The effectiveness of partnerships in response to Typhoon Haiyan
- The proximity to and knowledge of communities that NNGOs bought to partnerships strengthened the relevance of humanitarian assistance.
- Where International NGOs (INGOs) had invested in National NGO (NNGO) humanitarian consortia, partnerships contributed to a timely response although direct delivery INGOs were amongst the swiftest to respond.
- The greater technical knowledge that INGOs had of accountability mechanisms was complemented by NNGOs greater engagement with communities which strengthened the effectiveness of the response.
- While INGOs working in partnership with faith-based NNGOs benefited from their extensive networks direct delivery by INGOs accounted for the most of the coverage, and in the immediate aftermath of the Typhoon was often prioritised over partnership.
- Despite the limited NNGO presence that existed in the affected area before the Typhoon, where there was a prior presence, NNGOs did strengthen the connectedness of the response.

The engagement of national actors in the international humanitarian system
- The Haiyan response was of a magnitude that overwhelmed existing disaster management systems and with the L3 activation, humanitarian leadership and coordination mechanisms had an international look and feel.
- NNGOs largely felt out of place in the Clusters and absented themselves although INGO partners did play a role in facilitating attendance or representing their partners.
- There was very little direct funding of NNGOs through traditional humanitarian donors. INGO partners played a key role in providing funds to support national scale-up and response.

Three key messages from the research
- Create an enabling environment for partnership: Action must be taken in the Philippines to articulate a strategy for strengthening national disaster response which outlines how a government-led and civil society-supported humanitarian system can respond effectively to disasters in the future.
- The need to ‘localise’ surge responses: The Haiyan response provides an important agenda for the IASC to reflect on recent experience of large-scale international humanitarian responses with a view to complementing international L3 surge mechanism with national surge capacity.
- An obligation to prioritise preparedness: There is an urgent need to invest in preparing partnerships for response at scale in the Philippines.
Introduction

The humanitarian community has long celebrated its diversity which has been considered an asset in responding to disasters and situations of conflict. Over the years humanitarian codes and standards have emphasised the importance of working together but progress in putting principles into practice has been laboured; 20-years ago, the Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and NGOs in Disaster Relief articulated a determination to ‘work through local non-governmental humanitarian agencies as partners in planning and implementation’,1 7-years ago the Principles of Partnership (PoP) endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform offered a collective blueprint for humanitarian partnership2 and so it is disappointing that just 2-years ago in her preface to ALNAP’s State of the Humanitarian System, The Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs lamented the ‘lack of inclusion of non-traditional actors such as National Disaster Management Authorities and Southern NGOs...which undermined the effectiveness of many operations’.3 With its focus on national actors, this study returns to the vexed question of humanitarian partnership and seeks to provide evidence, in real time, of how far partnership working happened in the response to Typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Yolanda) in the Philippines.

Purpose and Methodology

The study analysed the Typhoon response to identify examples of where international NGOs (INGOs) working with local and national NGOs (collectively termed NNGOs) have improved the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and where challenges arose and looks more broadly at partnership between local and national actors and members of the international humanitarian system. The study was undertaken by one national and one international researcher and used the following methods;

- literature review to examine previous lessons from humanitarian action in the Philippines and emerging findings from the Haiyan response (88 documents)
- key informant interviews and focus group discussions with UN agencies (9 interviews), INGOs (19 interviews), NNGOs (23 interviews), government representatives (5 interviews), donor agencies (6 interviews) and community members (5 focus group discussions)
- 3-week field trip which included travel to Manila, Leyte, Cebu and Samar

The research builds on the findings from the publication ‘Missed Opportunities: the case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses’4 and makes recommendations for action that is required to strengthen partnership between the national and international humanitarian system in the Philippines and more broadly in humanitarian responses in the future.

This paper presents summary findings. A full length paper will follow.

The context of disaster risk, legislation and humanitarian response in the Philippines

Situated in the Pacific Ring of Fire and within the Typhoon belt, the Philippines is highly vulnerable to natural disasters including volcanoes, earthquakes, tropical storms, typhoons, floods and landslides. In an effort to prepare for these, the Government of the Philippines has developed a comprehensive set of policies to support disaster risk reduction and to promote climate change adaptation. It has also developed a set of institutions to prepare for and respond to disasters at each level of government but these were stretched beyond its limits when Typhoon Haiyan devastated large parts of the country in November 2013 causing over 6000 deaths and affecting 14-million people.5

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1 International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (1994) The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, (P. 4) IFRC: Geneva.
2 The PoP support national and international NGOs to improve relationships, underscoring a the value of each actor’s contribution, and emphasising the importance of building relationships on the basis of transparency and trust. See http://www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org/pop.html
4 Five UK development and humanitarian agencies: Christian Aid, CAFOD, Oxfam GB, Action Aid, Tearfund, have been collaborating since early 2012 to research our experiences of partnership working in humanitarian response and to develop policy and advocacy positions to promote partnership approaches throughout international the humanitarian system. The ‘Missed Opportunities’ report, was published in September 2013 and examined the current and future potential of partnerships with local and national NGOs in humanitarian response, based on lessons from across the commissioning agencies in four major emergency settings.
http://www.alnap.org/resource/8890.aspx
The effectiveness of partnership in the Typhoon Haiyan Response

Using the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee criteria for humanitarian evaluation, this section seeks to study the effectiveness of humanitarian partnerships through the lens of the response to Typhoon Haiyan.

Have partnerships enhanced the relevance and appropriateness of aid?

While UN agencies and INGOs tended to either be Manila-based or operated from the aid hubs, NNGO partners were most often located within communities which assisted in building trust and gave them a far greater knowledge of their priority needs. This provided a strong foundation for providing people with what they most required and as a result assistance delivered in partnership was often considered among the most relevant by recipient communities. NNGOs also had a good understanding of the political and security context and were better placed than international organisations to avoid political manipulation of assistance and work in areas perceived as insecure.

Case Study:

A discussion with local officials and community members in Barangay Tabgas in Leyte offered evidence of the link between knowledge of the community and community perceptions of the relevance of assistance; ‘The assistance from Balay Mindanao and Action Aid was the most valued by us because it responded to our needs and we were involved in the process. [They] were the two organizations the people of Tabgas knew best. It’s because they are very visible here. Their volunteers stay at the Barangay Hall, they ate and stayed with the people’

Have partnerships enhanced the effectiveness of aid?

Local government most often provided the initial assistance to communities affected by the Typhoon but stocks were quickly exhausted. The military and international organisations with strong logistics responded soon after with a more limited response by national NGOs. Pre-existing humanitarian partnerships between international and national NGOs were quickly mobilized and both the Oxfam-supported Humanitarian Response Consortium and the Christian Aid Rapid Response Assessment Team both initiated assessments within days of the Typhoon making landfall. Faith-based organisations such as CAFOD’s partner, National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA) were also swift to respond due to their networks throughout the affected areas.

Partnership between NNGOs and INGOs also benefited from the use of complementary skill-sets which made them more responsive to community needs. INGOs had a good technical understanding of accountability and complemented NNGOs stronger knowledge of and relationship with communities as a result of their greater proximity and understanding of culture and custom.

Case Study:

Oxfam rapidly mobilized its partnership with A Single Drop for Safe Water (ASDSW), part of the Humanitarian Response Consortium who traveled together to Tacloban on 12 November to assess needs and started a response 4-dys later. The mix of Oxfam’s logistics capacity and financial resources linked to ASDW’s knowledge of the water sector in the Philippines enabled them to quickly identify Leyte Metropolitan Water District as a partner and through the provision of fuel and support to get their staff back into work they were quickly able to start recommencing services. The mix of Oxfam’s resources and ASDW’s contextual knowledge provided a very relevant and timely response.
The effectiveness of partnerships was compromised by the movement of staff from NGOs to international organisations which is a common occurrence in the Philippines and makes it difficult for NGOs to retain knowledge and capacity. The scale of the humanitarian surge meant that the time when NGO capacity was most required, there was a migration to better-paid jobs with international organisations.

**Have partnerships enhanced the efficiency and value for money of aid?**

NGOs offered a number of cost advantages over direct delivery by INGOs including lower overheads and transport costs. Value for money of partnerships should also take into account the qualitative aspects of NGOs’ responses such as their better understanding of context and engagement with communities that can result in better programmatic outcomes.

**Case Study:**

The Philippines Children’s Ministries Network, a partner of Tearfund, is one of the few organisations that is co-located with the Municipal Government and has built strong links with communities in eastern Samar. While their use of shared office space and local vehicles provides cost-efficiencies compared to other organisations that are based in the local coordination hub in Guiuan, they consider an additional contribution to value for money to be the effectiveness of their programmes as a result of their proximity to and knowledge of communities which they consider strengthens the relevance of their response.

However, partnership also has costs associated with it. For the Haiyan response there was considerable investment by INGOs in setting up partnership teams to identify, assess and support partner operations. To address issues of absorptive capacity and to reduce perceived financial risk, some INGOs scaled up their own logistics capacity in order to undertake procurement on behalf of their partners. Several also seconded technical staff into partner organisations to make up for short-term capacity gaps. Perhaps the most important cost and also considered by NGOs to be one of the greatest gaps in partner investment is in capacity development, which is essential to ensure preparedness for humanitarian response in the future.

**Have partnerships improved connectedness?**

Despite the limited number of NGOs in the Haiyan-affected areas, there are examples of partnerships that have successfully linked their pre-disaster advocacy and development work with humanitarian response and resilience. However, this has been at small-scale and there is cause for concern about a lack of connectedness of the humanitarian response to longer-term challenges as a result of a mix of factors which includes the reliance on humanitarian staff from outside the country, the speed with which organisations had to work, and the de-linking by some agencies of their development programmes from their humanitarian response.

**Case Study:**

In Eastern Samar, Christian Aid is funding partnership with a consortium of two local NGOs, Coastal Core International (CCI) and the Centre for Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD). Both organisations are part of Christian Aid’s Rapid Response Assessment Team (CARRAT) and prior to the Haiyan response, both had been on an inter-agency Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) project which supported the implementation of the Philippines DRR Management Act. As a consequence both organisations had extremely excellent knowledge of the role of local government in disasters and they also enjoyed strong links with local governments in municipalities across east and west Samar. This knowledge allowed them to work effectively alongside the government in the response phase at a time when many others were working outside of government coordination mechanisms.

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6 The OECD/DAC criteria for humanitarian evaluation includes the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coverage and connectedness of assistance.

7 Developed with support from Oxfam, the Humanitarian Response Consortium provides high quality humanitarian services across the Philippines through NGO partners.

8 Interview with A Single Drop for Safe Water, 15/05/14 and Oxfam GB, 07/05/14.

9 The UK National Audit Office defines value for money as, ‘the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes’ and identifies economy, efficiency and effectiveness as the core ways of achieving this.
Typhoon Haiyan was the first large-scale natural disaster to strike since the IASC Transformative Agenda was adopted and an immediate decision was taken and communicated to declare this a Level 3 or ‘L3’ response. A means to deliver the aspirations of the Transformative Agenda, the L3 activation is a time-bound measure intended to allow humanitarian organisations to make available, as a matter of top priority, the leadership capacities, funds, supplies and personnel required to support the government’s response. This section will examine the role of national actors in the international humanitarian response, highlighting both the successes and challenges.

Humanitarian Leadership

While the role of the UN was to support to the Government of the Philippines’ response to the humanitarian needs of the people affected by Typhoon the reality was somewhat different. Although efforts were made to coordinate with the government, in practice the UN in large part played the lead role. The reasons for this are two-fold; while the government has significant experience of overseeing humanitarian response, Haiyan was of a magnitude that overwhelmed existing disaster management systems in addition to overwhelming local authorities and government departments tasked with disaster response in the affected areas. But there was also an element of inertia in the way that international humanitarian responses are configured and in this respect, the immediate response had an international look and feel.

Although NGOs had a standing representation in the Humanitarian Country Team, prior to Haiyan, active engagement was limited. Subsequently the Humanitarian Coordinator encouraged an NGO representative to engage in both the Manila-based HCT and Tacloban-based Regional HCT.

Humanitarian Coordination

Once the surge had started and the humanitarian architecture began to take shape it gained a momentum of its own and as the Manila structure was replicated in the designated hubs and staff were deployed to fill Cluster leadership roles, there was very limited scope for government to shape or influence the humanitarian architecture often for reasons of capacity but also due to a lack of familiarity. Despite the history of humanitarian response in the Philippines, the structure of the international system still felt very foreign to many of the government officials that were tasked to engage with it. That is not to say that government rejected it; more that it was overwhelming.

Despite efforts made by OCHA which within weeks deployed a liaison officer to reach out to NGOs in some areas to explain the humanitarian architecture and a number of the NGOs who played a facilitating role for NGOs they partnered with, these efforts catered to only a small proportion of NGOs. For others, the lack of capacity to attend, the long distances between areas of operation and coordination hubs and the international look and feel of the Cluster meetings and the lack of translation made them feel out of place and unable to confidently represent themselves which led to many NGOs deciding not to attend.

Preparing for the next time: residents of Tacloban city participate in a storm surge drill organised by Oxfam, the city government’s disaster risk reduction and management office (DRRMO) and the Morong Volunteers Emergency Response Team (MVERT), the barangay captains, and community leaders.
Humanitarian Financing

The Philippines is a middle-income country and as a consequence, outside of humanitarian response, it has not been considered as a donor priority. After the Typhoon, the partners that were best placed to respond were those with existing links to INGOs who were able to provide initial funding relatively swiftly but these were often the exception rather than the norm. While many bilateral donors were generous in the funds that they provided, they considered the international organisations to offer benefits of being able to absorb large grants at the same time as offering a greater degree of assurance that timely delivery of assistance would follow. When humanitarian funding was sub-granted to NNGOs, it was often part of a sub-contracting relationship rather than being based on an equal partnership.

Case Study:

In Samar, Christian Aid initially accompanied its partners to coordination meetings as a way to build confidence and familiarity with the Clusters. While this supported their engagement in the early weeks of the response, with time partner interest tended to wane as there was a perception that the meetings were oriented towards the needs of the UN rather than those of the response more broadly.
The importance of partnership as the central pillar of humanitarian response

Despites some efforts made to include local and national actors in the Haiyan response it remains largely an international led, coordinated and financed response. While the scale of the disaster was beyond the capacity of NGOs and government to adequately respond to, more could have been done to build capacity to prepare for and to strengthen partnership in response to the disaster. 6-months after Haiyan made landfall, the international humanitarian system is struggling with the task of responsibly handing over the recovery response to the government and NGOs. The lack of adequate support to assist the Philippines to prepare for large-scale disasters and the lack of willingness to entrust a greater share of the response to national organisations has played an important role in the perceived need to ‘scale-up to scale-down’ a euphemism for a further influx of international capacity to build national capacity in key institutions in order to permit a handover. The findings of the study suggest that this is true across all aspects of the response – leadership, coordination and implementation. There are widespread fears within civil society that one of the implications of such an internationalised response is that it is highly vulnerable as capacity is withdrawn.

The importance of creating an enabling environment for humanitarian partnerships

In the Philippines, action must be taken to engage government, national and international humanitarian stakeholders and donor agencies in a process to articulate a strategy for strengthening national disaster response which outlines how a government-led and civil society-supported humanitarian system can provide effective assistance to disaster-affected people in the future.

- The most successful humanitarian partnerships were those that have developed over time. NGOs should support capacity development as an essential ingredient of successful partnership in vulnerable areas pre-disaster
- Several NGOs found their suite of partner assessment tools to be too cumbersome and need to be modified to balance the needs of due diligence while being sufficiently agile for the compressed decision-making timeframes required for an emergency response. This is a key area for improvement by NGOs
- NGO consortia can provide national humanitarian response capacity but the Haiyan response revealed the challenges in achieving successful partnership at scale. It is important that NGOs work with NGO partners to explore practical ways of scaling up partnership.

Despite the significant experience of NGOs in humanitarian response they played a more modest role in the Haiyan response. It will be important for NGOs to support NGOs in strengthening national humanitarian networks in the Philippines with a view to identifying key blockages to NGO participation in response and systematically addressing these.

The need to ‘localise’ surge responses

The Haiyan response provides an important agenda for the IASC to reflect on recent experience of large-scale international humanitarian responses with a view to complementing international L3 surge mechanism with national surge capacity

- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee should identify those countries most vulnerable to disaster or at risk of large-scale conflict and adapt the Common Framework for Preparedness to include a set of actions to ensure that an international surge can be complemented by a national one. This should include a package of training, communication and support delivered by OCHA and targeted at government representatives and NGOs.
- It is strongly recommended that the Humanitarian Coordinator establishes an ERF in the Philippines to be managed by OCHA, so that NGOs can access funds directly and that international donors contribute to it.
The Humanitarian Coordinator and OCHA should jointly engage with the Government of the Philippines to ensure greater coherence in the future activation and use of the Cluster system in the Philippines and inclusion of local civil society.

The inclusion of NNGOs in the Humanitarian Country Team offers an important lesson and members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should ensure that this becomes routine in all disaster-affected countries.

**An obligation to prioritise preparedness**

The Haiyan response provides compelling evidence of the effectiveness of humanitarian partnership but also of the need to invest in preparing partnerships for response at scale.

- The Government of the Philippines should review and strengthen its capacity to respond at all levels in order to play its leadership role in response to large-scale crises.
- In recognition of the key role that Local Government Units play in early response, the Government of the Philippines should fast-track the establishment of DRRM offices and prioritise capacity building of LGU’s.
- The response to Typhoon Haiyan has revealed gaps in national preparedness of both government and civil society. For countries that are highly vulnerable to crises such as the Philippine it is now urgent that international donors focus greater attention on supporting national-level preparedness.
- There is an urgent need for the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to re-balance the response aspirations of the Transformative Agenda with preparedness in order for disaster-affected countries to be better placed to lead, coordinate and implement disaster response themselves.

This document is a summary of a larger report, commissioned by a consortium of UK-based international non-governmental organisations: ActionAid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam GB and Tearfund.

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