



**GUIDANCE NOTE**

# Protocol of Engagement between Local Governments and Humanitarian Actors

WORKING PAPER

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Working Group 1 is led by



UN-Habitat is the United Nations programme working towards a better urban future. Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.



The Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) is an inter-agency body that provides support to governments and humanitarian and development organisations seeking to improve locally owned information and analysis about displacement situations.



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## About the Global Alliance

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises (the 'Alliance') is a global, multi-disciplinary and collaborative community of practice. The Alliance acts as an inclusive platform bringing together local governments, built environment professionals, academics, humanitarian and development actors, working to arrive at systemic change in the way we enable cities and urban communities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to urban crisis.

Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the Alliance is guided by the Urban Crisis Charter, which outlines four main commitments made by its members: 1) Prioritize local municipal leadership in determining response to urban crisis that is aligned with development trajectories and promotes the active participation of affected people – with special attention to the participation of women – and other key urban stakeholders; 2) Adopt urban resilience as a common framework to align human rights, humanitarian and development goals; 3) Manage urban displacement as a combined human rights, development and humanitarian concern; and 4) Build partnerships between city, national, regional and global levels across disciplines and professions, as well as ensure the involvement of local government and professional associations.

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## **Research approach**

The methodology of this paper comprised primary and secondary data collection and analysis. A desk review of recent literature was used with a particular focus on case studies, reports, frameworks, assessments and evaluations. We carried out 25 key informant interviews (KIIs) with a diversity of stakeholders, which included humanitarian actors from the United Nations system, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, as well as national and international NGOs. Colleagues from the private sector, academia and built environment professionals were also interviewed. A series of focus group discussions (FGDs) was held with local authorities from around the world to identify and include their perspectives on the same questions and challenges. The first FGD was conducted at a regional consultation of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises (GAUC) in Geneva, Switzerland and subsequent sessions by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) consultant at a series of international conferences in Spain and Morocco. A draft version of the protocol was presented to another GAUC regional consultation held in Beirut, Lebanon for a desktop-type review and testing by a number of experienced local authority and humanitarian representatives.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Acronyms

CBPF	Country-based Pooled Funds
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CSO	Civil society organization
DM	Disaster management
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
FGD	Focus group discussion
GAUC	Global Alliance for Urban Crises
GBV	Gender-based violence
HCT	Humanitarian country team
HRP	Humanitarian response plan
KII	Key informant interview
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme

# The case for a protocol of engagement between local governments and humanitarian actors

**When emergencies occur in urban areas, humanitarian and development actors do not necessarily know how to work with, or in support of, local governments responsible for their respective jurisdiction,** in addition to their collaboration with national governments. Humanitarian and development actors responding do not always arrive with an intrinsic understanding of complex socio-economic dynamics, governance structures, and do not grasp the structure and diversity of the urban areas. Furthermore, other local stakeholders including essential service providers, local civil society, private sector entities and built environment professionals often remain excluded from internationally-driven and resourced humanitarian planning, response and recovery processes. These local actors are often not familiar with the complexity of international humanitarian responses, which can invariably result in duplication of effort, competition for limited resources, undermining of local actors' participation and an overall decrease in effectiveness of aid responses.

**Therefore, stronger engagement between local actors, led by local governments, and international humanitarian and development organizations, is needed to address these challenges in urban environments.** Earlier and stronger facilitated engagement between local governments and humanitarian actors can help to ensure a smooth transition between humanitarian, recovery and development phases.

**The Global Alliance for Urban Crises (GAUC) brings together local governments, humanitarian and development organizations, built environment professionals, academics, and grassroots organizations.** Currently, it is organized around four active working groups that collaborate to drive change through work on key initiatives. The objective of the working group for this product is to **facilitate stronger engagement between local governments, humanitarian and development actors and built environment professionals in response to urban crises, acknowledging the various mandates, legitimacy and perspectives of these stakeholders.** Engagement between each stakeholder group can be strengthened by identifying the roles, responsibilities, capacities, internal structure and ways of working of each constituency group. Furthermore, an articulated overall framework for collaboration or protocol may assist in structuring and guiding this process.

The genesis of this protocol of engagement arose from discussions between humanitarian, local authority and built environment representatives, with explicit discussions throughout Alliance all-members meetings held in 2017 and 2018.

This paper aims to outline the various stakeholders' potential roles and responsibilities within each component of the program management cycle (assessment and analysis; planning and design; implementation; financing and resource mobilization; and monitoring and evaluation). This working paper is intended to be the starting point of an extended consultative process facilitated by the Alliance, bringing together local governments, represented by UCLG and humanitarian actors represented in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

# Rationale

Building upon the background and challenges identified in the introduction to this paper, both secondary and primary research yielded complementary and reinforcing conclusions regarding the operational dynamics among and between the stakeholders mentioned earlier. An extensive review of the literature as well as the series of KIIs identified a number of recurrent themes, perspectives and issues raised by sub-national and national authorities, local organizations and community members during interactions with international humanitarian and development partners:

- **Profound lack of trust between and among all partners:** this included international partners' perception that local governments are first and foremost political and might be corrupt or lack operational capacity and experience; or national NGOs' perception that UN agencies and INGOs tend to monopolize donor funds and to only engage them out of necessity; or civil society entities feeling that international partners had no knowledge of, or interest in, local ways of working. The occupational nature of this mistrust therefore makes for a challenging initiation point from which all stakeholders need to start collaboration. Having said this, in most cases, each stakeholder is working towards the shared common goals of saving lives and relieving suffering. To a greater or lesser degree, this must impact on the effectiveness of how stakeholders cooperate with each other in the initial phases of a response.
- **Different organizational sizes, cultures and approaches:** this refers to the broad differences between stakeholders' hierarchies and corporate structures. On the one hand, many governments, as well as the UN system for example, are highly structured, bureaucratic, 'tall' organizations with many departments, component entities and complex reporting lines. On the other, local NGOs and civil society partners may be considerably smaller, simpler hierarchies, more informal and therefore by nature, be 'flatter' organizations, with fewer, more flexible procedures.
- **The use of 'different languages':** in terms of communication, this is meant not only in the literal sense of different languages used, but also different corporate or organizational terminology, jargon, acronyms and concepts.
- **Differences in operating timeframes, different priorities, loyalties and clientele:** stakeholders' perceptions of how other actors deliver services in terms of time, motivation and client orientation varied considerably. For example, international humanitarian organizations were perceived as often 'parachuting in', with a strong focus on saving lives, relieving suffering, being driven solely by the humanitarian imperative. 'Fast in-fast out' deployments by international staff on short-term staff contracts, implementing short-term programs with short-term funding cycles, with a primary focus on product and service delivery, were a common perception. While international humanitarians were said to have a strong client orientation towards the affected population, responsiveness to the funding preferences and priorities of international donors was also noted as a major motivation for humanitarian organizations.

In contrast to this, central and local government bodies and officials were perceived at times to be slow in their response, motivated by political dynamics, lacking in financial or in-kind resources, having alternative motivations for response – perhaps driven by career, loyalty or a desire to impress superiors. Finally, given that local government officials were invariably present in position prior to the disaster or arrival of the displaced population, and thereafter, their perspective on response and recovery and resilience phases differed considerably to those of humanitarians. Indeed, the notion of the 'humanitarian-development nexus' does not hold much significance, or is not an issue for, sub-national governments as it does not challenge service delivery planning and implementation processes.

- **Establishment of parallel coordination systems that undermine local or national coordination systems:** for a number of reasons, many responses have seen the swift and unilateral introduction of the Cluster Approach or a similar internationally-based coordination approach by the incoming humanitarian community without taking the time or consideration of local coordination mechanisms of government, local NGOs or private sector networks. Added to this was a general lack of engagement and coordination by international humanitarian and development organizations with government authorities at various stages throughout the program cycle.
- **Implementation of rigid sectoral coordination approaches did not always yield optimal results over time:** internationally standardized coordination approaches, such as the Cluster Approach, which are effective in helping international organizations organize themselves and plan their activities, have been successful in rural settings or camp-based environments. Research and practice show that purely sectoral approaches are less effective in complex, densely populated, urban settings where the affected population is often located alongside or among the general population and/or host community in case of displacement. Assistance directed at specific population groups, or at the exclusion of the host community, has caused social tensions, divisions and conflict. In response, evidence and momentum on the effectiveness of area-based approaches, are growing.
- **Lack of communication and information sharing on planning, activity implementation, reporting and results, good practices or lessons learned:** the perceived and actual lack of commitment between various stakeholders to formalize and maintain the sharing of information and knowledge at all phases of the response undermined trust, long-term relationships, and system-wide knowledge management which could have increased efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.
- **Poor contextual understanding of the local operating context by humanitarian organizations, in particular of complex urban settings:** as well as a perceived or actual limited commitment to deepen understanding of the operating environment, combined with a tendency to apply rigid, external coordination mechanisms and response approaches with little consultation of local partners, affected populations and government partners invariably undermined relations, efficiency, response effectiveness and sustainability.
- **In many crises, protection issues and access to the marginalized sectors of the population remain a challenge:** to all stakeholder groups being able to deliver products and services in a timely, consistent and effective manner.

# Guidance on developing local protocols of engagement between local governments and humanitarian and development actors

Acknowledging recurrent problems and limitations that challenge the effectiveness of response of civil society partners, service providers, private sector entities and built environment professionals, this **protocol of engagement is intended to provide a framework that will outline potential roles, responsibilities and activities of all stakeholders within each activity area of the program cycle across all three phases of the crisis management cycle: preparedness, response and recovery.**

Based on experience of negotiation and implementation of related system-wide preparedness processes, the following implementation process is proposed:

- **Interested stakeholders should be convened during the preparedness phase, or during times of `peace`.** Trying to negotiate these aspects and build collaboration at the beginning of the response phase will be more complicated and there will be less of a conducive environment for complex issues to be discussed and key issues agreed upon.
- **The process should ideally be initiated and led by legitimate local government(s).** This could be a provincial governor, a city mayor or head of one of the relevant urban authorities. Representatives from other stakeholder groups operational within that jurisdiction should be invited to participate and contribute to the process.
- While the fine points and specific actions for the negotiation of such a protocol still need to be fine-tuned, the content of this paper is intended to provide an initial template or suggested way forward for adaptation and implementation at the local level.
- The **draft Declaration** is suggested as a set of guiding principles and core commitments to be adopted by stakeholders at the global level to underpin and support collaboration among all stakeholders.
- In line with the spirit of this declaration, stakeholders are encouraged to **adapt and amend the generic text to the extent they see fit** and to further operationalize this at a sub-national or city level. Space is also made for the inclusion of any country, provincial or city-specific principles, standards or norms wished for by participating stakeholders.
- A list of **optional additional core operating principles or guiding commitments** for collaboration have been included as an annex (Annex 1) for local actors to select from for inclusion in their own document as deemed appropriate by the local context.
- The **roles, responsibilities and mandates of each stakeholder operational** in the local area should be briefly described in a few lines in the local version of the protocol document. A sample description of the generic roles, responsibilities and mandates of the various stakeholder groups are provided for illustration below.
- The section on existing national and local governmental, humanitarian and private sector organizational structures at national and sub-national level should include organigrams or descriptions of the hierarchies or organizational structures of each stakeholder group and how they interact and communicate with each other. The graphic representation could include the coordination platform(s) of the various stakeholders.
- The following sections describe a menu of **Key Questions** for stakeholders to engage on and establish common ground at each component phase of the planned humanitarian response and/or recovery program. These include *Assessment and Analysis; Planning and Design; Implementation, Financing and Resource Mobilization; Monitoring and Evaluation*; as well as *Coordination* as a cross-cutting activity across all phases. While these phases correspond to the Humanitarian Program Cycle, it is hoped that local governments will identify these phases relevant to any program management cycle.
- The **Elements to take into Account** section is intended to highlight issues to consider while debating the key questions.

- Finally, the **Roles and Responsibilities** matrices, in Annex 2, aim to suggest core or essential actions that each stakeholder should consider undertaking for each of the above-mentioned engagement points of the planned humanitarian response and/or recovery program. While the matrices included below present generic tasks or actions to be taken, local stakeholders should take this as a guide to populate their own locally relevant and applicable matrices, if found to be helpful.
- It is proposed that the outcome of the local discussions can be compiled into a *Local Protocol of Engagement between local governments and humanitarian actors*. Stakeholders, at the local level, need to reach consensus on who should 'sign off' on the result and on the **degree of formality and nature of the outcome**. KIIs and FGDs indicated a diversity of opinion on this point, from an instrument that should be formal, signed and binding, to a document that was rather flexible, informal, non-binding in nature.

## Draft Declaration: guiding principles and core commitments for improved collaboration between local governments and humanitarian actors

### **Preamble**

*This draft Declaration is starting point to promote further dialogue, initially at the global level, between local governments, represented by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Task Force, and humanitarian actors, represented in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and relevant stakeholders, part of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises, with the aim of creating a basis for stronger collaboration in preparation of, response to, and recovery from crises in urban contexts. This could potentially result in the adoption of a version of this text in a format agreed upon by all key relevant actors (hereafter referred to as 'we'). This Declaration borrows language broadly and liberally from the Alliance's Urban Crisis Charter, UN General Assembly (GA) Resolution 46/182, GA Resolution 69/243 and GA Resolution 72/133 and has been cited accordingly.*

In an increasingly urbanized world, where over half the global population already resides in towns and cities, the rising frequency and intensity of natural and man-made emergencies in these areas require new efforts to address risk, prepare for unavoidable events and mitigate the impact of crises.

We recognize that urban settings have specific characteristics that require effective, context-specific approaches to address vulnerability, risk reduction as well as crisis response<sup>i</sup>, and that early recovery strategies implemented from the initial stage of relief operations are essential.

We observe that local communities are often the first responders in most disasters, and acknowledge the critical role played by local authorities in disaster response and recovery. In order to ensure a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development, emergency assistance must be provided in ways that will be supportive of short and medium-term recovery leading to long-term development<sup>ii</sup>. The engagement of local governments is essential and should be maintained throughout wherever possible, or a seamless resumption of their leadership ensured when this has been disrupted.

We encourage national government and humanitarian organizations to create an enabling environment for the capacity building of local authorities, as well as national and local non-governmental and community-based organizations, to ensure timely, effective and predictable assistance<sup>iii</sup>. This should be informed by existing interagency frameworks, strategies and the transfer of technology. Additionally, the mainstreaming of social protection safety-net mechanisms and cash-based transfer mechanisms to support the development of local markets and strengthen local capacities, in both development and humanitarian contexts, should be prioritized.

We further encourage humanitarian and development organizations to support multi-year investment in preparedness, response and coordination to strengthen the capacity of local government, of organizations and of communities exposed to disasters, to better prepare for hazards, reduce disaster risk, build resilience,

respond to, recover from, and build back better after disasters<sup>iv</sup>. Furthermore, organizations should aim to complement and strengthen, rather than substitute or displace, local capacities to respond to crises, especially where crises are prolonged or recurrent.

We urge humanitarian organizations to actively identify and work closely with local governments, regional academic and professional institutions and local private sector entities, to explore effective, context-specific approaches to be better prepared for, respond to and recover from increasing emergencies in urban areas, which may have an impact on the provision of such life-saving essential services<sup>v</sup>. Investing time and effort in building functional relations and trust with local governments and partners to provide humanitarian assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles is essential.

While national authorities hold the primary responsibility to save lives and relieve the suffering of survivors within their jurisdiction through the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance<sup>vi</sup>, humanitarian and development organizations already resident in country, or external actors have a mandate and commitment to support efforts of governments in saving lives and relieving suffering.

We recognize that a number of national and international ethical and operational principles have developed over the years to guide all actors in humanitarian and recovery contexts. Primarily, the Humanitarian Principles of *humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence*, remain the over-arching guiding ethical norms by which all stakeholders should design and implement their programs. Of equal importance are the *Core Humanitarian Standard*, the *Red Cross Code of Conduct*, the principle of *do no harm*, gender equality, inclusive participation, human rights, the commitment of *accountability to affected populations*, the right to remedy of violations and the obligation to *leave no one behind*. The following principles and guidelines further inform the behavior and operations of all actors in the field:

- Mindful of the essential principles above, we commit ourselves to prioritize local municipal leadership in determining response to urban crisis<sup>vii</sup> that is aligned with national level agreements and development priorities that promote participation of affected people.
- Understanding the stated complexity of cities, we reiterate our commitment to build on the knowledge of local governments, civil society and urban communities, to employ a bottom-up approach, mobilizing all local resources and capacities through partnerships, including the private sector, local professionals and community-based organizations in future responses. We remain committed to strengthen existing urban governance mechanisms, transparency and accountability, respect for the rule of law and for the rights of citizens, and protection of the most vulnerable.
- We will achieve principles by adopting urban resilience as a common framework to integrate human rights, humanitarian and development goals, by building programs on existing urban service delivery systems, people's own recovery mechanisms and the strength of the urban economy.
- We aim to align immediate life-saving and protection activities as soon as possible with sustainable, inclusive and resilient post-crisis urban development strategies. Similarly, humanitarian organizations commit to align with or take development concerns into consideration to ensure these actors transition their activities to longer-term actors and exit as early as appropriate to do so.
- We further commit to jointly manage urban displacement as a combined human rights, development and humanitarian concern, which requires cities and towns to be welcoming, inclusive and safe environments that balance the safety and needs of refugees and IDPs alongside the needs of the host community.
- As external humanitarian and development partners, we commit to reinforce local capacities, primarily of local governments, to enable them to fulfil their roles to the best of their abilities and to support urban crisis preparedness and response capacities in cities at risk. We commit to identify creative ways to

ensure that local authorities are able to access capacity-building inputs, despite the increasing trend by humanitarian actors to employ direct cash support as an effective implementation strategy.

- We commit to develop local agreements based on the principles outlined here to ensure more effective collaboration, focused on needs assessment, information management, coordination arrangements, programming response, monitoring and evaluation – considering the national and local context.

## **Roles, responsibilities and mandates of stakeholders**

This paper is written with a diversity of crisis management stakeholders in mind. Each constituency has its own particular role, responsibility and mandate in preparing for and responding to the needs of affected populations. It should be recognized that both local authorities and humanitarian actors bring highly specialized skills and insights to the operating environment; these need to be acknowledged and maximized as far as possible. This section briefly explains the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder to ensure a common understanding between the groups.

### **National authorities**

Individual states maintain national disaster and/or crisis management offices, agencies, authorities or dedicated ministries depending on the hazard profile and internal needs of the country to respond to disasters, conflict or complex emergencies. As a trend, preparedness has rightfully become an increasing priority for governments around the world. In addition to organs and emergency services specifically dedicated to response, other departments and ministries (such as ministries of planning, social welfare, finance, foreign affairs and domestic affairs) play a role in facilitating and coordinating assistance to affected populations. National authorities hold primary responsibility to save lives and address the needs of affected populations within their jurisdictions, and therefore they need to supervise and coordinate where and when internal and external assistance are needed most. National line ministries also have the mandate to coordinate and monitor response, recovery and preparedness activities in their technical area to ensure national standards and practices are adhered to.

### **Sub-national authorities**

Sub-national authorities include state, provincial, district, municipal or city government officials who are not part of the national, federal or central level of government. This level of government tends to be closest to affected communities. Mandates, and the level of delegated authority, vary greatly across contexts. This is not to be confused with legitimacy derived from their standing in their communities and their track record in fulfilling their mandate. Many sub-national governments maintain their own emergency services and disaster and/or crisis management offices in order to provide services directly to crisis-impacted areas or affected populations within their jurisdictions. These offices, line ministries and planning departments hold responsibility for generating and maintaining preparedness plans and recovery programs to ensure their local communities are resilient when affected by a crisis. Sub-national authorities also have clear planning and coordination mandates in responding to crisis, and all stakeholders should engage actively in these processes and platforms.

### **International humanitarian and development organizations**

A number of funds, programs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system have specific roles in disaster and/or crisis management and provide sector-specific support and expertise before, during, and after a crisis. The mandate of UN Secretariat entities, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, however, focus entirely on crisis management. The UN agencies with humanitarian mandates include the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Refugee Agency, UN-Habitat, the United Nations Children's Fund, UN Women, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization. These entities provide a variety of crisis response services, including food security, nutrition, shelter, protection, health, education and livelihoods as well as common services such as logistics, telecommunications and coordination. At the national level, these UN bodies work closely with national disaster management offices and respective line ministries on disaster management issues.

In addition to the diversity of UN entities, a number of national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs/INGOs) are involved in preparedness, response and recovery activities. Individual organizations have specific missions, objectives, mandates and sources of income that determine the inputs and services they provide in humanitarian action. Many international organizations maintain an in-country presence and may be involved in humanitarian as well as development-oriented activities when not responding to acute emergencies. National NGOs continue to develop in their own right and many implement their own activities through their own funding sources and/or for government, while others partner with UN agencies and INGOs to implement on the latter's behalf.

Many developed countries with large and well-defined humanitarian and/or development aid budgets, such as the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the USA's Agency for International Development or Japan's International Cooperation Agency, also maintain resident offices in countries where they support large-scale programs. International financing institutions, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, regional development banks (Asian Development Bank and African Development Bank) and bilateral donors, engage with their host nations to support, complement and at times influence humanitarian and development action.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is made up of the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and at the national level, the national Red Cross or Crescent Society of the respective country. The national society invariably plays an auxiliary role to the government's preparedness and response machinery. National societies also maintain local chapters at the sub-national level and collaborate with local authorities in response and preparedness efforts. The IFRC and ICRC often have delegations at the national level to support preparedness and response efforts in natural disasters and complex emergencies (conflict) respectively.

## **Local civil society organizations**

National and community-based civil society organizations function within the borders of their home country. These organizations generally have well-developed community-based networks that are essential for accessing crisis-affected communities and helping them to be prepared for events when they do occur. Civil society organizations are usually officially registered with their local or national governments with their mandates clearly defined. Other organizations often included in this stakeholder group are faith-based organizations, religious groups and IDP or refugee-led organizations.

## **Utility service providers**

Municipal service providers may be private or joint government/public-private partnerships who deliver water, sewage, solid waste management, electricity, gas and other utility services at the sub-national level. The centralized functions and services they provide are essential to meeting the needs of high-density populations in urban environments, including displacement camps where similar needs exist. Coordination and planning with public utility providers are crucial in times of preparedness, response and recovery to ensure that services are maintained, or restored as quickly as possible. Failure to do so may result in community destabilization, conflict, deterioration of health standards and spread of communicable diseases in the worst case.

## **Private sector**

The private sector is a broadly inclusive group that comprises local entrepreneurs and business houses, national or international corporations, financial service providers and informal market vendors. In many urban areas, the provision of basic services and maintenance of infrastructure, such as water, electricity, basic health centers, education and transport linkages, might also be partly or completely privatized. This group includes formal sector business, such as those registered with national governments and who pay taxes, as well as the informal sector such as street sellers who may not be registered with any government authority. At the national and sub-national level, some of these actors organize themselves into chambers of commerce or partnerships to support the preparedness and resilience of communities in which they operate. While the private sector by nature is driven by profit, many actors donate financial, in-kind, logistical or technical assistance to government and affected communities, especially during times of response. Private sector partners are often an overlooked, forgotten or untapped resource due to a number of reasons. These include differing organizational structures, culture, motivations and coordination mechanisms. All of these can be mitigated against by proactive engagement during the preparedness phase. Lessons learned from previous humanitarian responses have also illustrated that 'free' assistance can undermine, for instance, the capacity of private health clinics to contribute to the response.

## **Built environment professionals**

This stakeholder group includes engineers, architects, urban planners, as well as professional membership bodies and institutions. These individuals and institutions have a vital role to play in working with sub-national and national government, as well as private sector entities, to ensure urban systems are well prepared when a crisis occurs. They can also play a key role in understanding the complexity of a city and help explain risks, population movements, and opportunities for a more sustainable response. They are also responsible for how the city or municipality will recover and re-build itself after a crisis. Professionals can also support sub-national government in planning recovery efforts by providing technical assistance so that neighborhoods and dwellings are built back better.

## **Description of existing governmental, humanitarian and private sector organizational structures at national and municipal level**

As referenced earlier in the background and rationale of this paper, each stakeholder group has its own hierarchy or internal organizational structure to organize itself, its personnel, its functional processes and decision making. Having a clear understanding of all the hierarches and more importantly, how they relate, interact and communicate with one another, is essential. However, unless time and effort have been invested during the preparedness phase to achieve this, attempting to negotiate this process during the response phase would be almost impossible.

Even the most basic of preparedness-building processes (such as contingency planning), normally include an articulation of the organizational structure or 'architecture' of the local and national government's departmental (or ministerial) structure and how each organ with mandate to respond interrelates with each other. Similarly, international humanitarian and development actors have a globally standardized structure through the Humanitarian Country Team and the Cluster Approach architecture to structure and guide their response activities. Local civil society organizations, national NGOs and other resident NGOs in country often organize themselves into a consortium or association. Similarly, private sector entities involved in crisis response may have arranged themselves into a business alliance or through a local chamber of commerce. However, it cannot be assumed that all these stakeholder groups are aware of the others' existence, let alone understand well how they function internally.

A core preparedness action is to map each of these structures alongside each other and through workshopped discussion, agree how and at what level(s) the various hierarchies communicate and how they interact with each other. For instance, pre-identifying who the primary representative or focal point within each hierarchy is, as well as how and when they should communicate with each other at the onset of a disaster, can be listed in simple standard operating procedures (SOPs). SOPs can facilitate prompt activation of each of the stakeholder groups to shift into action and start to work in support of each other's efforts.

It is therefore recommended that an annex of the local protocol of engagement represent the mapping of each hierarchy, as well as the crisis management coordination mechanisms of government and other stakeholders, should they exist. To the extent possible, all stakeholders should be included in, or if not, identify their space within the government's overall coordination platform. Where one does not exist or function, any external coordination approach and mechanism should aim to assimilate with a national structure as early as possible, and in the interim should encourage local government leaders and technical officers to lead, or at minimum co-chair, meetings and processes.

# Domains of Action for improved collaboration

## Domain of Action 1: Coordination

Coordination in crises involves bringing together multiple actors to ensure a coherent and principled response to emergencies, with the overall aim to assist people when they most need relief or protection. Specifically, humanitarian coordination involves: assessing situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; developing common strategies to address issues such as negotiating access, mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This is best achieved in an inclusive manner involving local government, humanitarian and development actors, civil society and the private sector.

Further helpful normative guidance and recommendations related to this, and other, domains of action can be found in the IASC's *Operational Guidance For Cluster Lead Agencies On Working With National Authorities*<sup>viii</sup>.

The questions and elements outlined below need to be tailored to each context.

### Key questions

- How do we map existing coordination mechanisms of national and sub-national government, humanitarian and development organizations, civil society and the private sector at national and city/provincial level to avoid creation of new platforms in parallel?
- Which stakeholders have resources to contribute to the local coordination platform, its functioning and service provision?
- How do we avoid the establishment of parallel coordination structures/mechanisms by external partners?
- How do we ensure we include informal or 'non-traditional' actors, who are not currently mainstreamed, in coordination structures and processes?
- How do we coordinate effectively with each other when stakeholders are (perceived to be) party to the conflict, and humanitarian principles may be blurred?
- What actions or processes can be introduced to facilitate all stakeholders' understanding of each other's mandates and responsibilities with a view to eventually building trust and respect between these groups?
- How can we surge capacity to local actors in order to increase their role in the process?
- What decisions and processes need to be put in place to ensure the sustainability of the coordination structure as the international humanitarian community exits?
- What tools or documents will be necessary to capture and formalize these arrangements and decisions?

### Elements to take into account

- A stakeholder mapping exercise at the sub-national and national level would be helpful in establishing and clarifying individual actors' role, responsibilities and mandates.
- Each stakeholder group invariably has its own existing structures or hierarchy already; the issue is how do these hierarchies communicate and interact with each other effectively, so as not to undermine each other's effectiveness, and avoid duplication of effort and competition for resources.
- Humanitarian and development organizations need to take the time to understand local coordination platforms, and work to reinforce or build on from these.
- Coordination structures and activities need to be fit for purpose and to scale; they need to be inclusive, participatory, lean, light and yield a return on investment of time and effort for even the smallest actors.

- Coordination structures and mechanisms need to be sufficiently flexible so that they ideally meet development as well as humanitarian requirements, able to scale up and multiply in times of rapid-onset large-scale response as well as contract cohesively to pre-disaster size, once emergency needs have been met.
- Coordination structures and mechanisms need to take protection and access issues into close consideration.
- Where the needs and challenges of vulnerable groups and populations in inaccessible locations are by nature under-represented, measures need to be identified and mainstreamed to ensure that these needs are addressed.

## **Domain of Action 2: Needs assessments and analysis**

Needs assessment provides the evidence base for strategic planning, as well as the baseline information upon which situation and response monitoring systems will rely. It should therefore form a continuous process throughout the humanitarian program cycle. Coordinated assessments are carried out to assess the humanitarian situation and to identify the needs of the affected population. Local and national authorities, civil society and affected communities should participate in this process.

The questions and elements outlined below need to be tailored to each context.

### **Key questions**

- What are the priority questions to be answered?
- How do we arrive at a shared understanding of the urban crisis context, the needs of the affected population and the identification of the most vulnerable?
- How do we differentiate between the chronic vulnerabilities of the urban poor and the acute vulnerabilities of those directly affected by the crisis?
- Which cities and neighborhoods need to be prioritized?
- Who has capacity to contribute to the needs assessment exercises and what is the related distribution of roles and responsibilities?
- Who has knowledge and data to contribute, who can facilitate access and how can we capture local knowledge?
- How do we ensure that we are able to map the needs of marginalized communities, in particular those living in informal settlements?
- Do assessment forms and analysis methodology adequately address access and protection issues in the affected communities?

### **Elements to take into account**

- Depending on the type and scale of the crisis, a key question will always be ‘what do we need to know and understand urgently’, leaving space to complement the assessments and analysis later (good enough approach).
- The roles various stakeholders can play will vary greatly depending on their capacities and the potential to strengthen these in the short term as well as their role in the crisis.
- Levels of trust between different stakeholders can complicate a transparent process. Measures might need to be taken to ensure trust is built over time, increasing ownership.

- Ensure that sex and age-disaggregated data are available in both secondary datasets and primary data activities. Take this into close consideration when analyzing data and forming recommendations for subsequent planning and program design.
- Ensure that protection issues have been taken into close consideration when designing and implementing assessment activities.
- Ensure that all sectors of the population, and all affected populations, have been accessed during the assessment phase of the response.
- Especially in complex emergencies (conflict settings), ensure that assessment activities include hard-to-reach areas and that the voice and needs of communities in inaccessible areas are taken into close consideration.

### **Domain of Action 3: Planning and design**

Humanitarian response plans (HRPs) are developed for any humanitarian crisis requiring the support of more than one agency, and are prepared by humanitarian country teams (HCTs), based on a humanitarian needs overview (informed by the needs assessment and analysis). Sub-national governments often also have pre-existing development priorities, in addition to explicit government-led response plans. These various planning and design processes, at the very least, need to be developed inclusively and be complementary in nature.

The questions and elements outlined below need to be tailored to each context.

#### **Key questions**

- How do humanitarian and development organizations, civil society organizations and private sector entities engage with sub-national governments in planning and design processes?
- How can these stakeholder groups be aware of existing planning documents or processes in order to build upon when considering response, recovery or DRR interventions?
- Are national and sub-national response, recovery, resilience and development plans aligned with and connected to national, international or private sector funding sources?
- Have the needs and challenges of vulnerable groups, such as female-headed households, people with disabilities, the elderly or minorities, been accurately planned and designed for in humanitarian and development programs?
- Where humanitarians' access to affected populations, or survivors' access to relief and recovery services, is challenged, have measures been put in place and resources (financial and/or human) allocated to address this?

#### **Elements to take into account**

- Humanitarian and development organizations need to work in tandem with government to agree common planning goals, objectives and activities, preferably based on broader resilience or development plans.
- Humanitarian and development organizations need to integrate recovery and development approaches into their planning processes, and those of government, as early as possible.
- Humanitarian response plans and programs need to be designed flexibly in order to evolve into longer-term development plans as smoothly and early as possible.
- Future (resilience) plans need to be designed to be flexible enough to absorb and respond to an external shock, enable adaptation and return to normal functionality as soon thereafter as possible.

- Peer-to-peer support mechanisms and the role of unions of municipalities within a country should be maximized in sharing good practice in resilience planning and design processes.
- In contexts where physical or humanitarian access may limit responders' ability to deliver services and inputs to the affected population, good practice, such as humanitarian access units, civil-military coordination capacities and guidelines to support these processes, should be introduced.

## **Domain of Action 4: Implementation**

The implementation phase of the program management cycle is a realization or actualization of the planning and design activities that have gone before it, based on the quantified needs identified through the assessment and analysis phases. In humanitarian responses, it is during the implementation phase that project activities aim to primarily save lives and alleviate suffering, followed by short to medium-term relief and recovery activities that empower affected populations to regain their self-sufficiency and independence.

The questions and elements outlined below need to be tailored to each context.

### **Key questions**

- How do humanitarian and development organizations, civil society organizations and private sector entities engage with national and sub-national government in the implementation of project activities?
- Do SOPs exist at the local level that spell out immediate roles, responsibilities and actions, per actor, in the immediate phases after an emergency?
- What key agreements or processes do all stakeholders need to have in place prior to and during an emergency to ensure smooth coordination and implementation of activities – in support of overall local government efforts?
- Do relief, recovery, development and resilience programs adequately address protection and access issues by ensuring these aspects are mainstreamed throughout?
- Does a culture of transparency and accountability exist within and between the various stakeholder groups to each other and most importantly to the displaced population?
- Where necessary, does a humanitarian access unit exist to liaise closely between government, parties to the conflict, foreign military forces and humanitarian service providers?

### **Elements to take into account**

- Humanitarian and development organizations, as well as other stakeholders, need to maintain the primacy and central role of local authorities in responding to the needs of affected populations. All efforts of these actors should work collectively towards enhancing those of the local government.
- In situations where local and/or national government authorities are party to the conflict, a coordinated approach by all actors that takes the Humanitarian Principles into close consideration is essential.
- Where country presence and residency has not been established in advance of an emergency, humanitarian and development organizations should take the time from the outset to introduce themselves to local authorities and the local disaster response community.
- The above-mentioned process should include a familiarization of local response processes, structures and mechanisms, as well as formal and informal leadership structures.
- Humanitarian and development organizations should increase their engagement with local and national NGOs in order to strengthen the latter's capacity and provide opportunity for eventual direct implementation of activities.

- Humanitarian and development organizations need to maintain, or be able to grasp, a robust understanding and contextual knowledge of the local operating environment in which they function.
- To the extent possible, ensure that meetings, coordination activities, visits and interactions are conducted in the local language, and/or have translation services accessible to as broad an audience as possible.
- Humanitarian and development organizations need to ensure that their response and recovery efforts work in support of, and not in competition with or opposition to, the efforts of local and national NGOs. Examples of this include: competition for physical resources, such as office space and humanitarian supplies; human resources, such as qualified staff; and affected communities – in terms of proximity and accessibility.
- In order to strengthen transparency and accountability between all stakeholders and towards displaced populations, ensure full access to information and introduce procedures and structures to support this (e.g. complaints mechanisms, whistle-blowing measures, publication of appropriate level of financial and programmatic progress, etc.).
- Ensure that the Protection Cluster and its supporting sub-clusters or technical working groups (child protection, Housing Land and Property issues, GBV, etc.) are mainstreaming protection and accessibility issues across all clusters and programs.

## **Domain of Action 5: Financing and resource mobilization**

Resource mobilization is about fundraising for the humanitarian response. It is also about using funding mechanisms (including humanitarian financing tools, such as country-based pooled funds, the Central Emergency Response Fund, and others) strategically to fund in line with the priorities set in humanitarian response plans. Financing is also generated through national and sub-national relief funds, complemented by funds from the private sector and individuals. Resource mobilization activities can take place at any point in the humanitarian program cycle.

The questions and elements outlined below need to be tailored to each context.

### **Key questions**

- What emergency funds or budgets exist at the national or sub-national level to immediately support response efforts in the area?
- What existing funding mechanisms, tools and frameworks exist in country and are available to the city or province to access funds for relief, recovery and DRR activities?
- What national, international and private sector donors are present in country and have resources and priorities aligned with relief, recovery and DRR activities of the city or province?
- Are local resource mobilization strategies and activities aligned with national and sub-national overarching response, recovery, resilience and development plans?
- What templates, formats, secondary datasets and other information would be required to have on file in order to support the rapid and prompt submission of response proposals, as well as inform longer planning horizon funding documents?
- Does a donor or development partner forum exist locally, and if not, would there be merit in establishing one?
- What non-financial and partnership possibilities can be forged with the private sector during the preparedness phase that could maximize its participation in response, recovery and resilience efforts?

## Elements to take into account

- A stakeholder mapping exercise of donors and fundraising sources at the sub-national and national level would be helpful in establishing and clarifying possibilities for support of preparedness, recovery or resilience activities.
- Consider preparation of generic proposals for predictable response requirements based on historical data and trends. These can then be adapted and fine-tuned at short notice based on immediate primary data from the field and submitted to donors for consideration, rather than having to locate and draft submissions from scratch.
- Provide opportunities for local community organizations and national NGOs to access DRR funding from a diversity of donors to strengthen their capacity and experience of funding sources and the processes required to access these funds.
- Support local community organizations and national NGOs in the vetting and due diligence processes required by most donors. This is most appropriately and practically done in the preparedness phase.
- Donor and development platforms, that could include the private sector, can be strategic entry points for all stakeholders to inform longer-term funding priorities and directions.
- Development actor and local business partnerships can support and promote disaster risk reduction, response and resilience programs, not necessarily financially, but also through technical assistance, staff-volunteer programs, re-establishment of supply chains and delivery lines, as well as in-kind support.
- Both national and international donors should increase the direct contracting of local and national NGOs for project implementation.
- International donors should more proactively incentivize the engagement of local and national NGOs by INGOs and UN agencies in order to provide greater opportunity and exposure for the former to grow and increase their capacity.
- Ensure that all funding rounds, calls for proposals, proposal templates, HRP and funding documents reflect protection and access issues at the local level.

## Domain of Action 6: Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring and evaluation is necessary to those responding to crises to: examine whether sufficient progress is being made in reaching strategic and cluster objectives; provide an evidence base for taking decisions about the future direction of the response; and support resource mobilization. It is a continuous process that records the aid delivered to people in need, measures results against the objectives set out in the response plans, and examines what was delivered versus the resources allocated.

The questions and elements outlined below need to be tailored to each context.

### Key questions

- Are humanitarian and development program M&E activities aligned with national or sub-national M&E procedures or standards?
- What role do community members, and the organizations that represent them, have in the M&E of project activities?
- What mechanisms exist for beneficiaries to communicate any possible complaint or qualitative feedback to the implementing agency or local government?

- Do channels or pathways exist that relay good practices and manage knowledge vertically and horizontally between various stakeholder groups; first and foremost between humanitarian and development and government partners?
- Where relevant, do your M&E activities include private sector entities, business and local market dynamics?
- Are protection issues sufficiently mainstreamed in the M&E indicator sets of all sectors?
- How have M&E activities been executed in communities where access is limited or may have limited the voice of affected community members?

### **Elements to take into account**

- Ensure that relevant technical and monitoring staff from local authority line ministries are included in field M&E activities on a regular basis.
- Additionally, ensure local authority participation in specific evaluation events such as after-action reviews, real time evaluations and final reporting and recommendation setting.
- Ensure that monitoring and especially evaluation data is shared with relevant local authorities in order to share good practice, build local capacity, ensure sustainability and potential direct implementation in future service provision.
- Ensure that good practices and lessons learned are reported and shared as widely as possible and in a diversity of formats, including on-line, printed, translated into local languages, and packaged appropriately to different user-groups.
- Ensure that humanitarian and development actors work equally closely with built environment professionals, private sector entities and civil society actors to share evaluation results and good practice.
- M&E indicators, and the approaches to measure them, need to sensitively consider the requirements and challenges of vulnerable groups and populations in inaccessible areas.

## **Endnotes**

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<sup>i</sup> Global Alliance for Urban Crises Urban Charter.

<sup>ii</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 69/243.

<sup>iii</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/133.

<sup>iv</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/133.

<sup>v</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/133.

<sup>vi</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182.

<sup>vii</sup> Global Alliance for Urban Crises Urban Charter.

<sup>viii</sup> Inter Agency Standing Committee. (2011). *IASC Guidance on Working With National Authorities For Cluster Lead Agency*. IASC, Geneva.