

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

NO MORE: *An Agenda for Change*

Localisation of aid and humanitarian partnerships

The regional consultations of the World Humanitarian Summit have repeatedly emphasised the need to ensure that local actors, - national governments and civil society organisations - are central to humanitarian response. This call comes from years of frustration by national actors who feel side-lined from the international response, particularly in large scale emergencies, as well as from a growing realisation that, as currently configured, the system is ill adapted to current realities.

This paper, prepared by 5 partnership-focused international NGOs working through the *Missed Opportunities* group, proposes a series of measures which different constituent parts of the international humanitarian system should adopt in order to re-balance the system more in favour of national actors, so that a re-calibrated system works to the relevant strengths of its constituent parts and enhances partnership approaches to humanitarian action.

At present the system favours humanitarian actors in inverse order to their proximity to crises: international actors have the greatest access to funding and decision making power which they pass on to national actors taking a percentage; national organisations, usually based in capitals come next as they have built up relations with donors in-country and with UN agencies and international NGOs; finally the local organisations, which are the first responders, present before during and after the crises, have the least access to humanitarian funding, the least opportunities to influence and determine humanitarian response, and the least opportunity to develop their capacities, knowledge and humanitarian practice and to prepare for and prevent disasters.

In order to create a more balanced humanitarian ecosystem where local actors take their place alongside international actors, with a shift of power towards locally owned and led response, the humanitarian system should ensure the following:

1. Implement partnership approaches

Prioritise investment in humanitarian partnerships: INGOs and UN agencies must streamline and improve their partnership tools and work together to harmonise tools and approaches to shift from ad hoc/reactive partnerships based on control, compliance and service delivery, to partnerships based on long term and transformative approaches and mutual support.

Support national NGOs to take advantage of funding opportunities and participate in strategic decision making processes UN OCHA should invest in staffing capacity at country-level to allow a more systematic and planned approach to coaching and supporting national NGOs to access country-level pooled funds and actively support National NGOs to participate in key coordination and decision-making forums including humanitarian country teams, cluster coordination, pooled fund advisory groups, coordinated needs assessments and development of strategic response plans.

All international actors, donors, UN and INGOs should provide minimum percentage of their humanitarian funding directly to national NGOs, publish what this percentage is and set themselves targets to increase it. We join with others in calling for a target of 20% of humanitarian funding channelled direct to national actors by 2020.

Increase transparency around resource transfers to national NGOs: A step change in approaches towards transparency is needed in order to build trust, accountability and efficiency of investments channelled to national actors via international intermediaries. All donors, including UN agencies and international NGOs who act as funding intermediaries, should publish their disbursements to partners in real-time to the IATI standard. Donors should require their funding partners to do this.

2. Localise surge responses:

Since the introduction of the Transformative Agenda local actors have often felt overwhelmed, sidelined and marginalised by the number of internationals brought in with the L3 surge. This international approach should be complimented by national surge strategies which should be supported by donors and implemented by IASC through adaptation of the Common Framework for Preparedness, which should include a package of training, communication, and support for national government and civil society organisations and NGOs.

Identify effective means of investing in national response capacity: which should include identifying practical solutions to resourcing and enabling national actors (both government and civil society) to take their place at the decision-making table and to respond to crises as equal partners in the collective response, clarifying where preparedness sits within the aid architecture, between humanitarian and development.

3. Support Preparedness

Scope out and table new funding mechanisms which bridge the humanitarian-development divide Donors should consider the feasibility of creating a new mechanism to channel contributions from a range of humanitarian and other donors (institutional and private) through which to scale up investments in national response capacity as an important long-term investment in emergency preparedness and response capacity. This could take the form of a global capacity fund managed at the regional level.



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

4. Remove barriers to access from existing humanitarian funding streams and tackle centralised risk-averse top-down donor controls:

Mediate donor risk control through adoption of alternative approaches and invest in new collective approaches to risk management: Recent innovations for example in the DRC and Somalia CHF indicate that alternative approaches to project audits, based on ex-ante capacity and risk assessments can provide a range of potential benefits for prospective funding partners, including streamlining processes and improving cost-efficiency of existing accountability measures. If coupled with investments to support organisational development on areas of identified weakness, this could be a highly enabling approach to risk management and would also provide a more objective basis for selecting partners and a shared blue-print bench-marking capacity-investment needs.

Further analysis and recommendations in support of these proposals can be found in the earlier policy and research reports [Missed Opportunities](#), [Missed Again](#), [Funding at the Sharp End](#), [Making the World Humanitarian Summit worth the climb](#) and [How can donor requirements be reformed to better support efforts to strengthen national capacity?](#)