

The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project II

A chance to influence
the humanitarian system

HUMANITARIAN ARCHITECTURE & NGO ENGAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN



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Foreword

The NGOs Humanitarian Reform Project Phase II activities focus on strengthening the role of national and international NGOs in coordinating and leading response. Building on the research and advocacy achievements of the first phase of the project, NHRP II is supporting NGOs – particularly local and national organizations – to improve humanitarian outcomes for communities affected by disasters and conflict. The focus is on enhancing NGO engagement in reformed humanitarian coordination, leadership, financial mechanisms, adherence to the Principles of Partnership, and promoting accountability to affected populations.

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Acronyms

DFID	UK Department for International Development	NOC	No Objections Certificate
EAD	Economic Affairs Department	NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office	OCHA	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
ERC	Emergency Response Coordinator	OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
ERRA	Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Administration	PCM	Policy Coordination Meeting
ERRC	Earthquake Recovery and Rehabilitation Commission	PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
ExComm	Executive Committee	PHF	Pakistan Humanitarian Forum
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas	PMD	Pakistan Meteorological Department
FFC	Federal Flood Commission	RC (O)	Resident Coordinator (Office)
FRC	Federal Relief Commission	RTE	Real-Time Evaluation
GCM	General Coordination Meeting	SUPARCO	Space and Upper Atmospheric Research Commission
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator	TA	Transformative Agenda
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team	ToR	Terms of Reference
HR	Humanitarian Reform	UN	United Nations
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	UNDHA	UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs
ICCM	Inter-Cluster Coordination Meeting	UNDRO	UN Disaster Response Organisation
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies	WFP	World Food Programme
IDPs	Internally Displaced Peoples	WPDA	Water and Power Development Authority
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent		
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organisations		
IOM	International Organization of Migration		
IRC	International Rescue Committee		
JAC-ER	Joint Action Committee for Earthquake Response		
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa		
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs		
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding		
NCM	National Coordination Meeting		
NDM(A)	National Disaster Management (Authority)		
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations		
NHN	National Humanitarian Network		
NNGOs	National Non-governmental Organisations		

Executive summary

The current humanitarian architecture in Pakistan is a direct product of events which occurred from 2003 to present. This architecture was heavily influenced by the evolving geopolitical events and relationships between Pakistan and traditional country donors and INGOs based in those countries. The humanitarian architecture is comprised of a number of different structures, bodies, and meetings including: the government, the army, UN OCHA, clusters, and NGOs through the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum and the National Humanitarian Network (NHN).

From 1999 to 2008, the government of Pakistan was under military rule with a shift to civilian administration in the past five years and elections due to be held in May 2013. Over the course of this period the humanitarian community has had to adapt to the changing responsibilities between different levels of government. In particular, the 18th amendment was added to the constitution which has devolved the focus of both government and coordination away from national levels toward the provincial level.

The UN coordination mechanisms are primarily the Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator's Office (RC/HC) and UN OCHA. The RC/HC is double-hatted and is perceived by many as having a development bias as the head of UNDP. The HCT has been criticized in a number of evaluations and reports as being weak and not having a strong voice with which to push for humanitarian space and being unwilling, or unable, to take humanitarian issues forward. Given the government's desire to quickly move humanitarian responses from the emergency phase, OCHA operations expand and contract and provide more policy coordination for NGOs than operational coordination.

Pakistan was the first country in which the cluster system was rolled out. Clusters are "rolling" meaning that they scale up and down according to need, have no defined membership, and have government co-chairs. While clusters are reported to be a facilitative and critical part of the humanitarian architecture, the lessons learned from previous disasters – dating back to 2005 – have not been fully implemented. NGOs have found clusters most useful at the provincial and local level. NNGOs have struggled with English as the primary language in the clusters.

INGOs are a primary actor in the humanitarian architecture and there are approximately 75 in Pakistan. The establishment of the Pakistan Humanitarian (PHF), a coordinating body of 53 INGOs, has proved useful in establishing a single voice for the INGO community. The PHF also has strong linkages and coordination with the National Humanitarian Network (NHN).

Although there is no official number of National NGOs (NNGOs) they are estimated to be in the thousands and registered with the government through a variety of acts and ministries or departments. 189 of these NNGOs make up the NHN which was established in 2010 and is overseen by a Central Executive Committee. The NHN has strong links at the provincial levels and their focus is on work done there.

The overall humanitarian coordination architecture does meet the practical needs of both INGOs and NNGOs in Pakistan. While NGO engagement with coordination tends to be robust it is relied on more heavily for policy level issues at a national level with NGOs relying on their own relationships for operational purposes at other levels.

I. Introduction

Aim of the study and research questions

This report aims to identify and describe the different elements that constitute the humanitarian coordination architecture in Pakistan. It seeks to distinguish how the overall architecture has been created and evolved as well as examining on-going challenges and strengths inherent in it. The report shows the ways in which international NGOs (INGOs) and national NGOs (NNGOs) engage humanitarian coordination and cites examples of NGO experience.

Methodology and scope

The report was written between 14 March 2013 and 25 April 2013 through a variety of data collection methods including:

Desk-based research:

Approximately 75 documents were reviewed and are listed in the Background Reading (Annex 1) with the exception of confidential and other internal organisational documentation. Pakistan specific documents were collected either from the author's personal documents, were passed by ICVA or key informants as a result of interviews conducted.

Interviews:

In addition to the document review, this report is based on information collected through interviews with 18 key informants who either are currently working, or previously worked in Pakistan. The majority of interviews were conducted by phone or Skype™, with most of them lasting an hour. Three interviews were conducted by email. Informants were selected based on their engagement with, or input into, humanitarian coordination in Pakistan. These included seven INGO representatives, five NNGO representatives, three UN representatives, and three donor country representatives.

Interviews were semi-structured but varied according to the individual interviewed based on their engagement and role with humanitarian reform processes and systems. Questions tended to focus on the past and current structure of humanitarian coordination and strengths and challenges of the evolving system. Interviews were conducted with an understanding of non-attribution and this has been honoured.

Structure of the report

This report is based mainly on a review of relevant literature as well as a number of interviews. It is divided into three main sections:

1. Background and context of humanitarian coordination in Pakistan which reviews the history and main contextual factors affecting humanitarian coordination.
2. A mapping of the various mechanisms and layers which make up the humanitarian system, or architecture, in Pakistan. This includes review of government, OCHA, Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, NGO (both INGO and NNGO) mechanisms and meetings at a federal, provincial and district levels for both natural disaster and complex emergency responses. Each of these is briefly described as a coordination body as well as meetings that are conducted.
3. Analysis of how this humanitarian coordination architecture meets the practical coordination needs of NGOs, both in terms of planning and responses. This includes an overview of the perception and acceptance for NGOs as well as constraints and challenges to engagement.

II. Background and Context of Humanitarian Coordination in Pakistan

1. Context of Humanitarian Coordination Today

Pakistan is the 6th most populated country on earth having over 170 million people who are susceptible to reoccurring natural hazards which often require a humanitarian response.¹ Based on events recorded by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) from February 1991 to April 2013, Pakistan has experienced 44 distinct disasters – an average of 1-2 natural disasters a year.² These include avalanches (3), cold waves (1), cyclones (2), droughts (2), earthquakes (11), floods (22), heat waves (1), rain/snowfall (1), and a storm (1).³ In addition to these natural disasters, counter-insurgency operations launched in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in 2005 and in Swat in 2009 have also resulted in an ongoing humanitarian response to meet the needs of internally displaced people (IDPs).

Prior to 2005, humanitarian responses were limited in scope and size as compared to post-2005, with the government responding to them alone or with the assistance of the few INGOs and NNGOs, donors and UN Agencies that were operating in Pakistan at any given time.

However, 2005 saw a major shift in the scale and type of humanitarian responses due to the interplay of a number of elements that critically shaped how humanitarian responses and humanitarian coordination would be conducted in the future. Understanding the interplay of these elements is critical to understanding the humanitarian architecture within Pakistan today.

These elements are, namely:

1. Conflict in the Afghanistan/Pakistan Region: The military campaign launched in 2001 by the United States and its allies resulted in additional international attention being focused on Pakistan and its strategic location. This has had influence both in terms of conflict dynamics within Pakistan as well as a sharp increase in funding support from many traditional donor countries in the region.
2. Natural hazards from 2005 to present have affected a far larger number of people than those prior to 2005. From 2005 onwards, between 2.3 million and 20 million people have been affected in each natural disaster or complex emergency occurring.⁴
3. The Government of Pakistan has been in transition from 2005 with the country being under military rule from 1999-2008. Civil administration structures are changing and developing. Part of this was the addition of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution that resulted in “devolution” of power and authority from the federal/national level to the provincial level.
4. From 2005, the international humanitarian community has also been transitioning, consolidating, and systematising the way it conducts humanitarian responses with the institution of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s (IASC) Humanitarian Reform and Transformative Agenda.

These events have raised a number of questions that are critical in analysing coordination and the development of the humanitarian architecture. Both Pakistan and the humanitarian

¹World Atlas: Pakistan. Available from: <http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/populations/ctypopls.htm>. [Accessed 01 April 2013].

²Relief Web. *Pakistan Disasters*. Available from <<http://reliefweb.int/country/pak>>. [Accessed 01 April 2013].

³Ibid.

⁴Relief Web. *Pakistan Disasters*. Available from <<http://reliefweb.int/country/pak>>. [Accessed 01 April 2013].

community have had to work with questions such as the role of government and military in humanitarian responses as well as the role of the international humanitarian community when there is no official request for humanitarian assistance from the government.

Disasters in Pakistan which result from natural hazards, and their responses, are treated as independent events by the government despite the cyclical nature or regularity of their occurrence. This continual activation/de-activation has left the humanitarian coordination system susceptible to abrupt changes in the way responses are conducted as well as not giving adequate time to prepare pre- and post- emergency for the next response. During the “interim” periods between responses the nature and personality of humanitarian partners can also change as there is turnover of staff in UN and INGOs or as there is movement in government agencies. This results in an inability to learn lessons from cyclical natural hazards such as recurrent flooding.

Today, there are reoccurring natural hazards resulting in a concentration of disasters in the South of the country and ongoing conflict in the North. The shape of the system that coordinates these has shifted to respond to the evolving political and humanitarian realities and demands during and between responses from 2003 to present.

2. History of Humanitarian Coordination Pakistan (2003-present)

The elements of success: 2003-2007

While the majority of actors active in the humanitarian coordination architecture today have only been present in Pakistan since 2005, a handful were present in the 1990s and 2000s. These include several large INGOs such as Save the Children, Care and Church World Service. It also includes UN Agencies such as UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, as well as the UN Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) and the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) – both precursors to UN OCHA.

In November, 2002, an earthquake of 5.5 magnitude on the Richter scale struck the region of Gilgit in Pakistan and affected approximately 350,000 people resulting in NGOs undertaking a number of assessments. In 2003, INGOs felt that coordinating these assessments in the future could improve their ability to respond and consequently set up an informal group of seven INGOs. Islamic Relief was the initial chair and information was shared by email. In 2004, the group became more organised adding 12 members and electing the chair. It was informally known as the Emergency Response Forum.

On 08 October 2005, another earthquake of 7.8 magnitude on the Richter scale struck the Kashmir and NWFP regions of Pakistan. Three and a half million people were affected. In addition to the handful of INGOs, there were a few large NNGOs, and several UN Agencies that initially responded. However, within weeks, they were joined by hundreds of other INGOs. Many national NGOs working in humanitarian response were also established at this time.

The government’s response was led by Provincial Relief Commissions at the provincial level.⁵ The informal INGO network met and began to work with the UN response. The UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team began to collaborate with the newly established Federal Relief Commission (FRC). Within weeks hundreds of NGOs were attending the INGO network’s meetings.

⁵Bower, W. (2011) *Earthquake Relief Operations: Leveraging Humanitarian Missions for Strategic Success* *Earthquake Relief Operations: Leveraging Humanitarian Missions for Strategic Success*. Washington, DC, USA: National Defence University Press

National NGOs also set up a group called Joint Action Committee for Earthquake Response (JAC-ER) with an informal structure. However, given that few NNGOs were located in Islamabad it never consolidated into a coherent organisation and disbanded quickly following the earthquake response.

In 2005, clusters had just been conceived globally but there was little understanding or global guidance on what their practical functioning would look like even as the decision was taken to roll them out in Pakistan. Understanding of their role or how they would/should coordinate was poor. As a former INGO Country Director said:

“People had little idea what cluster would handle what so people would go to shelter to discuss plastic sheeting and find out it was discussed at the NFI meeting and rush out. UNHCR was leading the shelter and advocating an approach based on learning from China where there was one warm room. But people were there from Mongolia and California and they wanted to build yurts and teepees. We just needed a good, simple design that could fit Pakistan but initially it was chaos.”

Clusters became a way for INGOs to raise their profile and get funding as donors relied on them as funding mechanisms. This was broadly evaluated to be a slow and ineffective approach broadly criticised in evaluations following the response.⁶

By October 2005, the government had established the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) a civil authority responsible for responding and rebuilding the earthquake affected regions.⁷

In March 2006, the FRC merged with the ERRA. Both of these governmental bodies were widely acknowledged as being effective in responding to the earthquake with open and collaborative coordination. As the earthquake response continued ERRA held regular meetings and donors, INGOs, and small local organisations were all welcome in coordination meetings. Things were open to discussion and accessible. A close working relationship between the UN and implementing organisations was forged.

In December 2006, the National Disaster Management (NDM) Ordinance was passed which paved the way for the establishment of the NDM Commission which is the civil oversight body of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The NDMA was tasked with being the coordinating body to facilitate implementation of disaster risk management strategies and responses.⁸ It would become the main governmental body to interact with all humanitarian stakeholders including ministries, divisions, departments, armed forces as well as the international human community.

Complications Arise: 2007-2010

In October 2007 flooding affected 2.5 million people. The consolidated coordination which was present through first the FRC, and then ERRA, was now diluted across a number of government agencies including the nascent NDMA. OCHA responded to the floods by undertaking a number

⁶ Inter-Agency Standing Committee *Real-Time Evaluation Cluster Approach – Pakistan Earthquake* (February 2006). IASC; Action-Aid. *The Evolving UN Cluster Approach in the Aftermath of the Pakistan Earthquake: An NGO Perspective*. Action Aid International: UK.

⁷ Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority. Available from: <<http://www.erra.pk/aboutus/erra.asp#HB>>. [Accessed on 28 March 2013].

⁸ National disaster Management Authority. Available from: <<http://www.ndma.gov.pk/>>. [Accessed on 28 March 2013].

of assessments in 2008. However funding for the flooding was less forthcoming and less coordinated. OCHA disbanded many of its field offices.

In 2009, the government undertook a counter-insurgency operation in the KP region to address Taliban elements. Two and a half million people would be displaced in Swat as a consequence and the coordination became more complicated as occurring in a conflict-area. Concentration on humanitarian space and civilian / military cooperation and relationships increased as did travel restrictions on humanitarian operations. NGOs and UN agencies had to seek No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from the military in order to start projects, carry out programme activities and move in areas of displacement.

In 2010, floods of an unprecedented scale occurred and OCHA began to scale up calling for a massive appeal in order to reach the approximate 20 million people affected. They also rolled out a large cluster response, with 12 clusters “rolled out” as a consequence. In 2010, an INGO coordination body – the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum – was also formalised.

Stalemate: 2010-present

The request from the government for assistance with the flooding response in 2011 occurred belatedly and no request for assistance was issued for the 2012 flooding. While this did not affect the ability of some organisations to respond it has a direct impact on some donors whose governments will not respond with funding without a direct request or appeal.

A precarious stalemate seems to have emerged as international support is still perceived by many as necessary in order to fully respond to humanitarian crisis. At the same time the scale of the international response is limited by the perceived Government unwillingness to officially request it. The international humanitarian community, in turn, feels bound by the “humanitarian imperative” and desire to respond where and when it is allowed, as well as by bureaucratic impediments and a lack of funding largely due to an inability to launch an appeal.

Given this stalemate, National NGOs expressed frustration over their inability to access and respond to the level of need they find in disaster areas.

III. Humanitarian Coordination in Pakistan: Overview and Mapping

“We have more of a structure but less of a heart. We have lots of structures but we no longer talk to each other in the same way.”— former INGO Country Director

In order to better understand the humanitarian coordination in Pakistan it is best to deconstruct it and examine it as the sum of its parts. There are a number of bodies and organisations that contribute to, or hold, coordination meetings that together make up the humanitarian structure. These different meetings are listed in Table 1 below along with the inter-agency coordination meetings for which each is responsible:

Table 1: Coordination Bodies / Meetings

Organisation / Body	Inter-Agency ⁹ Coordination Meetings
National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA)	Policy Coordination Meeting (PCM) National Coordination Meeting (NCM) General Coordination Meeting (GCM)
Provincial Disaster Management Agencies (PDMA)	
District Disaster Management Authority	
Pakistan Army Civilian / Military Liaison Cells & Divisions	Civilian – Military Liaison Meetings
Office of the UN Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator Office (RC/HC)	Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)
UN OCHA	Inter-Cluster Coordination Meeting (ICCM) Provincial ICCM – or, Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Humanitarian Communications Humanitarian Assessment Humanitarian Access Meeting Information Management GIS Planning & Preparedness Ad Hoc (IDP registration, etc)
Clusters ¹⁰	National Cluster Meetings Provincial Cluster Meetings District Cluster Meetings (in some cases)
Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF)	
National Humanitarian Network (NHN)	

⁹ Only inter-agency coordination meetings led by the organisation are listed here. The organisation might conduct other meetings (e.g. UNCT or PHF members meetings) but as these are inter- rather than intra- and so are not listed here.

¹⁰ It is debatable whether clusters are entities or simply meetings. Given that they have their own governance structure and, at times, dedicated coordinators all led by different UN Agencies they do not fit readily under any other organisational structure (e.g. OCHA or government) and so have been described here as an independent body.

Each of these operates at varying degrees at different levels. In order to better understand the overall structure each will be examined in detail – both the organisation and how it is structured as well as the inter-agency meetings it conducts.

1. Government Structure & Humanitarian Coordination

Perhaps the most critical element in understanding humanitarian coordination is recognition of how government is structured and the gradual evolution of both its overall structure, its structure related to humanitarian responses and view of disasters and emergencies over the past eight years.

From 1999 to 2008, the government of Pakistan was under military rule. This meant that for disasters occurring during that period it was unhelpful to draw a distinction between the military response and the response of the civil administration. In the eyes of the state – and many people in Pakistan – they were indivisible. In fact, the civil-military distinction drawn by the international community often stems from an understanding that the military and civilian administration of a country are, or should be, distinct. This division was anomalous with Pakistani reality. One INGO Country Director recognised this saying,

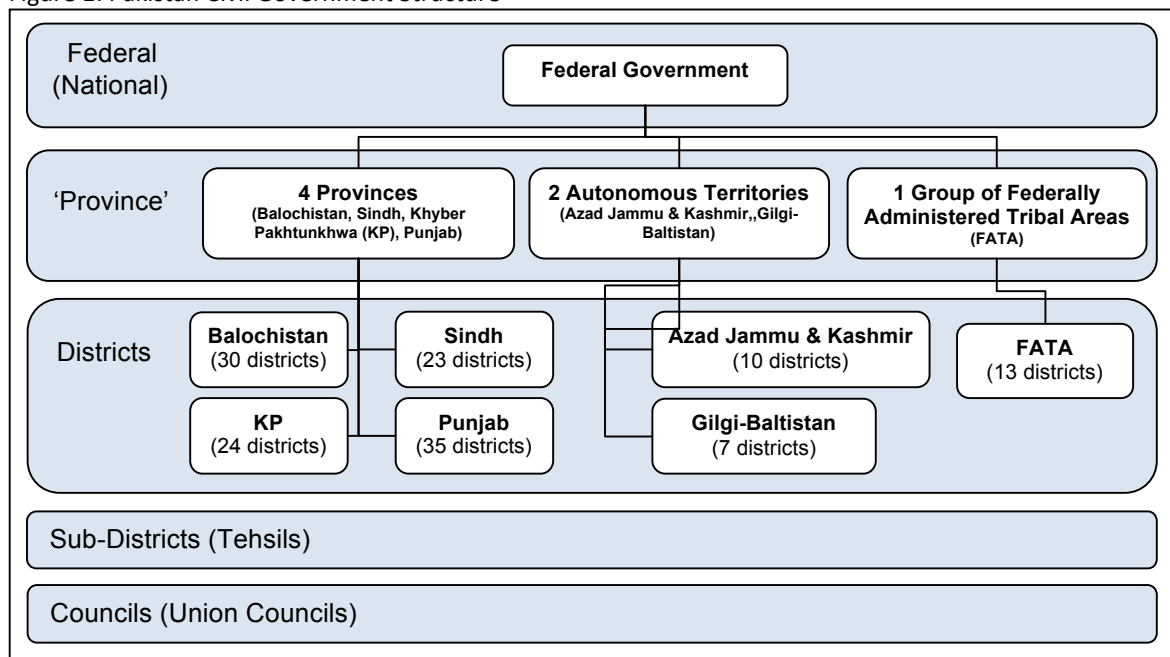
“In Pakistan, you have to take the military as a key humanitarian actor. They tend to be the first responder during the first few weeks and they save more lives maybe than all of us combined. .”

While this tends to be less of an issue during responses to natural disasters, issues with the international humanitarian community increase when the military is both an active combatant as well as a humanitarian responder to a the complex emergency; as has happened since 2009 in the counter-insurgency operation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. This has also led to a dichotomy in how humanitarian responses are viewed in Pakistan with natural disasters having one type of response and complex emergencies having another.

Pakistan is also a country in transition where geographic divisions are mutable and have been redefined according to political shifts and compromise. Broadly, the government is divided into five levels: federal (or national), provincial, district, sub-district and council as shown in Figure 1 below.

However, even this fails to explain the complexity as, for example, at the provincial “level” two autonomous territories and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in addition to four provinces. This structure results in a different government relationship between the federal level and a province and the federal level and an autonomous territory. Each have a different history and governance agreement with the federal level and this has implications for the humanitarian response oversight in each.

Figure 1: Pakistan Civil Government Structure



Engaging with the government at different levels has been described as diverse with most INGOs and NNGOs relying on developing close working relationships at each level in order to engage in work. Those interviewed in the course of this study felt that while relationships might be at times stretched, or strained, at the national level there is still broad acceptance of NGO work at the local levels.

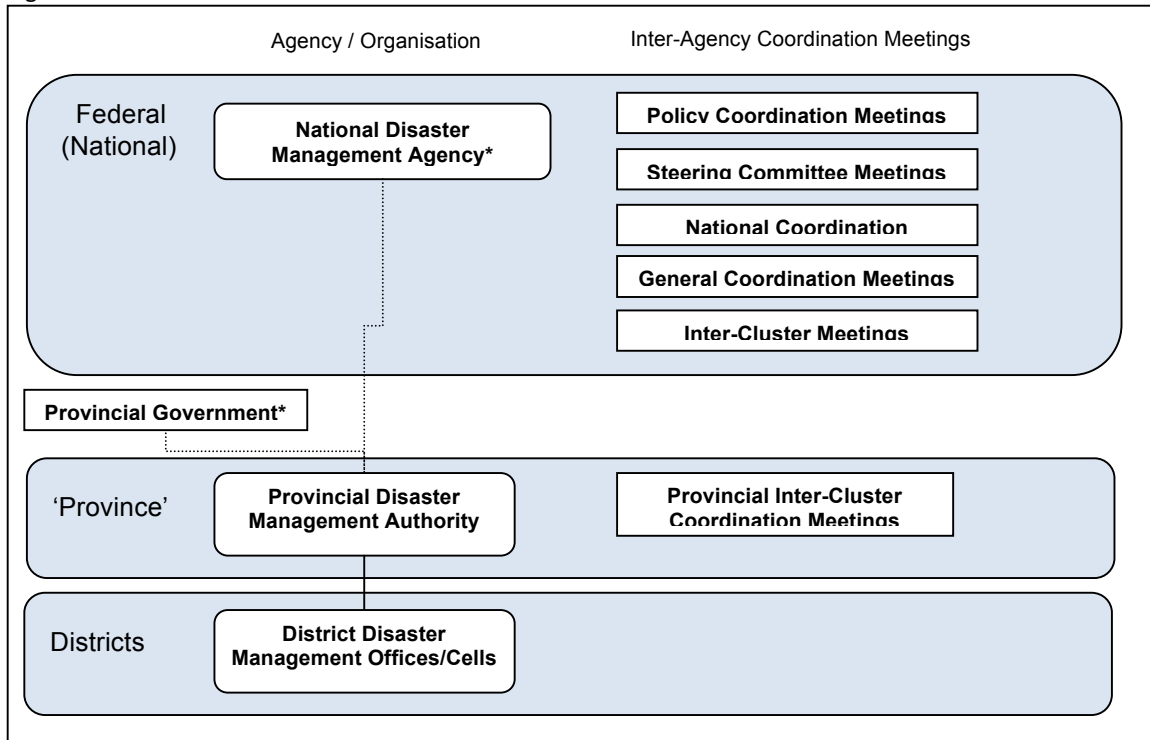
From 1999 to 2013 there have been substantial shifts in the politics of the country, which have resulted in shifts to the humanitarian architecture, and perceptions of the humanitarian community. In 2008, general elections were held and General Pervez Musharraf stepped down ending military rule and transitioning to a government that was in power for a five-year term. The successful conclusion of that term in 2013 has paved the way for the next general elections which are due to be held in May 2013. This transition has also been accompanied by increased activity by militant groups seeking to derail the process and increased insecurity for NGO activities.

The 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan passed in April 2010 broadly devolved power away from the federal level of government to the provinces. This resulted in shifting authority and decision making between the national and provincial levels in disaster responses. Clarity on line management between the PDMA and the NDMA were muddled with PDMA beginning to report to provincial authorities rather than national and thereby subject to provincial priorities. This thus created a situation where the provincial government could request a humanitarian response but the national government refused to recognise that the response was needed or endorse it. Clarification on roles and mandates has yet to be forthcoming.¹¹

Following the institution of the NDMA in 2006 the civil administration for responses to disasters in Pakistan began to develop. This institution is only seven years old and still developing and changing. Below is a map of the organisation at different governmental levels as well as meetings it conducts.

¹¹Oxfam - Missing Pieces: Assessing the impact of humanitarian reform in Pakistan – Oct 2009.

Figure 2: Civil Administration Humanitarian Coordination Structure¹²



While the government officially leads a number of coordination meetings these are not held on a regular basis but are most routinely called following the onset of a natural disaster and after an official request for international assistance.

Bureaucratic Difficulties

Coordination with government structures became more complicated from 2010, with INGOs noting an increase in bureaucratic requirements to accomplish humanitarian work. This can be related to any number of different processes such as tax issues, visas, or access permissions. Today, many of the INGOs present registered with the Pakistani government in 2006 which means that their five year registration has, or will soon, expire. However, new Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) or a process by which the MoUs will be renewed has been slow. Without a formal, standardised registration process, visas can be often delayed and some international aid workers are then in the country on expired visas or need to leave the country to be issued a new visa on a monthly basis. Moreover, additional permissions (NOCs) are necessary to start a project in, or conduct travel to, certain areas in KP, FATA and Balochistan; according to INGOs, donors and the UN interviewed, these can be difficult to obtain, impeding efficient implementation and response. As safety and security in these areas has become a greater issue further delays have occurred.

The government of Pakistan understandably noted that there was, and continues to be, a huge influx of aid monies for emergencies and wants to have an increased say in where this money is going and how it is being used. At times, the government has criticised what it considers to be the high overheads of INGO operations and some INGOs find this an unsubstantiated allegation. Many NGOs – especially CSOs – are multi-mandated and working on humanitarian, development and human rights issues simultaneously. This results in some organisations to

¹² *Following the institution of the 18th Amendment an unclear line relationship was created between federal NDMA and PDMA with authority and line management/reporting to NDMA being, at best, diluted and, at worst, wholly diverted to the provincial government.

both respond independently in a humanitarian response and criticise some government human rights record. In order to be in line with their humanitarian mandate, other NGOs have also been less willing to share information with the government.

The above has contributed to tension between the Government and the international humanitarian community. It must be noted, however, that this perception is not always shared across all government institutions as different line ministries have different attitudes toward partnership with NGOs.

Several people interviewed cited a genuine sympathy and understanding of the government's position, its need to know where and how the international humanitarian community is working, and to be able to authorise access to certain parts of the country. There was, however, also concern that continued strictures on humanitarian organisations could create an unfavourable environment for humanitarian response and reduce humanitarian space. Some frustration was expressed that there was no clear forum to dialogue on these issues with the government and an apparent unwillingness of higher level bodies – such as the HCT – to take these issues up collectively with the government.

Government Led Coordination Meetings

While the government officially leads a number of coordination meetings these are not held on a regular basis and are most routinely called following the onset of a natural disaster and following a request for international assistance.

Although there is no 'ranking' of government-led coordination meetings, the meeting attended by the highest level of official from both the government and international humanitarian community is the Steering Committee, which is co-chaired by NDMA and the Humanitarian Coordinator. This meeting includes representatives from the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Economic Affairs Division (EAD), ICRC/IFRC and representatives of the PDMA.

This group is supported by another number of meetings which are listed below along with their structure:

- Policy Coordination Meeting – Chaired by NDMA and attended by: MoFA, EAD, Federal Flood Commission (FFC), Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), Space and Upper Atmospheric Research Commission (SUPARCO), the HCT, PHF, NHN, and ICRC/IFRC. The ERRA and PDMA can attend if they feel the meeting is relevant.
- National Coordination Meeting – Chaired by NDMA and attended by: representatives from other ministries and departments, the HCT, donors, the armed forces, and ICRC/IFRC.
- General Coordination Meetings – Co-chaired by PDMA and OCHA and attended by: representatives from other ministries and departments, the HCT, donors, the armed forces, and ICRC/IFRC.

2. Office of the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC)

In Pakistan, the UN RC is "double-hatted" with the HC role. As in most countries with multiple hatting there is some debate as to whether one person can successfully fulfil both functions but moreso in Pakistan where there is perceived to be a strong development bias at the expense of humanitarian action. The RC/HC is constantly having to balance the need to smoothly coordinate

development work while juggling humanitarian concerns and needs. Additionally, several interviewees felt that the combination of mandates created confusion as the RC is instructed to work closely with the government in order to press the development agenda while the HC should be maintaining independence and neutrality of humanitarian interventions.

While there was near universal agreement that the roles should be separated in a context like Pakistan, thereby giving both development and humanitarian actors independent voices, there was also resignation that this would simply never happen. In the 2010 floods response, due to the severity and magnitude of the disaster, a separate senior humanitarian advisor was appointed for Sindh province and this was generally viewed as a positive and flexible approach to leadership which separated the RC and HC function.

Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Meetings

The RC/HC chairs the Humanitarian Country Team meetings with OCHA acting as the Secretariat. The meeting is attended by twelve UN Agencies and the IOM, five NGO representatives and the ICRC.¹³ There are six seats for NGOs one of which is filled by a Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) secretariat representative, three by members of the PHF executive committee and two NHN representative. Donors have no seat on the HCT. Although this has been advocated by DFID in 2010 and ECHO in 2011, there is a perceived reluctance from UN Agencies who are concerned that it would significantly change the dynamics of the meeting making it a fundraising exercise. The HCT meets monthly and operates by the Terms of Reference (ToR) revised in May 2012.

In nearly every assessment or evaluation following humanitarian responses between 2009 and 2012 the HCT has been critiqued for not being a strong enough voice in regard to humanitarian space and action. This includes finding that the HCT does not “argue for impartial humanitarian action”, that the cluster experiences “uneven commitment” from the HCT, that it “has not been as effective a forum as it should have been”, and makes, “little effort” to push for humanitarian space.¹⁴ Yet, interestingly, the group’s ToR makes no reference to any outside coordination or advocacy that will be done but rather suggests it is a way for agencies and organisations present to coordinate amongst themselves internally.

One reason why this could be was cited in the Humanitarian Principles and Practice in Pakistan meeting held in September 2012 which said,

“While the humanitarian community started out with basic operating rules, there has not been much take up of these rules. There was also a general lack of willingness among the humanitarian community to challenge the government, and little advocacy to push for a distinction between military and humanitarian response. This lack of willingness is due in part to the UN piloting its One UN approach, which pushes for greater partnership and good relationships with government.”¹⁵

Several INGO country directors felt that this HCT weakness was due, in part, to the heads of UN Agencies not having grasped, or fully accepted, the concept of the HCT being the entirety of the

¹³ FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, UN Women, UNOPS, ILO

¹⁴ Oxfam - Missing Pieces: Assessing the impact of humanitarian reform in Pakistan – Oct 2009; Inter-Cluster Diagnostic Mission to Pakistan – July 2009; August 2010 - IASC Real Time Evaluation Pakistan; August 2010 - IASC Real Time Evaluation Pakistan

¹⁵ Fenton, W, Abouzeid, Amany. (November 2010). It’s the thought that counts: Humanitarian principles and practice in Pakistan. Available from: <<http://www.odi.org.uk/events/2516-its-thought-that-counts-humanitarian-principles-practice-pakistan>> [Accessed 01 April 2013].

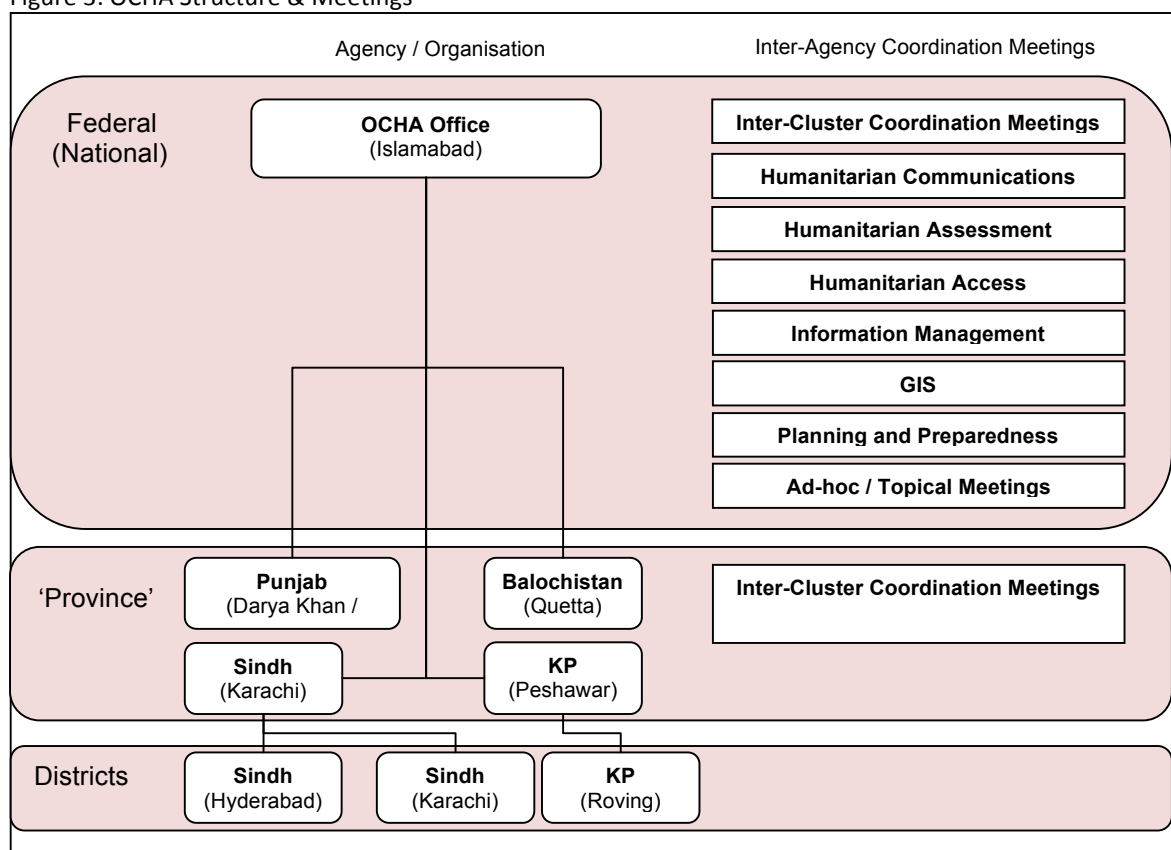
humanitarian community rather than a UN meeting to which NGOs are invited. One INGO Country Director cited the current discussions around bureaucratic impediments for INGOs as a prominent example where the HCT has not taken it forward collectively as a pertinent issue for the “humanitarian community” but rather it is dismissed as an “NGO issue”.

National NGO representatives from the NHN who have attended the HCT were glad to be included in the meeting and felt that they bring a relevant and important perspective. However, representatives did say that they struggle to attend every meeting and often there are meetings where no NHN representative can attend. Again, the perspective emerged that the meeting was one of the “international UN community” to which NNGOs were invited rather than a meeting of the entirety of the humanitarian community.

3. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA)

OCHA operates in Pakistan at the federal, provincial, and district levels. There are currently 71 staff in the country with 30 being located in field offices. Figure 3 below show the current structure and locations of OCHA offices as well as meetings it either conducts or co-chairs.

Figure 3: OCHA Structure & Meetings



This structure is prone to change depending on the emergency and the government’s response to it. During large-scale responses OCHA has opened more provincial and district offices and closed these following the emergency period. For example there were 23 field offices during the 2010 floods. However, this emergency period is only six months in length as emergency response is moved to ‘early recovery’, an ill-defined transition period where UNDP and other UN agencies become the focal points for coordination. While in Pakistan, OCHA is largely viewed as a policy coordination agency rather than an operational one its presence was cited as critical by most INGOs interviewed given that there is no other UN Agency with a sole coordination mandate. In 2010, when OCHA was instructed to transition its operations to UNDP, with cluster meetings hastily being renamed as Early Recovery Working Groups, much of the coordination

function fell flat, as UNDP was not perceived as a coordination agency, as their mandate is to capacity build and implement development projects.

OCHA-led Meetings

Similar to the “rolling” nature of its field offices OCHA’s inter-agency coordination meetings also expand and contract given the nature of the emergency and the topics needed for discussion. The ICCM is conducted on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis depending on the emergency. Humanitarian Communication is conducted monthly, The Humanitarian Assessment and Access meeting is now quarterly and co-chaired with the PHF but there is no set workplan and a perceived reluctance by UN agencies to participate. A number of meetings are conducted in an ad hoc manner such as those on IDP registration and family numbers.

4. Cluster Coordination

Pakistan was one of the first countries in which clusters were rolled out in 2005. Since that time they have been observed and evaluated in a number of reports but significant improvement and clarity in their function has been slow. An ICVA report of January 2011 noted this saying:

“In terms of lessons learnt with regards to the functioning of the clusters, it has been the subject of three real-time evaluations, with a fourth one underway. The question is whether all these efforts have led to more effective functioning of the clusters in the country.”¹⁶

The last of these evaluations was the March 2011 RTE of the 2010 Floods. This found that,

“Critical stakeholders see UN coordination becoming an end in itself and not the means to effectively improve the response.”¹⁷

Most monitoring, evaluation and RTEs conducted since 2005 simply reinforce the findings of the previous report. The 2010 RTE noted this specifically in regard to clusters saying,

“Problems identified in 2005 earthquake and 2007 flood are evident again.”¹⁸

These include:

1. Lack of good/standardised governance such as regular meetings and through information sharing (agenda and minutes).¹⁹
2. Lack of devoted leadership. At the time of writing only two national clusters had full-time dedicated leads. The rest of the clusters are double-hatted with UN Agency responsibilities which results in ‘agency centricity’.²⁰
3. Lack of NGO co-leadership.
4. Lack of membership requirements. Meetings are open meaning any security forces can attend cluster meetings.
5. Lack of capacity building and investment at the district level.²¹

¹⁶ICVA (January 2011). *Humanitarianism Stretched to the Limit*. ICVA: Switzerland.

¹⁷Polastro, R, Nagrah, A, Steen, N., Zafar, F. (March 2011) *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan’s 2010 Flood Crisis*. DARA: UK.

¹⁸IASC; Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R., and Zafar, F (August 2010). *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the hHumanitarian Response to Pakistan’s 2009 Displacement Crisis*. IASC.

¹⁹IASC. (July 2009) *Inter-Cluster Diagnostic Mission to Pakistan – July 2009*.

²⁰Inter-Agency Standing Committee *Real-Time Evaluation Cluster Approach – Pakistan Earthquake* (February 2006). IASC.

²¹Oxfam (October 2009). *Missing Pieces? Assessing the impact of humanitarian reform in Pakistan*. Oxfam: UK.

6. Lack of ability/mandate for clusters to act as pooled fund managers. Clusters allocate pooled donor funds, placing a burden on cluster to operate in a way in which they were never intended has compromised transparency, objectivity, efficiency, and effectiveness.²²

When asked why so few recommendations had been taken up and so few changes to the clusters made based on these reports one former INGO Country Director said that it was because it was, “no one’s job” to do so. And another current INGO Country Director suggested that the high turnover of humanitarian staff during, and following, emergencies as well as the immediate government-mandated cluster downsizing makes it difficult to have the staff and resources to do so.

Despite this, clusters have been recognised as being a helpful addition to the coordination architecture. In recent months, the purpose of the clusters has become clearer with each cluster now having a specific ToR and a growing familiarity with the system by all humanitarian actors. The 2006 IASC RTE of the Cluster Approach in the 2005 Earthquake found that clusters,

“Successfully provided a single and recognizable framework for coordination, collaboration, decision-making, and practical solutions in a chaotic operational environment.”²³

In a recent baseline survey conducted on cluster coordination, a majority of organisations felt that field-level cluster coordination meetings were more useful for resolving operational issues than national level meetings despite there being limited resources invested at the district-level.²⁴

Clusters in Pakistan are “rolling” meaning that they scale up and down according to need. Given that clusters wax and wane according to the number and sectors allowed by the government in any given response they are hard to analyse at any one point. At times there might be four clusters, at others nine clusters and in the midst of a large-scale emergency, eleven. At the time of writing there were eight clusters operating in response to natural disasters (2011/2012 flooding) and nine clusters operating for the on-going complex emergency (displacement) in the northwest of the country. These natural disaster and complex emergency clusters at the national, provincial, and district levels normally operate distinctly from each other but have recently merged at the national level. The sectoral clusters are listed in Table 2 below:

²² IASC; Cosgrave, J., Polastro, R., and Zafar, F (August 2010). *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the hUMANitarian Response to Pakistan’s 2009 Displacement Crisis*. IASC; and Polastro, R, Nagrah, A, Steen, N., Zafar, F. (March 2011) *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan’s 2010 Flood Crisis*. DARA: UK.

²³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee *Real-Time Evaluation Cluster Approach – Pakistan Earthquake* (Feb 2006) IASC.

²⁴ Read, J. (2012) *NGO Baseline Analysis*. ICVA.

Table 2: Cluster Matrix

Natural Disasters	Complex Emergency	Cluster 'Leads' (Agency)	Cluster Coordinators
Health	Health	WHO	WHO
Shelter	Shelter	UNHCR / IOM / IFRC	UNHCR / IOM / IFRC / NRC (Balochistan only)
Education	Education	UNICEF	Save the Children
Nutrition	Nutrition	UNICEF	UNICEF
WASH	WASH	UNICEF	UNICEF
Protection	Protection	UNHCR	UNHCR / IRC
Food Security (National Level only)	Food Security (National Level only)	WFP / FAO	WFP / FAO
Food (Provincial Level only)	Food (Provincial Level only)	WFP / FAO	WFP / FAO
Agriculture (Provincial Level only)	Agriculture (Provincial Level only)	WFP / FAO	WFP / FAO
Community Recovery	Community Recovery	UNICEF	UNICEF
	Camp Coordination	UNHCR / IOM	UNHCR/IOM

Clusters are represented at the HCT by the Cluster Lead Agency. As they became more familiar, there was a feeling of increased reliance by the HCT on the clusters for technical input. However, one representative who attends the HCT felt that it was rare to have a UN country representative speak on behalf of the cluster and normally, cluster questions are posed to the cluster coordinators, who attend the HCT as observers.

Cluster meetings exist at both the provincial and district level with identified provincial and district focal points tasked with liaising with government, updating a 4W template, convening cluster meetings co-chaired by either PDMA or line departments, and reporting to either provincial or national clusters. Both INGOs and NNGOs cited difficulty in engaging with clusters at a provincial and district level. One INGO country director said that their INGO was committed to coordination through clusters but found it difficult to engage regularly saying,

“If you’re a bigger organisation you can delegate someone to it but we’re medium sized and if you’re smaller you have even more issues. At the provincial level we had to drive three hours to get to a meeting that could be cancelled at a moment’s notice. Eventually, we just gave up on them. Sometimes, you have to choose between the cluster [meetings] and work.”

While the cluster approach in Pakistan could be considered a good model for the “rolling approach” with successful start-up/shut-down of clusters, some felt that in order for the clusters to respond appropriately *during* an emergency they needed the critical preparation time *between* emergencies to prepare for the next response in disaster prone areas. This is not afforded when clusters are required to scale down or close completely.

Cluster membership is nebulous with no definite parameters, qualifications, or criteria placed on who may attend. While this has been positive in that any interested party can be

incorporated into coordination it has also led to some in the humanitarian community questioning the presence of armed forces as humanitarian responders. Questions were also raised by some on the role of government as co-chairs of clusters at all levels – especially in the conflict/complex emergency clusters.

Clusters have also been cited as being difficult for NNGOs to engage with. Both because there has been little concerted outreach/engagement toward them but also because the meetings are all conducted in English and if translation is present in localities it is usually into Urdu which is the mother tongue of only eight percent of the population.²⁵ Several NNGOs also faced the same time and resource constraints of medium-to-small sized INGOs.

Real-time evaluations and reports have also alluded to spotty cluster linkages to recovery, developmental coordination, and government.²⁶ Those coordinating in Pakistan felt that given that clusters are a relatively new approach there has been a lack of direction from global clusters on how to transition to early recovery and developmental coordination such as working groups. This is doubly complicated for clusters where there is no clear line ministry or department to which a handover of coordination could occur – such as for the Protection Cluster. It was suggested that the RCO could be utilised as an appropriate transition office but there has been no thought or discussion on how then the RCO would be supported, developed or financed to take this on.

5. INGOs & the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum

While there is no formal figure of INGOs in Pakistan today there are approximately 75 operating in the country, some of which have been operating there for decades, but a majority of which arrived post-2005. While most people interviewed felt that there was a good relationship between INGOs and local populations/local government in areas of humanitarian response they also felt that these relationships had been in many occasions compromised recently. INGOs interviewed felt that there has been a rising negative perception of them related to geopolitical events and the amount of money raised for humanitarian responses, with media questioning over where and how this money had been/is being spent. Some felt that the Pakistani media perpetuates a negative perception of NGOs and the international humanitarian community has not adequately addressed this collectively.

A majority of INGOs implement either partially or fully through NNGOs as NNGOs are present in areas where it is difficult for INGOs to access. Many INGOs have begun to focus more on building the capacity of these NNGO partners in addition to providing funding. INGOs felt they are, at times, better able to bring up/highlight issues facing national partners who, at a local level, wish to remain silent for fear of targeting and being unable to implement.

A majority of these INGOs coordinate their activities and joint advocacy through the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF). PHF currently has fifty-three INGO members with a further ten members (six permanent and four temporary) who have observer status.

The roots of the PHF go back to 2003 when an informal meeting of INGOs began to discuss how they could accomplish assessments in a more coordinated manner. This group was formalised in 2005 following the large earthquake as the need for NGO coordination became more acute and hundreds of NGOs arrived to operate in the country. The PHF was able to play an advisory role

²⁵Library of Congress Federal Research Division.(1996-1998). Pakistan Country Study. Available from: <<http://countrystudies.us/pakistan/31.htm>>. [Accessed: 28 March 2013]

²⁶Polastro, R, Nagrah, A, Steen, N., Zafar, F. (March 2011) *Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis*. DARA: UK.

in terms of coordinating areas of activity as OCHA was restricted by their mandate to information provision only. By 2006, following the departure of most of these NGOs, the group had 20 members.²⁷

Focus on NGO coordination decreased from 2006 to 2008 but then reemerged when the counter-insurgency operation in the Swat Valley necessitated a large-scale humanitarian response and increased INGO focus on responding in a coordinated manner – especially on matters of policy or advocacy concern. In 2008, an Executive Committee (ExComm) was formed and governance procedures formalised.²⁸

PHF members must abide by membership criteria and incorporate both humanitarian and developmental INGOs as many are dual-mandated. Members also pay a membership fee which helps to provide partial funding for the PHF Secretariat which consists of seven permanent staff providing both support and security information to PHF members. Supplemental funding to the PHF is provided by donors such as OFDA, ECHO and DFID.

National NGOs do not participate in the PHF although there are linkages and information-sharing with a relatively new NNGO coordination body, the National Humanitarian Network. Neither INGOs nor NNGOs interviewed felt that there should be a single NGO coordinating body with both saying that INGOs and NNGOs face different issues and have different perspectives, visions and goals for their coordination. However, it is an ongoing topic of discussion and some feel that they should be combined.

INGOs felt that the PHF was an effective forum for coordinating NGO voices in a complex environment giving them a single voice through which donors and the UN might engage the community as well as increased efficacy to INGO issues. Increasingly, it is becoming “the” voice of INGOs at meetings such as the HCT and in government coordination meetings.

As a voluntary coordination body some INGO members felt that PHF lacks concentrated, committed, and continued support from its members if they were not facing pressing issues like a constriction of humanitarian space or operational impediments. Also, as a voluntary organisation, some members felt that messages were necessarily blunted or softened in order to arrive at a position that could be collectively agreed upon by the majority.

6. NNGOs & the National Humanitarian Network

There is no official number of registered NNGOs operating in humanitarian response in Pakistan, as they have been registered over the past 20 years through a variety of different governmental acts with a variety of different government agencies. However, it is broadly maintained that there are tens of thousands in operation varying in size from those that are far larger in both size and funding than INGOs and who operate across the entire country to small, local civil society organisations operating with only a few members.

Many of these NNGOs were started post-2005 in the image of INGOs in responding to humanitarian emergencies. These NNGOs tend to be the main operational/implementing partners of INGOs and are relied upon heavily to access areas considered difficult or off-limits to international organisations. Some INGOs expressed concern over the shifting of risk from INGOs to smaller, local NNGOs to operate in dangerous areas and NNGOs assuming that risk as they are in need of funding.

²⁷Currión, P. (January 2011). *Strength in Numbers: A Review of NGO Coordination in the Field; Case Study: Pakistan 2002-2010*. ICVA: Switzerland.

²⁸Ibid.

Some international organisations at times referred to the issue of neutrality which could hinder national organisations but NNGOs interviewed felt that there were two sides to the coin and that by being integrated in communities they have access and ability to respond appropriately which INGOs do not. NNGOs felt that they could better assess the needs and respond to the priorities of communities in which they were imbedded and did not feel that this necessarily compromised their ability to respond in a neutral, needs-based manner.

NNGOs interviewed advocated as strongly for the necessity of a separate coordination mechanism as did INGOs which is one of the reasons why the National Humanitarian Network was initially formed in 2010 when the Chairman of NDMA announced that he wanted a “single phone number” he could call in order to reach NNGOs. National NGOs then convened a meeting in order to initiate a NNGO forum.

The NHN has very limited membership criteria, which is currently under review. It operates by a ToR and has approximately 150 members. The network is overseen by the Central Executive Committee (CEC) which consists of the eight founding members as well as two representatives from the five provinces that have NHN chapters, or groups.

In each province, as well as at the national level, the chairperson’s organisation bears most of the responsibility for conducting NHN business having been elected to the position for a two year term by the Provincial/State Executive Council (PEC/State). This same council also elects two organisations to represent it at the national level on the CEC.

Overall, the NHN does not have a strong governance structure or national secretariat which some of its members feel is both a strength and a weakness - strength because it means that coordination that takes place is based on the value derived from coordination itself and a weakness because all the members are active in satisfying the demands of their own organisations responses which forces them to de-prioritise coordination meetings at times.

Most NHN communication takes place with members through an email list and meetings are held in an ad hoc manner given the limited financial ability of most NHN members to travel to them. There is a formal agenda circulated prior to each meeting but no formal voting structure for decision making or to reach a ‘NHN position’. There are no official employees or Secretariat of the NHN although the creation of an enabling structure is being considered. In Sindh province, a decision was taken by NHN members to employ a dedicated, full-time staff person and each NNGO member contributes a small amount monthly to their pay. It was felt that this might be a model that other provinces follow in the future.

Additionally, the NHN was praised for taking a more pro-active approach in coordination with the government at both a national and local level as well as facilitating engagement with sub-national government actors. Some NHN members highlighted that they brought a unique voice and perspective to the humanitarian coordination meetings held at a national level by having grassroots/local information, where, they believe the international humanitarian community tended to rely on the media or international perspectives.

In engaging with the international humanitarian community some NNGOs felt that wider participation by the NNGO community was hindered by English dominating coordination meetings - despite Urdu, and four provincial languages, being national languages as well. Where translation occurs it tends to be into Urdu which might not be the dominant language in a response area. Even if translation is provided at a local level NNGOs felt constricted because processes and meetings at a national level are dominated by English language as well as being unfamiliar to their staff who do not have enough dedicated time to learn and complete. In a survey recently conducted by ICVA of NNGOs 91 percent of the respondents who noted that

language was a barrier for them in attending meetings said that they would prefer the meetings to be conducted in Urdu.²⁹ In addition, some NNGOs felt that having coordination meetings in venues like the high security, five-star hotels in Islamabad was intimidating and foreign to some NNGOs and might have precluded their involvement.

NNGOs felt that they were often stretched during emergencies as they were responding in their communities but also felt the demand and requirement to be involved in coordination with INGOs and clusters. NNGOs cited that their proximity and integration in communities affected by disasters creates accountability that can be lacking from other implementing organisations that come and go. This can create security concerns for NNGOs who are blamed when assessments conducted by INGOs or UN are not followed up with aid, or aid is distributed in a partial way.

While those in the international community interviewed tended to refer to humanitarian coordination bodies and meetings described in this report as collective 'humanitarian coordination' national actors tended draw a distinction between international and national coordination.

²⁹ICVA. (March 2013) *Enhancement and improvement of coordination meetings to develop linkages between local NGOs of Pakistan*. ICVA: Pakistan.

IV. Humanitarian Architecture and NGO Needs

The most critical element of any coordination architecture is how it facilitates the planning and responses of a humanitarian response and whether it fosters relationships and partnership amongst various actors to that end. For the purposes of this report, the test is whether it meets the practical coordination needs of NGOs. By that test, the results are varied.

INGOs interviewed felt that overall coordination was good and that actively participating in coordination mechanisms did improve their organisations' ability to respond effectively. While citing that coordination did meet the needs of their organisation it was made clear that most INGOs engage with coordination mechanisms in order to facilitate policy engagement and rely rather on their own networks and coordination at local levels to facilitate operational engagement. INGOs generally expressed a belief that while the cluster system was helpful and something with which they engaged the most effort and expenditure in the system happened at the level (national) where coordination was the least effective and that provincial and district-level coordination was where the most impact could be made and the best engagement could be achieved.

Most INGOs felt that the information flow that they received, and contributed to, was adequate to facilitate their responses and that it had been made better in the past four years by the presence of a stronger, more organised PHF.

While a number of INGOs focused on the coordination architecture facilitating their organisation's ability to respond most felt that the most improvement could be made in facilitating their ability to plan. At present, they felt that the humanitarian community was unable to prepare for emergency responses between emergencies resulting in slower response launches once disasters do occur.

The results of a survey conducted by ICVA of 54 NNGOs, showed that NNGOs overwhelmingly engage in coordination at a provincial, district, or sub-district level.³⁰ While 96 percent of respondents said they do attend coordination meetings only 29 percent said that they are able to do so at a national level as compared to 61 percent who did so at a district level. When asked what type of coordination meeting they are most likely to regularly attend NHN meetings received the highest ranking following by a variety of cluster meetings.

In the same survey, 71 percent of NNGOs cited that they actively participate in coordination meetings with 27 percent saying their participation was average and two percent saying it was passive. Respondents added that their full involvement was hindered by capacity issues within their own organisation (e.g. not having enough staff, or staff time to dedicate to coordination), language difficulties (e.g. meeting attendees struggling to understand/function in the language in which the meeting is conducted), meetings not being consistently and regularly scheduled and a lack of effective sharing of information and meeting follow-up.

All NGOs felt that their acceptance was best at the local levels and became more complicated at the provincial and then national levels. All NGOs also felt that their ability to both program and coordinate well was very dependent on relationships they had at the various levels and said that they worked hard at maintaining those as they were more effective at enabling programming than coordination meetings.

³⁰ICVA. (March 2013) *Enhancement and improvement of coordination meetings to develop linkages between local NGOs of Pakistan*. ICVA: Pakistan.

As the humanitarian architecture has developed since 2005, there is an increased knowledge and acceptance of the different mechanism related to it. However, there remains a need for ongoing trainings for new staff as well as coordination on new initiatives and major policy reforms. For example, NGOs mentioned that they would appreciate training on humanitarian funding (e.g. the difference between CERF and ERF) in order that they can engage more proactively on relevant issues.

Conclusion

The humanitarian coordination architecture as it is structured now is complex, multi-layered but effectively meets the primary needs of NGOs. The shape and nature of the structure has been influenced by the changing nature of the government of Pakistan and the international humanitarian community's engagement with it. In order for it to more efficiently meet the needs of NGOs focus could be placed on regularising and expanding it at the provincial and district levels where direct implementation can be most directly affected by any investment in coordination

The creation of two valuable humanitarian NGO Forums has significantly contributed to the effectiveness of NGO engagement with different elements of the architecture. These, together with UN OCHA and the cluster system, have provided for the coordination needs of most NGOs.

As has been noted in most evaluations and reports following humanitarian emergencies over the past eight years, the HCT could be strengthened to better support the overall humanitarian architecture as the highest policy level body of the humanitarian community in the country specifically in advocating for issues related to humanitarian space. Clarification from the government as to the purpose and structure of internal mechanisms would also remain welcome.

With the likelihood of continued large-scale disasters and complex emergency operations in Pakistan it is likely that the humanitarian community will continue to grow and evolve working together both in the short and long term. As this happens the implementation of evaluations and application of lessons learned from previous years will become even more critical. Some of those have been highlighted again in this report.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Background Reading

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