

- Striving to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian action, based on an ethical obligation and accountability to the populations we serve,
- Acknowledging diversity as an asset of the humanitarian community and recognizing the interdependence among humanitarian organizations,
- Committed to building and nurturing an effective partnership,

... the organizations participating in the **Global Humanitarian Platform** agree to base their partnership on the following principles:

• **Equality**

Equality requires mutual respect between members of the partnership irrespective of size and power. The participants must respect each other's mandates, obligations and independence and recognize each other's constraints and commitments. Mutual respect must not preclude organizations from engaging in constructive dissent.

• **Transparency**

Transparency is achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust among organizations.

• **Result-oriented approach**

Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action-oriented. This requires result-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.

• **Responsibility**

Humanitarian organizations have an ethical obligation to each other to accomplish their tasks responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. They must make sure they commit to activities only when they have the means, competencies, skills, and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.

• **Complementarity**

The diversity of the humanitarian community is an asset if we build on our comparative advantages and complement each other's contributions. Local capacity is one of the main assets to enhance and on which to build. Whenever possible, humanitarian organizations should strive to make it an integral part in emergency response. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome.

www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org

Section 3: The Context of Coordination

The context in which coordination takes place is essential when considering how NGO coordination might or might not work. The context is often what helps to push the creation of NGO coordination. NGO coordination may come about because of gaps in the existing coordination architecture; because of a desire to improve the response in terms of principled action, quality of response, or accountability to populations; because of a need to find ways to better access populations in need; or because of frustrations with the way the response is taking place.

The diagram below identifies elements related to the 5 main factors that define the requirements for humanitarian coordination:

- Emergency Type
- Government Strength
- Emergency Size
- Impact Type
- Government Stance

Each will have an impact on whether and how NGO coordination will take place.

THE CONTEXT OF COORDINATION

5 main factors define the requirements for humanitarian coordination.

The distinction between Natural Disasters or Complex Emergencies is a standard one, but it is difficult to find a purely "natural" disaster since in many cases manmade elements are involved. Coordination structures will need to be more complicated to take account of political implications, with greater focus needed on advocacy to address the political implications for humanitarian activities.

National governments have the mandate but not always the capacity to coordinate effectively. Sometimes they rely on other actors (such as UN agencies) to take the lead or provide support, but sometimes there may simply be a coordination gap. NGO coordination must strike a balance between providing essential services and supporting government capacity, and this will often determine how closely NGOs work with government.

GOVERNMENT STANCE

National government stance – towards affected populations and response organisations – may range from antagonistic to cooperative. This plays a critical role in defining what formal structures are established and how they are managed, but also affects the nature of coordination that happens outside of those structures. It is worth noting that different parts of the same government may have different stances. NGO coordination bodies may have to invest more effort in managing government relationships, but this is an essential part of coordination.

EMERGENCY TYPE

Generally an emergency is either sudden-onset or chronic, although a sudden-onset emergency may be overlaid on an existing chronic emergency. In a chronic emergency, coordination needs to be longer-term and process-oriented; in a sudden-onset emergency, the situation will change more rapidly and coordination will need to be more flexible and responsive. This will influence the design and workings of any coordination body.

IMPACT TYPE

GOVERNMENT STRENGTH

EMERGENCY SIZE

The size of an emergency is sometimes judged on the basis of the size of the affected population. While in some cases size of response is not proportionate to size of affected population, generally the larger the number of actors on the ground, the more difficult coordination becomes. Coordination approaches that work for small groups may not scale up to larger numbers of NGOs.

Section 4: Deciding the Appropriateness of Separate NGO Coordination

NGO Coordination cannot be all things to all people. (Bennett in NGO Coordination, 1994)

They (the NCSO) tried to be everything to everybody in an environment where that was impossible. What they needed was a few quick wins to gain credibility and show their value-added. (Donor in [Haiti Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field](#), 2011)

There is a general sense of "meeting overload" ... it is essential that [coordination] focus on outcomes and effectiveness, rather than process. (IASC Principals meeting, 13 December 2011)

While this last statement is in specific reference to the cluster system, the criticism can be said to be true for any effort to coordinate, including NGO coordination. Coordination mechanisms can proliferate in an emergency, particularly a large-scale humanitarian response. They can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, but if well run, they can help to improve the response. The overall objective for coordination is delivery of high quality, effective and efficient humanitarian aid, which respects agreed upon principles (including the humanitarian imperative, independence, impartiality, neutrality, as well as accountability).

It is essential to place NGO coordination in the context of other coordination mechanisms for any given emergency: led by the government, UN, military or other – or risk undermining these equally relevant efforts. NGO coordination will most likely be implemented in parallel to government coordination, the cluster system, or coordination of a refugee operation led by UNHCR. Therefore, the value-added of separate NGO coordination has to be carefully analysed and communicated to all stakeholders.

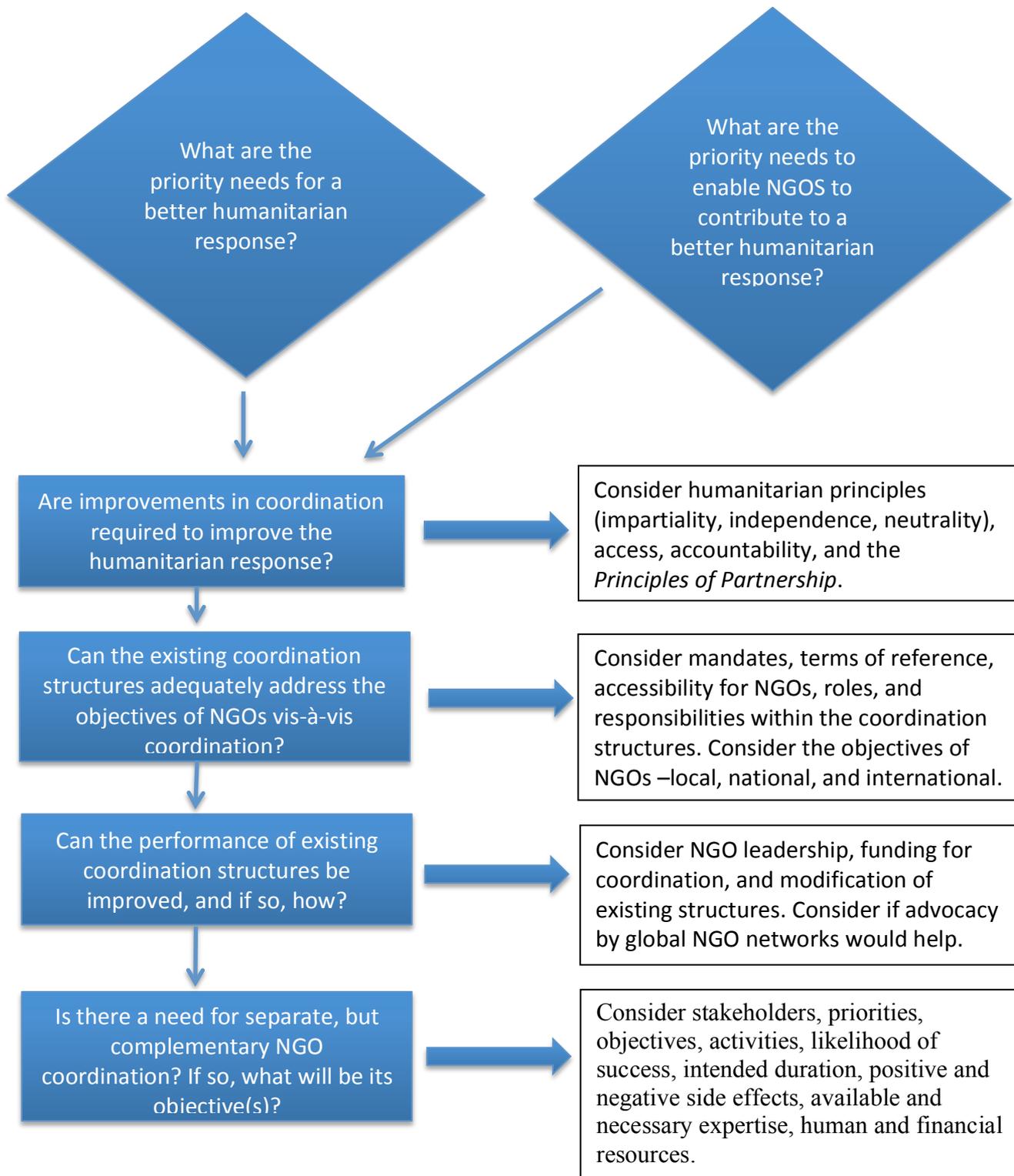
The best way to support better coordination is not always to establish a separate coordination mechanism, but to support existing ones to better fulfil their obligations.

In addition, there may already be some existing form of NGO coordination more focused on development. Consideration should be given to whether such existing NGO coordination bodies may be able to take on any necessary humanitarian coordination elements or if they can complement each other. Many of the NGOs that are involved in such development coordination forums will also be involved in a humanitarian response, so careful consideration will have to be given to the potential for duplication or coordination overload.

A basic problem analysis can assist in identifying the need for, and objectives of, NGO-supported coordination and methods (*see problem analysis on the following page*). Often, it may be a small handful of (often international) NGOs that will start an NGO coordination mechanism in an emergency out of need. These bodies often expand to include the broader NGO community, but not always. It is often necessary (and helpful) to have a few very committed NGOs to help start a coordination body, if such a need is identified. Care should be taken, however, not to have the coordination body dominated by the same NGOs all the time.

There are two essential questions NGOs need to ask themselves – one for the general humanitarian response and one for the NGO-specific response. Any answer should serve to improve one, the other, or both.

Basic Problem Analysis



Factors to Consider when Deciding NGO Coordination Priorities and Activities

If the outcome of answering the above questions results in the answer that separate NGO coordination should be established, further consideration will have to be given to the priorities and activities of the mechanism.

When determining priority needs and, therefore, activities (See *Section 5: Possible Functions of an NGO Coordination Body*), it is important to consider the following:

- Who are the primary stakeholders?
 - all NGOs?
 - Local/national NGOs only?
 - INGOs only?
 - the biggest INGOs?
- What are their priority needs?
 - Is there agreement amongst stakeholders about the priority needs?
- Do these needs contribute to the overall objective of better humanitarian response and specific objectives of the primary stakeholders?
- Are there some priorities that are more urgent than others?
- What are the possible positive and negative side-effects, including opportunity costs of this activity?
 - How can any of the possible negative side-effects be mitigated or turned into opportunities?
- What expertise exists already?
- What human and financial resources exist already?
- What is still needed and where will it be found?

If the problem analysis leads to the creation of a separate NGO coordination mechanism, the NGO coordination stakeholders (NGOs) will need to keep asking themselves,

“Is this additional coordination improving the overall humanitarian effort?”

Equality

Transparency

NGO Coordination and the *Principles of Partnership*

Acknowledging diversity as an asset of the humanitarian community and recognizing the interdependence among humanitarian organizations....

As a commitment in writing by UN and non-UN humanitarian organisations, the *Principles of Partnership* (PoP) should underline the objectives of any NGO coordination effort: equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity.

The PoP should be a guidepost of how to engage in coordination efforts. Whether analysing the obstacles to a more effective humanitarian response, setting objectives for an NGO coordination mechanism, considering terms of engagement between local/national and international NGOs, and promoting accountability to affected people and their representatives, the PoP should be a constant reminder of what NGOs are trying to achieve.

www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org

Result-oriented approach

Complementarity

Responsibility

NGO Coordination Mechanisms and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT)

As part of the IASC Principals' "[transformative agenda](#)," the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team are among the primary means of implementing the IASC's commitments to leadership, coordination, and accountability in country (IASC, 2011). It is, therefore, critical to get NGO representation on the HCT right.

It was agreed, therefore, at the IASC that NGO representatives on the HCT may be from a consortium or umbrella organisation (where they exist), but this representation must be complemented with operational national and international NGOs. It is incumbent upon all NGO participants in the HCT to ensure that they reflect and advocate for the interests of the NGO community. The selection of the NGO representatives on the HCT therefore remains the responsibility of the NGO community as a whole.

If NGO representation on an HCT will be through some form of NGO coordination mechanism (ideally as part of response preparedness activities), consideration will have to be given to this function when developing Terms of Reference, Membership, Structure, and/or Governance.

When NGO Coordination has Unintended Negative Impacts: The Example of Haiti

Prior to the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) chaired meetings of the in-country Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC; CPIO in French). The INGOs who had participated in the IASC/CPIO were some of the largest INGOs; they did not pretend to represent the larger (I)NGO community.

Two weeks after the Haiti earthquake in 2010, a letter was written to the HC by the IASC/CPIO INGOs requesting a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meeting to be convened. Once HCT meetings started to be regularly convened, weekly "HCT INGOs" were quickly established to discuss issues and strategy for the subsequent HCT meeting.

These meetings were considered by other NGOs to be exclusive. Already (20 January 2010) at IASC meetings in New York, the UN observed "some differences among NGOs....[and] the growing tension between pre-existing national and international NGOs."

Adapted from the [Case Study on Haiti](#), *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*.

Assessing the Need for NGO Coordination: The Example of NCCI

The Iraq war is an example of where many NGOs felt there was a compression of civil and military operations compromising the neutrality of the humanitarian response. Prior to the invasion in January 2003, the US Pentagon, as part of its military headquarters in Kuwait, established the Humanitarian Operations Centre (HOC) to “facilitate the work of humanitarian organisations that will be called upon to assist the Iraqi people in the event of a conflict in the region”. After the invasion in May, the Coalition Provisional Authorities (CPA) implemented civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) briefing sessions across the country, which were attended by some within the humanitarian community. The UN led national coordination meetings in Baghdad, but failed to monitor sectoral working groups. Due to delayed UN deployment, the Coalition forces took charge of aid coordination in certain parts of the country.

The NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI) was established in April 2003 in Baghdad at the initiative of (largely) European NGOs with a pre-war presence. NCCI felt that there was a need for a forum independent of the US, UN, and military where operational and policy discussions could take place. The role of NCCI was later expanded following the bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003 and the evacuation of UN foreign staff from Iraq. NCCI stayed and took on many of the UN coordination activities. At this point, NCCI had offices in Baghdad, Erbil, Basrah, Kuwait, and Amman. Between 2003 and 2007 the objectives of the NCCI included protection of humanitarian space through advocacy; operational coordination through field offices, including the maintenance of a “who-what-where” database; and information sharing on security incidences through the NCCI Security Officer, as NGOs still had a significant field presence.

NCCI is a good example of how an NGO coordination body has to change to reflect context and the needs of stakeholders in a protracted emergency.

For more information, see the [Case Study on Iraq](#), *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*.

Common Pitfalls of NGO Coordination

NGO coordination, like all forms of coordination, has potential pitfalls. Knowing some of the pitfalls can help to mitigate ending up in them.

Some of these pitfalls are not always necessarily bad, as there may be very good reasons for a few of the situations listed below. However, it is essential, in the spirit of upholding the *Principles of Partnership* of Transparency, for NGO mechanisms to be open and clear about their objectives. It is also important to explain the rationale for membership, participation, priorities, and functions. Otherwise, there is a risk of negative perceptions about the NGO coordination body.

- **NGO coordination is seen as exclusive:** i.e. it does not define its relationship to local agencies including government, or other coordination initiatives, such as clusters or the Humanitarian Country Team;
- **NGO coordination is seen as elitist:** it includes only a few international NGOs, or the biggest NGOs, or the NGOs with the most money;
- **NGO coordination is seen as inaccessible to some:** meetings are not run in local language(s), information is not shared in a way that is accessible to all NGOs, particularly local/national NGOs;
- **NGO coordination is seen as redundant:** it is “a meeting for the sake of a meeting,” which does not add value;
- **NGO coordination is seen as competition:** it takes NGOs away from other coordination forums;
- **NGO coordination is seen as misrepresenting the interests of NGOs,** e.g. when individual NGOs are meant to represent broader NGO concerns on Humanitarian Country Teams or other multi-agency coordinating bodies including with government, donors, and other stakeholders;
- **NGO coordination is seen as anti-UN,** when NGO coordination is antagonistic, rather than contributing to mutual responsibility and accountability;
- **NGO coordination is seen as representing “The” NGO voice:** when representatives of the coordination body speak, stakeholders assume the view is shared by *all* NGOs; and
- **NGO coordination is seen as impossible:** when there are too many agencies and too many people with too many interests, coordination is seen as requiring too much time when time and human resources are too little.

Resources and Further Reading

- [Principles of Partnership](#)
- [The Global Humanitarian Platform](#)
- [IASC Transformative Agenda 2011-2012](#)
- [The Cluster Approach](#)

Section 5: Possible Functions of an NGO Coordination Body

The list of possible functions of an NGO coordination body is intended to provide an indication of what NGO coordination can involve, depending on the specific requirements of a specific context. In every context, it is essential to look at who or what other coordination mechanisms may be carrying out these functions, or that might be better placed to take on these functions.

No NGO coordination body has ever carried out all of these activities, nor should future bodies attempt to: this list contains *possible* functions, not mandatory activities. Conversely, the list is not exhaustive, and some NGO coordination bodies may incorporate additional functions not included in the list.

This list was developed from a number of documents describing NGO coordination experiences, including the country case studies published in *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field* (see below the table).

Areas	Activities
Analysis, Advocacy	<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conflict analysis ▪ Actor analysis ▪ Agency positions in the political economy of a conflict ▪ Scenario development ▪ Resource analysis ▪ Analysis of meetings with restricted access <p><u>Advocacy (and/or Representation)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to national government, e.g. inclusion in sector-specific policy processes ▪ to donors/general public, e.g. resource mobilisation, political support around humanitarian issues ▪ to the humanitarian community, e.g. representation of NGO concerns in Humanitarian Country Teams ▪ to the media, e.g. awareness raising on critical humanitarian issues ▪ to UN agencies for programmatic issues, e.g. inter-cluster prioritisation ▪ to military forces (national, international or paramilitary), e.g. humanitarian access, area security, civilian protection ▪ to international community, e.g. representation in external policy-making bodies ▪ to non-NGO actors, e.g. for inclusion of local civil society
Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing and implementing joint needs assessments ▪ Collating programme reviews, evaluations, and lessons learned ▪ Facilitating inter-agency discussion of reviews and evaluations ▪ Facilitating or implementing joint monitoring, evaluation, and review ▪ Creating opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience between members, e.g. peer reviews ▪ Facilitating inter-agency expert meetings, e.g. human resources, advocacy)

Operational Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishing specific sectoral coordination structures (e.g. working groups) ▪ Maintaining a “Who's doing What, Where” database ▪ Convening sectoral and/or geographic coordination meetings ▪ Developing sectoral policies and guidelines ▪ Facilitating inter-agency programme planning ▪ Reviewing programming gaps/duplication ▪ Establishing and/or maintaining additional surge capacity ▪ Developing disaster preparedness protocols
Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinating phone/SMS security tree ▪ Supporting general security communications ▪ Liaising with UN/government/other security structures ▪ Facilitating civil-military relations ▪ Contingency planning ▪ Facilitating evacuation planning (security and medical) ▪ Convoy planning and coordination ▪ Making security arrangements for office and residential premises ▪ Collating and analysing security incidents and trends ▪ Providing technical support, e.g. for radio networks and handsets ▪ Undertaking advocacy to UN and government for improved security ▪ Undertaking incident management and investigation
Services to Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sharing relevant information with, and between, members on various topics, including external meetings, such as clusters ▪ Facilitating registration with relevant authorities ▪ Providing taxation advice on import, income, and other requirements ▪ Providing legal advice, e.g. regarding labour laws ▪ Providing logistics advice, e.g. regarding leasing and procurement ▪ Carrying out member surveys on key issues, such as staff salaries ▪ Providing a meeting room and/or resource centre ▪ Mediating between member NGOs and other coordination mechanisms ▪ Mediating between NGOs and external stakeholders/partners ▪ Mediating between international and local NGOs
Situational Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Producing situational updates for members based on external information, or for external actors based on members’ information ▪ Publishing NGO contact list or agency directory ▪ Providing single contact point for members ▪ Producing maps and map products ▪ Collating needs assessments from members ▪ Monitoring resource availability amongst members ▪ Facilitating joint or common needs assessments
Strategic Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertaking task allocation (sectoral and/or geographic) ▪ Facilitating collective adoption of principles, standards, or codes of conduct ▪ Facilitating collective adoption of internal policies (i.e. national staff salary scales) ▪ Facilitating collective adoption of external policies (i.e. support to local markets) ▪ Registering and/or monitoring NGO activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitating discussion around agency positioning during conflict, especially regarding terms of engagement/disengagement ▪ Facilitating discussion around agency positioning regarding aid conditionality ▪ Scenario planning
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing or facilitating training in key common areas such as: Accountability frameworks (e.g. HAP), Humanitarian standards (e.g. Sphere), Effective partnership (e.g. Principles of Partnership), Needs Assessment, Security, humanitarian principles ▪ Providing information about, and assisting participation, in external training courses ▪ Standardising member training schemes and curricula

Adapted from: [Von Brabant \(1999\)](#), [IASC Generic Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster at the Country Level \(2005\)](#), [InterAction Field Cooperation Protocol \(1996\)](#), [Currion and Hedlund \(2011\)](#)

NGO Coordination and Advocacy: The Example of AIDA

AIDA, the Association of International Development Agencies, has been an NGO coordination body in the occupied Palestinian Territory since the 1940s. Advocacy of humanitarian principles has always been a primary objective, however joint advocacy has always been contentious particularly given funding-relationship with certain donors: "US regulations are inimical to providing humanitarian aid according to humanitarian principles; neutrally, impartially..." However many agencies prefer to use AIDA to make joint statements when the risk of repercussions from individual efforts is too high: "NGOs can call a spade a spade in a way that other organisations cannot. Together we are louder and more credible." As of 2010, AIDA is largely an advocacy body "to stand as a group on ...issues and not be cowed." AIDA has been effective in influencing the UN, donors and government (IDF, Hamas and Fatah) on policy regarding funding, humanitarian space and humanitarian conditions, e.g. in 2009, IDF decided not to renew INGO work visas however through AIDA advocacy this decision was rescinded.

In 2010, the AIDA Advocacy Strategy was developed in consultation with members to define a 'trigger mechanism', i.e. on what issues, how, and to whom to, or *not to*, advocate in a variety of scenarios including acute crises such as Operation Cast Lead (OCL). During OCL it was difficult to organise joint statements particularly those that included US-NGOs. AIDA was not unique in suffering from some ambiguity from US-NGOs: CARE and Save the Children also had difficulties making "family" press statements. By focusing on the impact of restrictions on access and movement of people and goods, on both the provision of assistance and deteriorating humanitarian and development conditions, will allow for greater collaboration and efficacy in advocacy. The strategy also mentions INGO advocacy on behalf of LNGOs as well.

Adapted from the [oPT Case Study](#), *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*.

Resource: Field-level Security Coordination Platforms

Excerpted from *Supporting Security for Humanitarian Action: A review of critical issues for the humanitarian community* (Stoddard and Harmer 2010).

“Field-level security coordination platforms

“Overall, the more successful field-level security coordination platforms have been generated by the NGOs themselves. Often driven by extreme need, the field platforms offer NGOs a range of additional support to their existing security management arrangements, including:

- Convening inter-agency security meetings;
- Providing security alerts, cross checking information and undertaking security incident reporting and analysis;
- Carrying out risk assessments, undertaking trend analysis, and communicating these in periodic security threat reports;
- Providing introductory security briefings, as well as technical assistance and advice to individual agencies, and training;
- Crisis management: providing support with contingency planning; and facilitating in-extremis support, for example, if an agency suffers a critical incident such as the kidnapping of staff, the platform might be able to provide additional analysis and support through local networks
- Liaison with governmental authorities, international and national military forces, including a UN peacekeeping or political mission, and private security companies, (therefore allowing the NGOs to keep themselves at arms distance from military and political actors, where necessary).

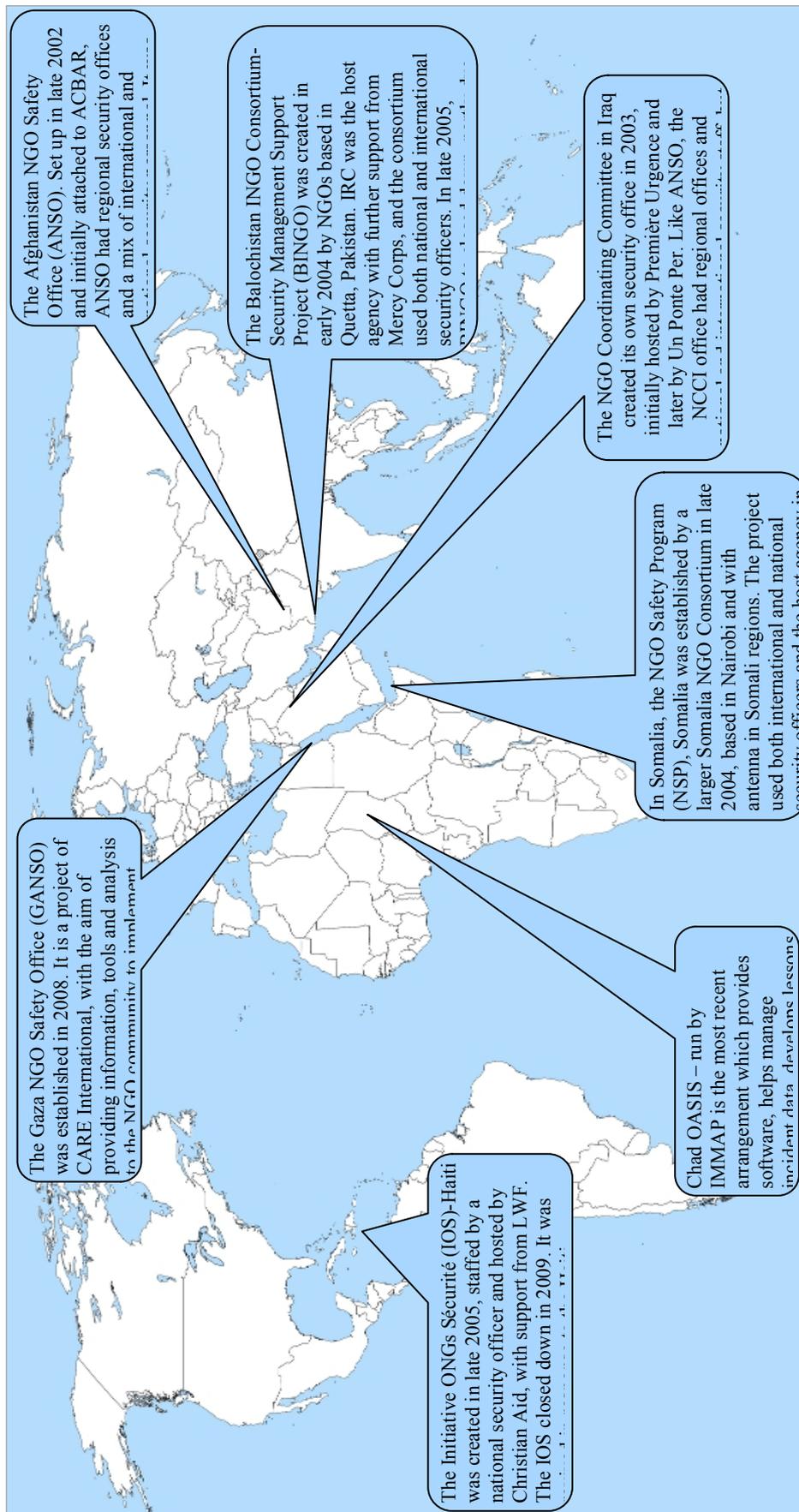
“There is no standard model of an inter-agency security platform. Some are informal, for example, a periodic Heads of Mission meeting, or a network of interested security focal points. Keeping the collaboration informal may be the result of inter-agency dynamics but in some settings can be due to strong apprehension of the host authorities over a formal safety or security related body, as was the case in Darfur, Sudan. Others can take the form of a separate or hosted NGO security and safety office, which can serve the whole NGO community....Often this requires a lead agency to step up and assume, at least initially, the additional costs and visibility that come with the role - something many are reluctant to do. In general these mechanisms require significant financial and human resources as well as operational assets, such as vehicles, communications and IT equipment. Much of this in the past has been supported by a number of key donors, including USAID, ECHO, DFID, Irish Aid and the Swiss government.

“Inter-agency security cooperation can provide organisations with extra-capacity at relatively low cost. Despite general praise and appreciation for the security cooperation platforms such as those in Somalia and Afghanistan, however, there are few platforms in existence.⁶ This is partly because of the cultural change that agencies have to go through to work in an interdependent way on security issues and because it requires establishing it as a dedicated task. In resource-scarce contexts this is sometimes a difficult decision to justify.

⁶ “See for example, ECHO 2006: NGO Security Collaboration Guide. Brussels (by Sean Bickley) and the Good Practice Review on Operational Security Management in Violent Environments: Revised 2010, *forthcoming*.”

“Some agencies are inclined to stand outside formal security coordination mechanism, such as MSF and ICRC, although they may share information to varying degrees. In addition most field-level security platforms operate between INGOs, and it is unclear the extent to which national NGOs participate and benefit. An additional risk for small and medium size organisations, is that there can be a reliance on these mechanism so much so that it displaces any internal efforts to actively maintain their own security management.”

Examples of field level inter-agency security coordination platforms (Stoddard and Harmer 2010)



Section 6: Members of an NGO Coordination Body

At the start of an NGO coordination body there may be a relatively limited number of NGOs involved, which later grows in terms of numbers. In other cases, a deliberate decision is taken to limit the membership of the coordination body to local/national NGOs or to just international NGOs. As noted above (*Common Pitfalls of NGO Coordination*), there may be very good reasons for taking a decision to be inclusive or exclusive when it comes to the membership of an NGO coordination body. Unless there is transparency about what those reasons are, the NGO coordination body risks coming under criticism for being elitist or exclusive. Of course, if an NGO coordination body chooses to be exclusive without good justification, then the potential criticisms will be well placed.

No one debates the necessity of working in support of local capacity – government and non-government – for emergency response when doing so does not compromise humanitarian principles. However, evaluations of humanitarian response, including the State of the Humanitarian System (ALNAP, 2010) and reflections from former Emergency Response Coordinator, John Holmes, on coordination in the Haiti 2010 Earthquake Response (Humanitarian Exchange 48: 2011), indicate that the humanitarian system is far from achieving this goal:

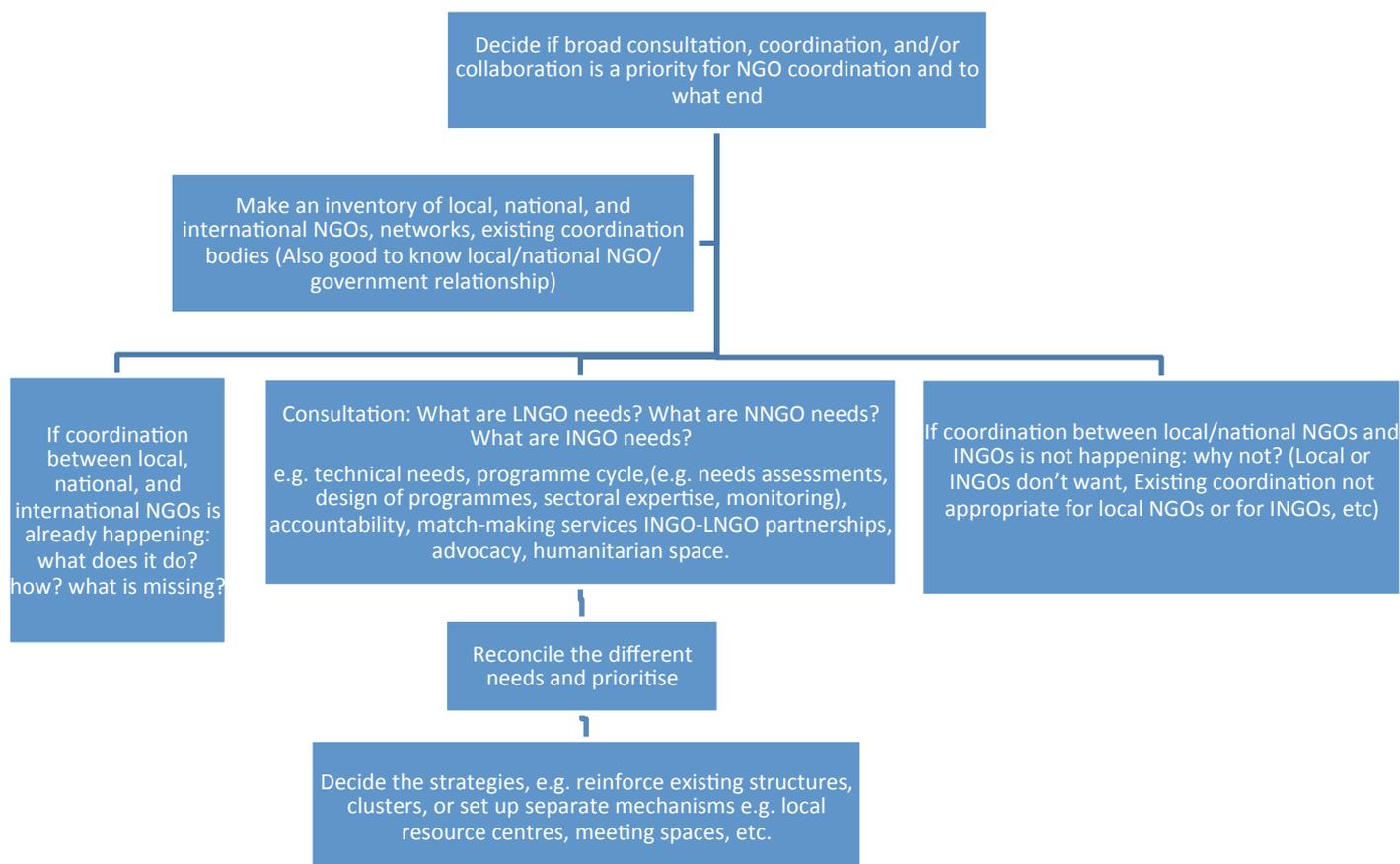
The international humanitarian community meanwhile did not show itself to be sufficiently sensitive to the concerns and capacities of local civil society, and did not listen closely enough to what the people whose lives had been destroyed by the earthquake were saying. This mistake has been made before, for example in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami five years ago. It leads to misjudgements about what is needed and errors in strategy which then have to be corrected. In this case it was compounded by too much use of English in the coordination mechanisms and difficult access for local NGOs to the UN base where most meetings were being conducted. This is an area where we really must do better. The humanitarian community simply cannot afford not to work with national and local structures, to the fullest extent possible, however daunting and complex an operation may be.

International NGOs are not systematically considering how they might better coordinate with their local NGO counterparts. INGOs may instead focus on operations and in some cases operational partnerships, but they may not have as their objective to increase the role of local NGOs in strategic decision making for the humanitarian response as a whole. This lack of coordination with local NGOs is increasingly criticised by governments and donors alike. Where the voices of LNGOs have been documented, they have also similarly criticised many international NGOs (Haiti Case Study, 2010). A very first step toward rectifying this imbalance is communication and coordination between local, national, and international NGOs.

At the same time, it must be remembered that not all local or national NGOs will want to work with international NGOs in a humanitarian response, for a variety of reasons. They may not see the INGOs as being independent from their governments; feel that they come with hidden agendas; or find them to be disrespectful of local customs and culture.

Decisions around coordination with other NGOs – whether local, national, or international – have to be taken by all parties. One of the added values of inclusive coordination is that relationships and trust between different NGOs can be built over time, which can lead to a better response. Ideally, this trust and the relationships will be in place before a crisis, but often times, partnerships have to be forged in the midst of crisis.

Decision Tree Around Members in NGO Coordination Body



Benefits of Coordination Between International and National NGOs in Humanitarian Response

Below are some of the reasons of coordinating with local NGOs cited by NGO coordination bodies in the nine cases studied in *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*:

- Local NGOs were there before the disaster, the first days of the disaster, and will be there after the disaster with clear implications for emergency preparedness and response.
- Local NGOs have insights, information, knowledge and know-how that is likely to contribute to a more appropriate, efficient, and effective emergency response.
- An emergency is an opportunity for trust building, networking and community-building that has immediate benefits for emergency response, as well as recovery and development.
- Through coordination mechanisms, by emphasising democratic representation, the link between local NGOs and their constituencies can have immediate and long-term advantages including more reliable information flows and feedback.
- Where appropriate, coordination forums can create neutral terms and grounds for engagement.
- Through engagement, local and international NGOs can debate and 'acculturate' common humanitarian principles, improving the accountability of the overall humanitarian response and increasing acceptance of international NGOs in complex crisis
- Through shared mechanisms for information exchange, coordination, liaison, and representation, local organisations (and smaller NGOs) can maximise their limited human and financial resources.

Practical Examples of LNGO-NNGO-INGO Coordination

These examples are drawn from the nine case studies contained in [*Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*](#):

- Seconding national staff of INGOs to existing or start up initiatives (Myanmar)
- Collaborating with other civil society institutions, e.g. universities, institutes (Iraq)
- Strong representation of LNGO on governance bodies (Afghanistan, Iraq)
- Supporting ‘connectors’; choosing NGO networks that encourage unity or supporting new NGO networks that are non-political or sectarian (Myanmar, Iraq)
- Joint development of Codes of Conduct or facilitating the development of local NGO CoC (Afghanistan)
- Joint development of the Good Partnership Guidelines (Myanmar)
- Joint contingency planning (Myanmar)
- Joint evaluation of the *Principles of Partnership*

When is Exclusivity in NGO Coordination Justified?

A common dilemma in emergencies is whether NGO coordination should be inclusive or exclusive, e.g. limited to a certain number or type of NGO. This obviously depends on the context and objectives of NGO coordination and derives from the initial needs assessment or problem and response analysis described in Section 4. The key here is not that one is better than the other, but how NGOs that coordinate among themselves relate to the greater humanitarian effort, again reiterating the principles of equality and transparency.

The questions below derive from nine country case studies in NGO coordination are presented for discussion and reflection:

- Will the inclusion of certain NGOs compromise neutrality and independence?
 - See [*Iraq case study*](#).
- Does impact depend on consensus and cohesiveness within the NGO community or rather expediency?
 - See [*Myanmar and Haiti case studies*](#).
- Does NGO coordination have short- or long-term objectives that depend on inclusivity?
 - See [*Haiti and oPT case studies*](#).
- What are other potential positive and negative impacts of exclusive NGO coordination? How can negative impacts be mitigated?

Sample Elements of Terms of Reference of Inclusive NGO Coordination Bodies

Combined Elements from the TORs of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) and the Myanmar Local Resource Centre (LRC), highlighting aspects of the LNGO/NNGO/INGO Relationship

- Facilitate information exchange between the IASC coordinating bodies and local NGOs and other civil society groups;
- Facilitate participation in clusters where appropriate; including ensuring a local NGO counterpart and liaison in each cluster responsible for sharing information and communication in local languages;
- Translate key documents and key messages from clusters and IASC meetings, ensuring hard copies of key documents are easily available, providing Internet services;
- Communicate through locally appropriate means in local languages, e.g. posting minutes of meetings in an easily accessible site, sending tweets of key messages, creating Facebook pages, etc.;
- Work with clusters, OCHA, and Humanitarian Information Centres (HICs) to ensure complete and accurate local NGO mailing lists;
- Facilitate other coordination by providing neutral meeting spaces in safe and accessible places;
- Advocate and conduct action research to ensure that the work of local organisations is acknowledged and understood;
- Joint policy and advocacy including the NGO Code of Conduct;
- Link local organisations to donor funds and technical expertise;
- Provide support to local NGOs in proposal writing, reporting and procuring supplies;
- Provide local NGOs with information and training on principles of disaster relief including codes of conduct, accountability to affected populations (HAP) and minimum standards (Sphere); and government relations and legal services.

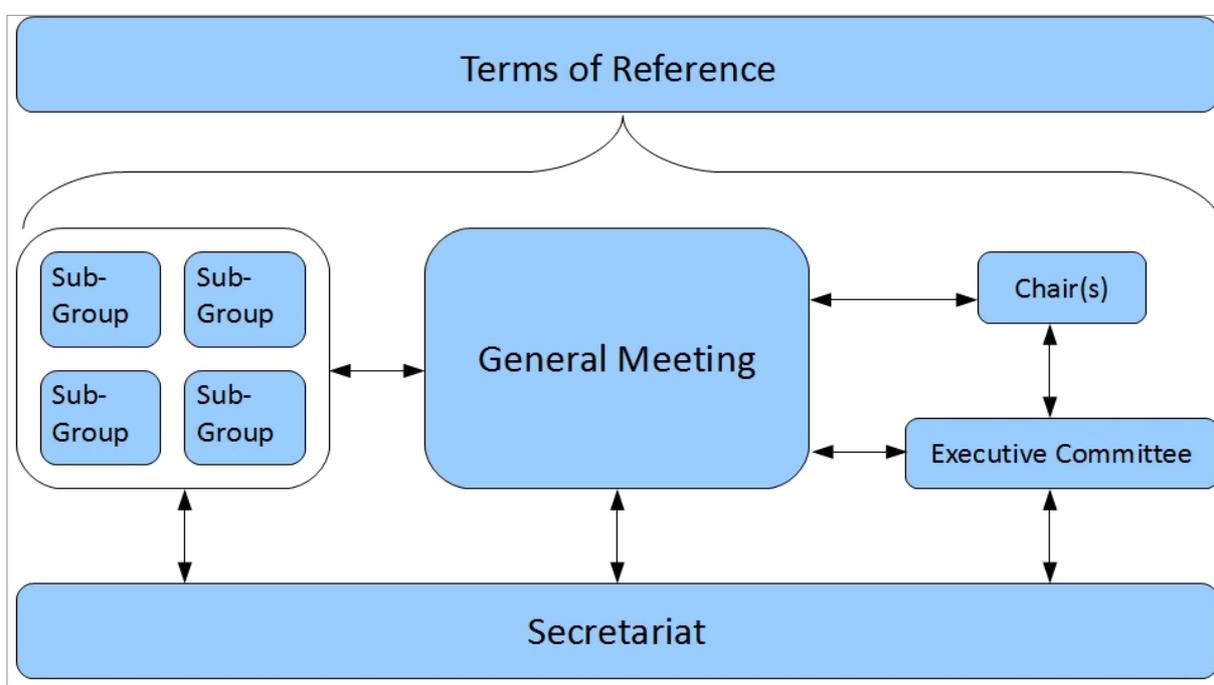
References and Further Reading

- [The Global Humanitarian Platform](#)
- [Humanitarian Partnerships: a review of recent experience](#)
- [The Humanitarian Forum](#)
- [More than Implementers: Civil Society in Complex Emergencies](#)
- [Changing Roles: Governments, NGOs and Donors](#)
- [Ambiguity and Change: Humanitarian NGOs Prepare for the Future](#)
- [INTRAC: Understanding the importance of civil society](#)

Section 7: Five Elements of NGO Coordination Bodies

Poor coordination structures established in the early days of an emergency can become fixed in place, leading to a higher chance of failure in the longer term. It is, therefore, critical to make sure that the organisational structures you set up are appropriate to both the members and the external environment. Despite the context-specific nature of NGO coordination bodies, ICVA's research into NGO coordination bodies identified five organisational elements frequently found in successful membership-based NGO coordination bodies (see case studies in *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*):

These structures do not constitute a blueprint, but they can be seen as a useful starting point for setting up a coordination body. It is worth noting that the labels given here are used for reference only (i.e. "General Meeting" refers simply to the membership of the body, and the specific term does not have to be used).



1) General Meeting:

The starting point for most NGO coordination is a **General Meeting**. While small groups may have been meeting informally, this meeting brings together a critical mass from a clearly defined NGO constituency in a clearly defined structure for clearly defined purposes.

2) Executive or Steering Committee:

The General Meeting may elect an **Executive** or **Steering Committee** to take specific actions. Such committees are often dominated by staff from larger and richer NGOs, but it is important that the Committee be open to all in order to fully represent the membership.

Steering Committees need to be composed of Country Directors who are prepared to make decisions, often on behalf of the entire membership. They must be prepared to commit to a higher level of responsibility and carve out space to reach decisions away from their day-to-

day responsibilities, while being realistic about how much time they can commit. This is a difficult balancing act which may be achieved best by spreading responsibilities among members, particularly to help smaller NGOs to have a voice.

***South Sudan Case Study**, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*

3) Chair:

The Committee may need a **Chair** (and Deputy or Vice Chairs, where necessary) to play a representative role with external actors. However, in some cases no Chair is required and responsibilities are shared amongst the Steering Committee or wider membership.

The Chair set the tone for the entire Pakistan Humanitarian Forum internally and externally, as well as providing administrative support. Given the heavy workload dealt with by the Chair, this required commitment, selflessness and transparency, combined with an ability to take decisions and bring colleagues along. Diplomatic skills were essential not just for external representation, but also to be able to address individual NGOs in terms that they would respond to, particularly in cases when agency opinions differ within the membership.

***Pakistan Case Study**, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*

4) Sub-Groups:

Depending on the situation, the General Meeting may wish to form **Sub-groups** that meet for limited periods to address specific issues of concern to members of the coordination body and take forward advocacy activities in the wider humanitarian community.

5) Secretariat:

As the number of members and range of activities increase, administrative requirements for the coordination body will also increase. A **Secretariat** function may be required to fulfil basic administrative functions and free members to take forward coordination activities. (See further below for essential skills for Secretariat staff)

Terms of Reference

Regardless of how many of the above elements are utilised by the NGO community, a clear **Terms of Reference** for the NGO coordination body is essential to provide:

- the framework in which these elements can work together;
- the processes that enable them to achieve their objectives;
- the focus and continuity of the coordination body; and
- its accountability to the wider NGO community and its stakeholders.

Resources and Further Reading

Terms of References/Charters/Mandates from NGO coordination bodies:

- AIDA, oPT
- CCO, Chad
- NCCI, Iraq
- Somalia NGO Consortium
- South Sudan NGO Forum

NGO Coordination Staff and Governance

If a secretariat is set up for the NGO coordination body, it will be important to ensure that it is staffed with people with the appropriate skills. Having a secretariat does not mean that the members and governing body can pass all responsibility to the staff. The governance of the coordination body will have to ensure accountability of the staff.

Coordination requires “connectors” not “dividers.”⁷ *Coordination will require staff with specific skills, qualities and experience. Particularly important is operational experience, the ability to build new relationships and respect old ones, to be self-aware enough to perceive ones' impact on others, to communicate, liaise, facilitate, negotiate, and mediate. The ability to represent is necessary only when that responsibility is conferred upon coordination staff.*

Haiti Case Study, *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*

*While a good coordinator is necessary... **An NGO coordinator must have experience working with different stakeholders, particularly sensitive to NGO-UN relationships, is pro-NGO and pro-civil society and appreciate the strengths of local NGO community.** Someone who understands the subtle and often context-specific difference between representing NGOs and encouraging representation. If the NGO Coordinator is someone who is familiar with the country-specific operating environment and stakeholders, s/he will be more quickly operational.*

Myanmar Case Study, *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*

*When it is necessary to employ a secretariat, **it is imperative that the governance body of the NGO coordination mechanism invest the time necessary to ensure the accountability of its hired staff**, in cooperation with the host agency.*

oPT Case Study, *Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field*

⁷ The way coordination is implemented can either be a Divider (threats to peace and stability) or Connectors (supports to peace and stability) among the humanitarian community. This concept, developed by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and used in the ALNAP/DAC/UNEG Haiti evaluation framework, is also reflected upon in this case study.

Resource: How to Facilitate Coordination Meetings

The tables below provide a very detailed list of what to do when facilitating cluster coordination meetings. Many of the elements will not be relevant in all contexts nor to all NGO coordination bodies. Many of the actions required to facilitate a cluster coordination meeting, however, are equally necessary to facilitate an NGO coordination meeting.

On a less detailed level than the tables below, any (NGO) coordination meetings should have the following elements:

- **Planned:** should be well planned, with invitations sent out well in advance, if possible, and be held in a location that is accessible and safe to all those invited. If a suitable location is impossible, consider using technology to allow people to participate in the meeting, via Twitter, webcasts, etc.
- **Structured:** should be well structured, with a clear agenda agreed (in advance), with a set time limit (flexibility is, however, needed to adapt the agenda for issues that may arise during the course of the meeting).
- **Inclusive:** should provide interpretation, if necessary and possible.
- **Focused:** should have clear objectives and expected outcomes.
- **Facilitated:** should be facilitated in a manner to ensure everyone feels comfortable to participate freely; keeps the meeting to the allocated time; and ensures clear outcomes and conclusions.
- **Concluded:** should be clearly wrapped up so that participants agree conclusions and next steps before the end of the meeting.
- **Documented:** should have short, clear minutes or at least action points that are shared with participants to agree, ideally within a day or two of the meeting.

How to Facilitate Coordination Meetings

Taken from *Clusterwise 2* (Shepherd-Barron et al 2011), james.shepherd-barron.com/clusterwise-2/21-managing-effective-meetings-2/ and from the Shelter Cluster Field Coordination Toolkit, www.sheltercluster.org/References/Pages/SCCoordinationToolkit.aspx

BEFORE MEETING	
Action	Comments
Confirm room booking	Probably hotel for first ten days
Inform OCHA and HIC of time / venue / frequency of meeting	Ensure it is correct and posted on relevant office/corridor walls and websites
Send draft agenda to e-mail list	Request input from the partners; use GoogleGroup or similar for list management; make sure the agenda is realistic, does not have too many items on it, and that the items are sequenced logically (see example). Put major and/or difficult items first. Attach meeting notes from the previous meeting.
Seating arrangements for 100 people + standing room for 100 more	Sit at a large round table, or, at a separate table at the same level with the other participants surrounding in a semi-circle. Ensure adequate seating/standing room for all.
Sign at entrance to building and on Door	Emergency Shelter Cluster Coordination Meeting
How to join / contact Cluster Poster on wall	A2

Other posters on wall as space allows	Switch Off phones / No Smoking / No guns / Coordination Aims
Map facing audience	As big as possible
Mobile Amplification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Two amplifiers ▲ Two Desktop microphones ▲ Two wireless microphones (+spare batteries) 	IT Cluster / Office technician in-room standing by
Simultaneous Translation	Through OCHA / IT Cluster; alternatively, consider having two translators sitting in a huddle to one side; or, have translation of key points only at the end of every section of the agenda; do <i>not</i> attempt to have an interpreter translate every sentence
Print 2 x Attendance sheets	Cover sheet + 2 blanks (stapled) on a clipboard if possible
Hard copies of agenda, previous meeting notes, maps, matrices etc. on every other chair	Prepare these well in advance; staple the last set together no later than 1 hour before the meeting
Water available for (Co-) Chairs	Small bottles
Arrange for coffee/tea and biscuits outside <i>after</i> the meeting	[Tip: Coffee/Tea and biscuits are <i>essential</i> as it engenders much goodwill and enables discussions to take place in the margins of the main meeting which are often every bit as useful as the main meeting itself]
Appoint Meeting Note taker from Secretariat or Participants	Should be a native speaker of the language in which the meeting is conducted. This is not as easy as it looks. It should <i>not</i> be the Coordinator him/herself if at all possible; Usually, the Assistant Coordinator (seconded from national NGO should be requested).

DURING MEETING	
Action	Comments
Call meeting to order	Start on time. (Tip: Tap an empty glass with a pencil next to the microphone or tap the microphone itself)
Introduce Chair and Co-Chair	If a Government representative is present (s)he <i>must</i> speak first and hand-over to the Cluster Coordinator only if (s)he wants.
Nominate Meeting Note taker	Normally the chair but can be a rotated NGO volunteer (Tip: the one whose mobile phone goes off, takes notes at the next meeting)
Identify any Donor representatives or Press in the room	Do <i>not</i> ask everyone to introduce themselves; only those who are attending for the first time. Partners should be encouraged instead to fill in the 'Agency Profile' form (see template) and submit either electronically or at the next meeting. If Press is present, inform the room that everything that follows is "off the record" and subject to 'Chatham House Rules' i.e. the affiliation of the speaker is not mentioned unless expressly requested. Speakers should still mention their name, function, and agency when intervening though.
Mention any points of 'housekeeping'	Outline how the meeting will be conducted and ask anyone who doesn't like the approach to come up and recommend improvements afterwards. Run through administrative points of relevance to the meeting (e.g. coffee afterwards, meeting will last 90 minutes; mobile phones off) [Tip: Suggest that anyone whose phone goes off automatically

	volunteers to take the next set of meeting notes It's amazing how everyone scrambles to mute their phone!]
Outline expected outcomes of the meeting	Even in the first days of crisis response, meetings have definite themes
Ask if the agenda needs amending	Normally any matters arising can be handled under 'Any Other Business'. Accept minor changes if there is consensus. Large items will be included in the next agenda.
Manage the agenda (see notes for Facilitators, below)	Do not run through previous meeting notes at this stage. [Tip: Either put something simple as the first item, or brief an NGO to raise a particular issue before the meeting starts]
Update partners on action points arising from the meeting notes of the previous meeting that have not been covered during the meeting	Meeting Notes are action-oriented (see example)

AFTER MEETING	
Action	Comments
Circulate and meet representatives of larger NGOs	Arrange to visit three per week, either in the field or in their office. Ask if any improvements could be made to how the meeting was conducted.
Ensure Donors know that you are available to (brief) them at any time	
Collect attendance sheets	Ensure attendance is tracked in graphic (numerical) form according to type of participant (Donor, Large/Small INGO, NNGO, Other Clusters, Government, Academic Institution); Update Cluster Partners list.
Download latest data onto NGO Flash-drives	As requested by NGOs
Circulate meeting notes within 24 hours	These are meeting notes, not minutes. As such, they capture key issues discussed and actions/responsibilities/deadlines delegated. Principal concerns are captured in the SitRep; Post to Cluster / HIC website

Coordination Meeting Management

Facilitating a meeting with over 50 NGOs present is likened to “herding cats”. Being seen to be impartial, independent, a good listener, and someone who is not afraid to ask advice goes a long way to engendering the ‘trust’ so vital to being perceived as an ‘honest broker’. Try these:

- Start with a statement that sets the tone and style of the meeting (avoid humour, though, as this is so often misinterpreted in multi-cultural settings, especially where people are already stressed)
- Avoid talking too much and getting personally involved in discussions
- Listen actively (i.e. be aware of body language)
- Stick to the agenda and keep discussions focused on key issues (i.e. stop digressions – interrupt if necessary). However, allow flexibility within agenda items for participants to express and develop closely-related issues and concerns (but watch the clock)
- Encourage wide participation. Ask for information and opinions, especially from smaller NGOs and Donors. Ask open-ended questions.
- Don’t be defensive and don’t take comments personally
- Clarify and elaborate when requested or when needed
- Test continually for consensus (“Do you all agree?”)
- Summarize, re-formulate and record key points. Since this is easier said than done when chairing the meeting, arrange for a volunteer to record salient points as they arise; this helps the group stay focused, avoids repetition, and helps reach consensus
- Obtain agreement from those present on specific proposals and allocate responsibilities there and then (it helps to write the proposal on a Flip-chart)
- Anticipate problems and prevent or mitigate them by defusing clashes and being seen to deal calmly with difficult participants

Section 8: Developing Financial Sustainability for NGO Coordination Mechanisms

Once it has been decided to have separate NGO coordination, there may have to be cost considerations. Not all coordination mechanisms will be structured and require many resources, but over time, many informal coordination mechanisms become more formalised. It is particularly in such formalised cases that questions of financial sustainability eventually come to the fore.

Points to Remember:

- Start-up costs for most NGO coordination efforts are usually minimal since they are voluntary and informal. In most cases, any initial costs are jointly borne by some or all of the membership as part of their on-going work.
- However once a coordination body is properly formed, it will start to incur more substantial and regular costs. If a formal entity (such as a Secretariat or Security Office) is created, then costs will rapidly increase, in terms of staffing, office space, etc.
- Most arrangements to finance an NGO coordination body will themselves have administrative costs – whether that is in proposal writing, managing membership subscriptions, or reporting to donors. Make sure that such costs are taken into account during discussions.
- It is also worth remembering that financial arrangements have a direct impact not just on sustainability, but also on the accountability of NGO coordination to both internal and external stakeholders.
- It is essential, therefore, for participants in NGO coordination to take the question of the financial sustainability of their efforts seriously from the outset, not to put off critical decisions, and to get support from the membership for those decisions.
- Donors are increasingly receptive to funding NGO coordination, but only where they perceive that it adds value to, and does not undermine, existing coordination mechanisms.
- Making an NGO coordination structure financially self-sustaining is extremely difficult but not impossible; a combination of the approaches described in the table below is likely to be necessary.

The four strategies described in the table below have all been used by existing or previous coordination mechanisms to sustain their operations, although none of the strategies will guarantee sustainability; they must be combined with good management.

The table contains a range of possible funding strategies, although the specifics will vary depending on the situation. They can be used as a starting point for discussions within the membership to develop the most appropriate solution.

Strategy	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Further development
Core Donor	Relying on one or two key donors to cover core costs is the most common way in which coordination bodies initially establish a funding base.	<p>Ensures that the coordination body is able to get off to a strong start without worrying about funding.</p> <p>Donor support will often not just be financial, but will also include informally supporting the coordination body in e.g. advocacy efforts.</p>	<p>Reliance on a single donor will cause problems if the donor withdraws support, especially if that decision is sudden.</p> <p>Donor relations must be carefully managed to avoid the NGO coordination body becoming a tool of donor policy.</p> <p>Association with a particular donor may be perceived as compromising the independence of the coordination body and its members.</p>	If external funding is intended as a long-term solution, a donor diversification strategy should be considered. Such a strategy is only feasible if the NGO coordination body is perceived to add value to coordination and constructive relationships with key donors are developed and maintained. A wide range of donors spreads the risk of collapse should one donor withdraw their support; it also adds credibility through demonstrating confidence from a wider range of actors.
Consortium	A small group of larger NGOs agrees to support the Secretariat on behalf of the entire NGO community.	<p>By seconding core staff to support the coordination body (either full-time or part-time), larger NGOs can absorb the running costs in their budgets.</p> <p>Although donor support will still be needed, this approach can be sustainable if managed well by consortium members.</p>	<p>May lead to the body being less representative than intended, especially as consortium NGOs are likely to be seen as dominant both internally and externally.</p> <p>Relies on continued support by Directors of Consortium members, which may change when a new Country Director arrives.</p>	As the workload grows, most NGOs will be unable to bear the costs. The next step is for one of the Consortium to agree to act as a “host” for a Secretariat, channelling donor funds as an alternative to setting up an entirely new organisation.
Subscription	NGOs pay a regular (usually annual) subscription which guarantees their membership, in return for which they receive the right to benefit from services provided by the body	Subscription offers the best demonstration that NGO coordination is worth pursuing, since it provides visible proof of the value that the members attach to the coordination body and creates credibility as a result.	<p>Rarely covers core costs and may require supplementing by donors.</p> <p>Since they require active management, these schemes generate overheads.</p> <p>Setting subscription fees on an equitable basis is often challenging.</p> <p>Can create accountability issues as non-participating NGOs run the risk of being left out of decision-making.</p>	A shareholder system is a more radical approach in which every NGO receives a share in the coordination body. NGOs ‘buy shares’ through financial or in-kind support to the coordination body, but the number of shares held gives the NGO a larger or smaller voice in decision-making processes. (This risks favouring larger and richer NGOs at the expense of smaller and poorer, giving the former a greater voice; however this is what happens in many coordination bodies

				regardless of financial arrangements.)
Service charges	Generate income through either physical products (such as maps) or for services. Possible services include: security management, publications (e.g. Guides to NGO registration or government structures), analytical reports, training provision, M&E support.	The most financially sustainable approach, since it uses a profit-making model. It is worth remembering that “profit-making” does not necessarily equal “for profit”, since profits are channelled directly back into services.	Profit-making may conflict with principles of open access, transparency, etc. It is difficult to persuade people to pay for services that they previously received for free. Profit-making activities may alienate members or potential members.	Successful services can last beyond the life of the coordination body itself and form part of capacity-building by NGOs.

Durability Over the Years: The Example of ACBAR

The relatively long history of ACBAR is both its strength and its weakness. On the one hand, it has managed to weather several periods of crisis successfully, managing to remain relevant despite the changing context. On the other, the institutional form of ACBAR was created in a very specific set of circumstances, and changes in those circumstances inevitably lead to transitional periods in which questions of its role and relevance are resolved. ACBAR has more or less successfully negotiated these transitional periods, partly due to the perceived necessity of an NGO coordination body both by the NGOs and external actors.

This durability has a negative as well as a positive lesson for NGO coordination. The history of ACBAR raises the difficult question: when should a coordination body cease its operations? Some respondents felt that the ACBAR Steering Committee should have had the courage to close the organisation at times when it was clear that it was unable to play the representational role that was critical for its members. ACBAR has become so much a part of the institutional landscape in Afghanistan that it is hard for many to imagine it gone; while all respondents felt that ACBAR still has a role to play, this also prevents serious consideration of an exit strategy.

While funding was more limited in the 1980s, NGOs undertook a wide range of activities supported by bilateral coordination within their own community; however this took place in the absence of a functioning State and a large degree of freedom for NGOs. Increased funding made a wider range of activities possible, but also increased the reliance of the mechanism on that funding. In addition a number of the NGO coordination bodies were initiated or encouraged by donor governments; while this could be seen as donors facilitating coordination, it has also increased the complexity of NGO coordination. Donors must take more responsibility, both in encouraging their grantees to participate in coordination activities and ensuring that their own policies do not complicate the situation.

Afghanistan Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field.

Section 9: Good Governance and NGO Performance

The Importance of Good Governance in NGO Coordination

The Steering Committee and Secretariat are perceived as more representative by external actors: the Steering Committee as an elected body, and the Secretariat as an independent non-operational body. This does not necessarily reflect the views of Forum members themselves, who have expressed concern that their voice may not be represented through Forum channels (South Sudan Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field).

Previously, accountability between the Steering Committee and the Forum could be characterised as relatively weak, with the Forum meeting only monthly to receive information from SC members and therefore not included in many of their discussions (Sudan Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field).

Without an in-country steering committee for the NCSO, there was no local supervision of NCSO activities. In the absence of any field-based mechanism to express any favour or discontent, INGOs made comments to their headquarters or affiliate networks, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and ICVA (Haiti Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field).

For the last 10 years, the ExCom has been chaired by World Vision, Care, and Oxfam, resulting in some criticism that AIDA is "run by white northerners". (oPT Case Study, Strength in Numbers: An Overview of NGO Coordination in the Field).

If NGOs are going to promote greater performance and accountability in the humanitarian system, they first need to demonstrate these same principles in the management of their own coordination mechanisms. This demonstration is particularly important when an NGO coordination body is perceived to represent the views of NGOs in a country. Such principles or rules to manage NGO coordination mechanisms are most often found in their **Terms of Reference, Statutes, or Bylaws**.

Examples of Good Governance Promotion

- In Afghanistan and Iraq, local NGOs have formal representation in governance structures.
- In oPT, a representative of a smaller NGO is always in the Steering Committee.
- In Afghanistan, oPT, and Iraq, the Steering Committee is comprised of elected members who are rotated on fixed terms.
- In Myanmar, representation of NGOs in the Humanitarian Country Team has both fixed and rotating members, but the agencies always represents the interests of an inclusive international NGO Forum.
- In Iraq, South Sudan, and Somalia, the Secretariat is accountable to the in-country Steering Committee.
- In Iraq, oPT, South Sudan, and Somalia, NGO coordinating bodies commission public and independent evaluations.

Key Considerations for Good Governance of NGO Coordination Bodies

Translating the key principles of the [2010 Humanitarian Accountability Partnership \(HAP\) Standard in Accountability and Management](#) (systems/structures, information and transparency, participation, complaints and feedback systems, evaluation and learning) into internal processes of NGO coordination bodies involves considering the following questions:

Members

- Who are the members?
- How are they chosen?

Decision-Making

- How will decisions be made and how will they be enforced?
- Who will make decisions and how will they be chosen?

Governance

- How will governance bodies be held accountable and, if necessary, members removed/replaced?

Information

- What information must be shared with which members and how frequently?
- How will this information be shared?

Representation

- How will participation or representation in non-NGO meetings be decided (rotational, nominated, fixed representation, depending on the subject)?
- How will information be fed back to members and decisions taken by the broader membership?
- Who will participate (members/non-members) in meetings and what rights/privileges do they have?

Secretariat Staff

- If staff are employed, e.g. Secretariat, who will be responsible for managerial and financial oversight?
- If there are staff, what are their necessary competencies? What are their terms of reference (TORs)?
- How will staff be disciplined and if necessary removed/replaced?

Feedback and Complaints

- How will stakeholders provide feedback and how will complaints be handled?

Evaluation

- How will the NGO coordination body be evaluated?

Promoting Quality, Accountability, and Performance through NGO Coordination

Accountability, quality, and performance are increasingly being looked at in humanitarian response. NGOs have been at the forefront on leading many of the quality and accountability initiatives, such as the [Sphere Project](#), [Humanitarian Accountability Partnership](#), and the [ECB Good Enough Guide](#), the [Joint Standards Initiative](#), etc.⁸ In recent years, the introduction of the humanitarian reform process and the transformative agenda have started to put quality, accountability, and performance higher on the agenda of UN agencies, particularly through the IASC.

Increased NGO coordination may improve both collective and individual accountability through:

1. Promoting collective accountability, lately through constructively engaging in the IASC “[transformative agenda](#)” that includes a “step-change” in how the diverse elements of the humanitarian system (HCs, UN agencies, clusters, donors, and NGOs) can account to each other. Country implementation is now getting underway (see: <http://clusters.humanitarianresponse.info>);
2. Establishing or adopting standards or principles specific to NGOs, and monitoring and enforcing adherence to standards. This latter approach has been used particularly in countries where humanitarian and military operations are implemented simultaneously and the humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence are threatened. The development of joint codes of conduct is one way to promote principles and standards in a country; and
3. Advocating for, participating in, and providing technical assistance in implementing practical measures to increase accountability to disaster-affected populations, such as shared complaints mechanisms.

Depending on a collective NGO analysis of the needs and priorities to improve any specific humanitarian response, NGO coordination mechanisms may choose to prioritise improving quality and accountability.

⁸ There are numerous quality and accountability initiatives in existence. A recent mapping by Liza Cragg identifies a number of them in *Mapping Exercise on Quality & Accountability Initiatives*, <http://pool.fruitycms.com/humanitarianstandards/AS-Mapping-Exercise-Report-from-Liza-Cragg-website.pdf>
Section 9: Good Governance and NGO Performance, 51
NGO Coordination Guide, Version 1.0,
April 2013, ICVA, www.icvanetwork.org

Possible Ways that NGO Coordination Bodies can Promote Accountability

Promoting an accountable humanitarian response	Examples:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assisting in the identification of accountability gaps at system, agency, and community levels and advocacy to address gaps 2. Ensuring adequate information and communication with affected populations 3. Ensuring feedback and complaints mechanisms are integrated into coordination structures, including clusters, particularly at field level 4. Facilitating the enrolment, organisation, and implementation of accountability-related trainings, e.g. Sphere, HAP 5. Making accountability materials and tools available and facilitating discussions on adapting these tools to local contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC) in Haiti (2010) • Accountability and Learning Working Group in Haiti (2010) and Myanmar (2008) • Accountability indicators in the UN Integrated Monitoring Matrix in coordination with World Bank Social Impacts Monitoring for data collection in Myanmar (2008) • NGO Forum Steering Committee who addresses any gaps in cluster performance to the relevant UN agency in South Sudan (2010) • NGOs hosting and facilitating the work of People in Aid, Sphere, and HAP in Haiti (2010) and Myanmar (2008)

Ensuring Accountable NGO Practice	Examples
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing NGO Codes of Conduct specific to a given emergency (building on existing Codes) 2. Developing means for enforcing the Code of Conduct (Ombudsperson) 3. Criteria for membership 4. NGO registrars/registration 5. NGO accreditation 6. Peer-reviews and participation in monitoring and evaluation 7. Making public evaluations and learning exercise particularly through websites and other free media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO Codes of Conduct in Iraq, Afghanistan, oPT with emphasis on neutrality and advocating for non-armed escorts to distinguish NGOs from military and not-for-profit status to distinguish NGOs from government contractors • InterAction’s Haiti Accountability Report (2010) • Peer review (local and international NGO) in Real Time Evaluations (Save the Children and CARE in Myanmar) • Development of good ‘partnership’ guidelines for INGO/LNGO relations in Myanmar (2008)

Reference and Further Reading

- [Principles of Partnership](#)
- [Accountability Library at the One World Trust](#)
- [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief](#)
- Cosgrove, J. (2013). [Humanitarian Standards – too much of a good thing?](#) Joint Standards Initiative.
- [Developing a Code of Conduct for NGOs](#)
- Cragg, L. (20130). [Mapping Exercise on Quality & Accountability Initiatives](#), Joint Standards Initiative.
- [Quality and Accountability Initiatives: Questions and Answers](#)

- [The International NGO Accountability Charter](#)

Initiatives

- [Do No Harm of the CDA Collaborative Learning Project](#)
- [Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities \(CDAC\)](#)
- [Humanitarian Accountability Partnership \(HAP\)](#)
- [Joint Standards Initiative](#)
- [Quality COMPAS](#)
- [Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response](#)
- [Synergie Qualité: Coordination Sud Groupe Q & A \(Quality and Accountability\)](#)
- [The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action \(ALNAP\)](#)
- [The Emergency Capacity Building Project \(ECB\)](#)
- [The Sphere Project](#)

For improving the management of human resources in humanitarian emergencies

- [Bioforce](#)
- [People In Aid](#)
- [RedR](#)

Section 10: Evaluating NGO Coordination

Given the multiplicity of actors involved in an emergency response, it is important that coordination is explicitly considered – the intervention of a single agency cannot be evaluated in isolation from what others are doing, particularly as what may be appropriate from the point of view of a single actor, may not be appropriate from the point of view of the system as a whole.

Hallam, A. (1998), *Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance Programmes in Complex Emergencies*, ODI: London,

Coordination is consistently identified as being key to the performance of the humanitarian community, yet coordination activities are not frequently evaluated at the field level. Where coordination is discussed, it is usually in the context of system-wide evaluations, such as the Joint Evaluation of Assistance to Rwanda, which results in extremely broad recommendations. Such broad evaluations leave out a great deal of detail and fail to provide specific lessons to draw on for future coordination.

Coordination is rarely evaluated on its own terms, and this lack of focused evaluation has negative implications for the effectiveness of humanitarian aid. Since the introduction of the humanitarian reform process, more attention has been paid to coordination as a specific issue, particularly in measuring the performance of cluster coordination. However, these discussions focus on the clusters as a mechanism, rather than coordination as a process; since coordination does not happen solely within clusters, such focus can sometimes fail to investigate coordination outside the clusters.

The consensus is that the key metric for the success of coordination is how much it improves the effectiveness and efficiency of the overall aid effort. Unfortunately, those two terms are themselves subject to differing interpretations, and may be applied differently to different issues within the coordination effort; for example, the effectiveness of joint needs assessment must be measured differently than the effectiveness of civil-military coordination. In addition, it is difficult to identify cause-and-effect for coordination activities, which makes it difficult to evaluate coordination solely in those terms.

An expanded set of criteria has been laid out by the OECD DAC, including: Relevance / Appropriateness, Connectedness, Coherence, Coverage, Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Impact. The 2006 ALNAP guide *Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria* provides a good starting point; however it is worth noting that coordination is not like other types of humanitarian action, and in most cases has been treated only as a subset of broader humanitarian action. Another approach is to evaluate joint activities carried out by NGOs, placing coordination in the wider context, but such joint activities are still relatively rare in the field.

Without the development of clear guidance on how to evaluate coordination in the field, it is possible to identify key issues which evaluations should address. *The evaluation of coordination should reflect the objectives of the coordination mechanism itself, i.e. what did it initially set out to do, did it do it, and were the objectives relevant to improving humanitarian response in the first place?* Ideally, an evaluation approach should be decided in consultation with the members of the coordination mechanism, but also with external stakeholders such as national government, UN agencies, and donors.

This section provides some material on which you can base the development of an evaluation approach. These four approaches range from a logical framework approach with a focus on

evaluating the perceived usefulness of outputs and their impact on practice, to modifying the OECD-DAC criteria to accommodate evaluating coordination as one means of achieving a more effective humanitarian response. The evaluation approach that you develop will depend on your specific circumstances: the type of coordination being evaluated, the operational or security constraints, the available budget and other support resources, and so on.

Evaluation Approach 1: Case Study

These questions need to be slightly modified to reflect the objectives of an evaluation.

BACKGROUND

- **Background:** what situation led to the formation of the mechanism? Were there any existing mechanisms, and why were they insufficient? What were the specific reasons for forming it?
- **Alternatives:** what other mechanisms existed or now exist that provide alternative avenues for coordination? How does this mechanism relate to those alternatives?
- **Actors:** who were the primary actors that brought the group together? What roles did they take, e.g. funding, hosting, facilitating? Who were the initial members of the group?
- **Objectives:** what were the objectives of the mechanism, and who decided them? Have those objectives changed over time, and why?

GOVERNANCE

- **Governance:** what governance mechanisms exist? How are they decided (e.g. ExCom, elections)? Have these changed over time, and if so, how? How is their success judged?
- **Meetings:** what regular meetings are there, and how are they managed? How effective and useful are they, and who judges that? How are new meetings (e.g. working groups) formed?
- **Structure:** what is the structure of the group? How has that structure changed over time? How does the structure reflect (or not) the activities of the group?

ADMINISTRATION

- **Support:** what support structures exist (e.g. secretariat, security officer, etc.), if any? What are the historical and current budgets for the mechanism?
- **Cost:** how much has the mechanism cost to support over time, and how has cost-effectiveness been assessed (if at all)?
- **Funding:** who funds the mechanism (if funding is necessary)? How is that funding managed? Has the funding been consistent and, if not, how has that affected work?
- **Hosting:** who has hosted the mechanism (either meetings or support functions) and how has that hosting arrangement been managed?

MEMBERSHIP

- **Participation:** what constitutes “membership” and how is that managed? What is the quantity and quality of participation in the mechanism by the members?
- **Membership:** what is the members' composition in term of international / local, big / small, faith-based / secular NGOs? Was this composition arrived at through accident or design?
- **Discipline:** what compliance measures exist for membership criteria or codes of conduct? How are these measures enforced? Is there a member complaints mechanism in place?

EXTERNAL ROLE

- **Relationships:** who are the key actors with whom the group deals, and how does it interface

with them? What are the gaps in the relationships?

- **Role:** how does the mechanism fit into the wider humanitarian community, both in theory (i.e. strategically) and in practice (i.e. operationally)? (includes policy development)
- **Impact:** what does impact mean to the group? What has the impact of the mechanism been, and how has that impact been judged (informally) or measured (formally)?
- **Value-added:** what is the added value of the coordination mechanism to a) the group members; b) the humanitarian community; c) affected communities; d) other actors?
- **Status:** what is the current status of the group, and what are its future plans? How is it regarded by the humanitarian community? What documentation exists or is planned?

ACTIVITIES

- **Issues:** what are the key issues the group has dealt with or is dealing with? What are the approaches that have been taken to address these issues (e.g. working groups)?
- **Functions:** what functions does the mechanism fulfil and/or what services does it provide to members? How are those functions and services delivered?
- **Communication:** how is information passed between governing members and general members, between members generally, and between the mechanism and other actors?
- **Levels:** at what level has the mechanism operated – regionally, nationally, locally, site-specific? How have the relations between different levels been managed by the mechanism?

LESSONS

- **History:** what has been the broad path that the mechanism has taken? What were the critical success or failure points (e.g. funding, credibility, etc.), and how did the group manage them?
- **Learning:** are there any learning opportunities for the mechanism – retreats, evaluations, reviews? Are there any accountability measures in place, or have any been considered?
- **Success factors:** what are the factors that have led to the success (or failure) of a) the overall coordination mechanism and b) specific initiatives the mechanism has undertaken?
- **Lessons learned:** aside from the success factors, what are the lessons that have been learned either individually (by interviewees) or collectively (by the group)?
- **Exit strategy:** is there a situation in which the mechanism would no longer serve a purpose, and has that situation been articulated explicitly by the group?

Evaluation Approach 2: Service Delivery (Logical Framework approach)

Example Activity	Type	Possible Outputs	Impact
Coordination meetings	Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency and type of meetings held Meeting attendance levels over time Value of meetings held to members 	Examples of collective or individual actions taken as a result of improved coordination that demonstrate improved ownership and connectedness and/or coherent actions taken
Information sharing	Service / Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and type of information products produced Circulation levels of information products produced 	Perceived value, actual use and impact of information products produced
Advocacy and production of policy positions	Service/ Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of advocacy points raised Type and level of advocacy actions Number and type of papers produced Circulation levels of papers produced 	Impact of advocacy actions, e.g. examples of change in policy/action
Engagement and representation with external stakeholders	Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of Key Actors established Level and consistency of access maintained 	Recognition and consultation by stakeholders with NGO coordination mechanism
Security Co-ordination	Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uptake of security services by members Value of security services to members 	Actual or perceived reduction in security risks due to decisions/actions taken as a result of better coordination

Evaluation Approach 3: Adaptation of the OECD/DAC Evaluating Humanitarian Action Criteria (Systems Approach)

Systems approach used by the European Commission's 3 Cs (Coordination, Complementarity, Coherence)

Scope of evaluating NGO coordination (adapted from [EU 3 C's](#)):

- At different levels (international, regional, national, sub-national, and sectoral)
- Content (Policies, principles, priorities, procedures, practices/actions)
- Intensity (Consultation, co-operation, collaboration)
- With different stakeholders (national and local NGOs, other civil society, INGOs big and

small from different nations, national and local government, UN, donors, etc.).

Guiding Principles of the Coordination Mechanism

- Participation in, and formulation of, guiding policies and principles
- Application and relevance of guiding policies and principles to given situation
- Management financial and human resources; procedures and practices as applied and their effect

Foundation and Work Planning of Coordination Mechanism through Problem Analysis, Objectives, Planning, and Implementation

- Analyse the needs assessment and problem analysis that informed the foundation of the coordination mechanism and the prioritisation of its activities
- Assess the relevance of the objectives of the coordination mechanism to the contextual analysis and problem analysis particularly in light of concurrent coordination
- Analyse the following processes and their effect on activities of the coordination mechanism: (a) planning (b) implementation (c) reflection and feedback (d) expenditure.

Application of *OECD/DAC Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance (EHA) Criteria Area of Enquiry*

- Efficiency (including cost-effectiveness): Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been used. Cost-effectiveness looks beyond how inputs were converted into outputs, to whether different outputs could have been produced that would have had a greater impact in achieving the project purpose.
- Effectiveness (including timeliness): Effectiveness measures the extent to which the activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Implicit within the criteria of effectiveness is timeliness of the intervention.

Sustainability, including transition or exit strategy

Basic questions to ask:

- What steps did relevant actors take, individually or jointly, to improve coherence, complementarity, and/or coordination?
- Which, if any, enabling mechanisms and/or frameworks were used or put into place? And for what purpose?
- What results were achieved, intentionally or unintentionally? Why, and why not?
- What constraints or opportunities did the actors encounter while implementing their actions/mechanisms? How did they deal with these?

Evaluation Approach 4: Cluster Evaluation II, Adapted to an NGO Coordination Mechanism

Key Evaluation Questions	Criteria
a. To what degree has the NGO coordination mechanism modified and strengthened the humanitarian response?	Effectiveness (outcome)
b. What intentional or unintentional positive or negative effects of the NGO coordination mechanism concerning the coordination and interactions among participating organisations and the humanitarian system as a whole can be demonstrated?	Effects (rather than “impact”)
c. How is the NGO coordination mechanism interacting with initiatives to improve overall humanitarian performance, e.g. cluster approach, the HC system, including the HCT (or UNHCR in refugee situations). Is it implemented in the spirit of the <i>Principles for Partnership</i> ?	Coherence
d. To what degree has the NGO coordination mechanism achieved the intended outputs (these will vary, e.g. representation, partnership/cohesiveness, protecting humanitarian space, accountability)?	Effectiveness
e. Does the NGO coordination mechanism enable participating organisations to deliver better response through coordination and information sharing?	Relevance
g. Is there evidence that the output and impacts of the NGO coordination mechanism justify the inputs of stakeholders INGOs and LNGOs at the country level?	Efficiency

Further Reading

For a comprehensive bibliography on coordination, please visit www.ngocoordination.info.

Coordination General

Bennett, J. et al. (2006). *Coordination of international humanitarian assistance in tsunami-affected countries*. Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.

Bennett, J. (1994). *NGO Coordination at Field Level: A Handbook*. ICVA: Geneva.

Bennett, J. (1995). *Meeting needs: NGO Coordination in Practice*. ICVA: Geneva.

Currion, P. and K. Hedlund. (2011). *Strength in Numbers: A Review of NGO Coordination in the Field: An Overview, Case Studies, and Lessons Learned*. ICVA: Geneva.

Donini, A. (1996). *The Policies of Mercy – UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda*. Institute for International Studies.

InterAction (1996). *NGO Field Cooperation Protocol*. InterAction: Washington, DC.

Lautze, S. et al. (1998). *Strategic Humanitarian Coordination in the Great Lakes, 1996-1997: An Independent Assessment*, OCHA.

Minear, L., U. Chellia, J. Crisp, J. Macinlay, and T. Weiss (1992). *UN Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis 1990-1992*, Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies

Reindorp, N. and P. Wiles (1992). *Humanitarian Coordination: Lessons from Recent Field Experience. A Study commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*. OCHA.

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (2011), *Humanitarian Coordination: What Do We Stand For?*, SCHR: Geneva.

Sommers, S. (2000). *The Dynamics of Coordination*. Thomas Watson Institute, Brown University.

Stockton, N. (2002). *Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan*. ACBAR: Kabul.

Van Brabant, K. (1999). *Opening the Black Box - An outline of a framework to understand, promote and evaluate humanitarian coordination*. ODI HPN: London.

www.odi.org.uk/publications/3833-evaluate-humanitarian-coordination

UN General Assembly (1991), *Resolution A/RES/46/182: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations*. New York.

<https://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm>

The Cluster Approach

NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (2010), *Basic Information Leaflet Series: NGOs, Clusters and Other Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms*. Geneva.

Shepherd-Barron, J. et al (2010), *Clusterwise 2*. <http://clustercoordination.org/>

NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (2009), *Synthesis Report: Review of the engagement of NGOs with the humanitarian reform process*. Geneva.

Cluster Approach Evaluation, Final (ODI HPG Commissioned Report 2007).

IASC (2005). *Generic Terms of Reference for Cluster Leads at the Country Level*. Geneva.

IASC (2006), *Guidance Note on using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*. Geneva.

IASC, *Global Cluster Approach*: <http://clusters.humanitarianinfo.org>

OCHA (2005). *Humanitarian Response Review*:

<https://icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/doc00001434.pdf>

Civil-Military and Security

SCHR (2010) *Position Paper on Humanitarian-Military Relations*. Geneva.

IASC and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2008), *Civil-Military Guidelines and Reference for Complex Emergencies*. New York.

<http://ochaonline.un.org/cmcs/guidelines>

OCHA (2007), *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets In Disaster Relief – “Oslo Guidelines”*. Rev. 1.1. Geneva. <http://ochaonline.un.org/cmcs>

Barry and Jefferys (2002), *A bridge too far aid agencies and the military in humanitarian response*, HPN Network Paper 37, ODI Humanitarian Practice Network.

<http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?ID=2398>

Principles and Standards

Cosgrove, J. (2013). *Humanitarian Standards – too much of a good thing?* Joint Standards Initiative: London.

Cragg, L. (2013). *Mapping Exercise on Quality & Accountability Initiatives*, Joint Standards Initiative: London.

SCHR (1994). *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief*. IFRC: Geneva.

<http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/publication/p1067.htm>

NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (2011) *Humanitarian Reform: Basic Information Leaflet Series: Principles of Partnership*. Geneva.

Global Humanitarian Platform (2007), *Global Humanitarian Principles of Partnership. A Statement*

of Commitment Endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform. Geneva.

www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org/pop.html

The Sphere Project (2011), *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*. Geneva. www.sphereproject.org

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (2007), *HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management* and (2008) *The Guide to the HAP Standard*. Geneva.

www.hapinternational.org

People in Aid (2003), *Code of Good Practice in the management and support of aid personnel*.

London. www.peopleinaid.org

Evaluation

Hallam, A. (1998) *Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance Programmes in Complex Emergencies*, Good Practice Review 7, Relief and Rehabilitation Network, Overseas Development Institute, London.

OECD (1999) *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies*, OECD Development Assistance Committee on Aid Evaluation.

ALNAP (2006) *Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria: An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies*, Overseas Development Institute, London.

ECB Project (2011) *What We Know About Joint Evaluations of Humanitarian Action: Learning from NGO Experiences*, ECB Project, Oxford.

Global Level NGO Coordination and Collaboration

- [ICVA](#)
- [InterAction](#)
- SCHR
- [VOICE](#)

NGO Coordination at the Field Level

- [Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief \(ACBAR\)](#)
- [AIDA](#)
- [CCO Chad](#)
- [NCCI Iraq](#)
- PHF
- [South Sudan Forum](#)
- Sudan INGO Forum