



Disaster Response Dialogue

Global Conference in Manila

“Improving trust and cooperation for more effective humanitarian responses”

Conference report – 13-15 October 2014



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Cover photo: Tacloban residents following Typhoon Haiyan/IFRC

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**Disaster Response Dialogue Global Conference in
Manila – Conference report**

Table of contents

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| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 5 |
| 2. Key note address | 7 |
| 3. High-level panel | 9 |
| 4. Presentations | 12 |
| 4.1 Background study “addressing the Perennial problems in disaster response” | 12 |
| 4.2 DRD learning review | 13 |
| 5. Working Groups discussions | 14 |
| 5.1 Strengthening trust and relationships | 14 |
| 5.2 Making cooperation more effective | 16 |
| 5.3 International humanitarian financing and the affected state | 18 |
| 6. Conclusion | 20 |
| 7. Recommendations | 21 |
| Annex I: Conference agenda | 23 |
| Annex II : List of participants | 25 |

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The Disaster Response Dialogue, convened by Switzerland through its Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is a platform bringing together governments and humanitarian organisations involved in disaster risk management to improve trust and mutual cooperation, with a particular focus on disaster preparedness and response in natural disaster contexts. The Dialogue offers a facilitated space in which issues of concern can be identified and discussed openly and honestly, leading to practical solutions.



1. Introduction

Building on the outcome of its first international meeting on 25-26 October 2011 in Geneva, the Disaster Response Dialogue convened a global conference in Manila on the theme “*improving trust and cooperation for more effective humanitarian responses*”. The conference was hosted by the Government of the Philippines in partnership with the Government of Australia, as chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and the conveners of the dialogue. The conference was informed by experiences from the response to Typhoon Yolanda.

Over 80 participants attended the conference from governments, regional organisations, the United Nations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, national and international NGOs, the private sector, military and academia. The conference was an opportunity to share lessons and best practices in disaster preparedness and response with a view to identify a set of concrete recommendations for more inclusive, principled and effective humanitarian action during natural disasters. These recommendations will represent an important contribution to the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit and other relevant platforms.

In their welcoming remarks, the conveners of the dialogue highlighted their expectations from the conference.

Swiss Ambassador Ivo Sieber thanked the Government of Philippines for hosting this important conference: this is a clear manifestation of their strong support to the dialogue. The fact that this conference takes place in the Philippines reminds us all that even well prepared governments may need international assistance in large-scale disasters, as experienced in the recent response to typhoon Haiyan. Mr Sieber noted that the humanitarian sector is rapidly changing. The increasing number and diversity of actors in the sector makes coordination and cooperation heavy and challenging. In this changing landscape, one thing remains clear however: without cooperation and trust amongst all actors, we cannot ensure effective responses, and ultimately to better serve the needs of disaster-affected people.

Nan Buzard, Executive Director of ICVA, reminded the participants that emergency responses take place in chaotic environments: when discussing coordination, efficiency, or partnership, we should always remind ourselves that it often takes place in volatile and difficult contexts. Nonetheless, greater efforts are needed to strengthen trust and partnership between national and international bodies. Trust in particular can be built through more predictability in the current humanitarian system especially in the context of natural disasters. We also need a candid look at decision-making and financing: who has the power to make decisions on how and when the money is spent has significant influence on the quality of the cooperation between national and international actors.

Jagan Chapagain, the Director of Asia Pacific for the IFRC, highlighted the critical importance of emergency preparedness: dialogue between a broad range of stakeholders involved in disaster management, like the one carried out during this conference, needs to take place before a disaster. This is particularly important with the emergence of new actors with different methods, values and principles involved

in humanitarian action. This is only through this form of engagement, involving a broad range of stakeholders such as the military and the private sector, that we will be able to make coordination and partnerships more effective. Mr Chapagain also noted that significant progresses have been made in the sector in terms of accountability. However, there is a fine line between greater accountability and too much bureaucracy: it is important to find the right balance so that people do not spend too much time with bureaucratic requirements to the detriment of interaction with people in the field.

Oliver Lacey-Hall, Regional Head of OCHA for Asia and Pacific, pointed out that there has been a fundamental shift in disaster management, with a growing role of national actors, particularly national governments: a number of governments have established well-functioning disaster management authorities in the last decade. This has important implications for international actors, and there is a need to examine more closely where and how local, national, regional and international support can work better together. The Disaster Response Dialogue global conference, taking into account these changes, is expected to come up with a set of practical recommendations to address some of the challenges related to the cooperation between a growing number of actors. Mr Lacey-Hall encouraged everyone to be as concrete and practical as possible: this Conference is a unique opportunity to contribute to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.



2. Key note address

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Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, Department of Social Welfare and Development delivered the key-note address, in which she highlighted the importance of trust, drawing from her direct experiences during Haiyan response:

“(..). Being the head of a department or a ministry that stands in the frontline of disaster response, I have certainly had my share of experiences, from which I’ve culled some reflections I thought I’d share with you today. My hope is that my insights contribute to your discussions in the following days, and help lay a stronger foundation among the actors engaged in humanitarian response.

Deficiency in Trust

Today presents us a unique opportunity to address key factors that underpin our global response to disaster. First of which is the deficiency in trust.

The success of any relationship depends on the ability of people to trust. It fuels the willingness of the actors to engage and to work together, and it invites openness between them to listen and learn from each other. Therefore, relationships are built on trust in the same way that trust is built on relationships. It is a product of an experience of working together, and of knowing and understanding each other.

In the landscape of humanitarian response, the role that trust plays is not any different. It paves the way for cooperation needed between governments, donor institutions, and non-government organizations in carrying out approaches and plans that help rebuild and improve the lives of the people affected. Most importantly, it determines the effectiveness of their cooperation. Trust and cooperation do not easily happen during an emergency situation. The working relationship starts from the pre-disaster work which requires meetings and getting to know each other and the systems of each organization. It works on concrete steps and arrangements when an emergency occurs. The political and social context is understood by the international organizations – UN or NGOs.

In our experience in Haiyan, the magnitude of the destruction was so vast that there was room for everyone who wanted to help. Such a situation created a logjam in attending to the needs of the survivors (...). The assumption of many of the new actors from the international organizations comes from their own experience of failed states

or weak states; there was inadequate context information which they could have gotten from in-country colleagues who knew the situation and the capacities and systems of government. There already existed a working relationship and trust between the in-country directors and staff and the government. During the first three weeks, there were many new faces on the ground that we met and the only thread that bound us was trust. Trust built with in-country people, thus as the new faces introduced themselves to this organization, it is the social capital of the organization that informs our response. Trust that each would respond accordingly to the needs at hand. Some of those who responded were in-country partners, and with them, the working out of procedures was already instinctive. However, with those whom we welcomed for the first time, we had to spend some time leveling off expectations, working protocols, and setting up procedures among other things (...).

Lack of Context

One lesson I have gained from Haiyan is that while experiences and expertise can help, it will only be effective if it is practiced with proper understanding, proper grasp of the context of the place. And so, the surge of compassion and desire to help expressed by foreign agencies must be balanced with an understanding of the situation and capacities of the country they will support (...). It would be easy to cite cultural factors as one of the many causes but I’d much rather raise the tendency of aid agencies to push for formulaic approaches and general principles that while they may have been effective in other countries, these may not be suitable to the local situation at hand.

For example, the level 3 response of the UN can be reviewed and adjusted to the level of capacity of the countries that they help. Rather than being a general intervention, the approach should be tailor-fit to the context of the country and should encourage the use of in-country resources, including maximizing the technical assets of the country offices. I think that this makes for a more effective response because it recognizes the innate capacity of the people in the country to respond to the disaster. The assignment of experts to disaster areas must be tempered with trust that the local agencies and actors have the capacity to respond, especially

because they have a better understanding and knowledge of the area devastated and the population affected. What is therefore needed is support for the local agencies rather than bringing in people from foreign offices who have yet to familiarize themselves with the political and cultural climate of the country and the affected areas.

Another challenge faced by the international and local responders is to have predisaster arrangements and agreements that can be put in place when the disaster occurs. This reflection comes from our experience in Typhoon Haiyan that while we were implementing the cluster approach as prescribed in UN protocols, we were overtaken by the level 3 intervention such that there was some confusion as to who was directing the humanitarian organizations.

The Happy Problem

We also experienced problems – although this was a happy problem – where international financing was more than adequate. At this time, donations were pouring in from all corners from citizens and organizations alike. Thus, the amount of financial assistance was more than enough to provide relief and in many instances even rehabilitate and rebuild devastated areas. However, while the financial assistance was overwhelming, it must be said that a good part of this was given outside formal protocols and bypassed procedures and consultations with local authorities in using these to respond to the needs of the survivors. Usually, these were international organizations or individuals abroad who needed to establish their own linkages, as they did not have previous partnerships in our country. It is unfortunate that the many private individual initiatives in responding to Typhoon Haiyan created an image of a Philippine government that is unable to absorb assistance, properly utilize it and account for it. The funds from donor countries in the relief phase went through UN agencies and international organizations and NGOs, and yet the public is asking government to account for it.

This poses a challenge to us so that in the future, contributions such as these are more effectively utilized and coordinated. One way that we can ensure this objective is to have them coordinate officially and for government to find a place for them in the coordinated disaster response.

Looking Forward

There are many should-haves, could-haves, and would-haves from our numerous experiences with disasters, particularly with that of Haiyan. But the one element I would like to linger on is the animus to march onward from a disaster that devastated not only our country but the world – the fighting spirit that resonated strongly in every organization that helped and each person who worked with us during this challenging time. It is the same spirit that pushed us to look beyond the rubbles of disaster and see the possibilities that lay ahead.

This spirit is one that is rooted in our ability to trust; trust ourselves and especially trust that each one will carry out, in the best of his abilities, the much needed work of delivering relief, rehabilitating and rebuilding the disaster areas for the survivors (...). It is my hope that we take advantage of this conference to build trust in each other, by communication, coordination and the spirit of collaboration. Thank you.”

3. High-level panel

Swiss Ambassador Ivo Sieber, as chair of the high-level panel, welcomed the panelists. He noted that the Disaster Response Dialogue, as envisaged at its origin, provides a space in which issues of concerns can be identified and discussed openly and honestly, leading to practical solutions. It was triggered in 2011 by concerns of growing mistrust between national authorities and humanitarian actors, particularly in situations of large-scale disasters: with this in mind, the objective of this high-level panel is to start gathering some initial perspectives from a range of very senior and experienced individuals from governments, regional organisations, NGOs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and the United Nations. in terms of some of the from a range of very experienced individuals.

The Chair asked panelists to reflect on what they saw as some of the major challenges to be addressed as a matter of priority and what are their initial suggestions of recommendations participants may consider.

Lesley Cordero, Under Secretary, Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery, Philippines highlighted some challenges in terms of coordination between the government and international actors. The government of the Philippines has adopted the cluster framework in 2007, long before typhoon Haiyan. When the typhoon hit, there were some questions about how well the mechanism was functioning, particularly in terms of how it connects with international responders. There were challenges in terms of how national and international protocols in the case of a “level-3” response. This recent experience highlighted the need to have better communication between the government and international responders, and also the importance of having clear points of contact for communication. Under Secretary Cordero also noted the importance of financial reporting mechanisms, particularly for the local population: the government cannot be hold accountable by the local population for the money that is spent by foreign organisations, over which it has very little control. International actors and the government should work together in that regard, so that humanitarian spending can be clearly communicated to the population. It is also important to remember that disaster responses are chaotic: the best time for reviewing policies and protocols is when we are in a recovery phase. In that regard, we need to see how best we can build a smooth transition from the emergency to the recovery phase.

Alicia Dela Rosa Bala, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN insisted on a major challenge affected countries often face when dealing with large scale disasters: while governments can be overwhelmed and need international support, there are situations where the humanitarian assistance, while well intended, can be harmful if uncoordinated. Greater cooperation in the identification of needs is therefore critical. Deputy Secretary Bala argued that the focus of international support should shift towards building better preparedness and strengthening resilience, so that countries can respond to disasters with their own capacities. A shift is already taking place with countries increasingly reluctant to appeal for international assistance, yet welcoming such support when needed. She noted that ASEAN is strengthening its partnership with the military and civil societies groups and is reviewing its standard operating procedures to improve its response capacity.

Ambassador Fuad Maznae, OIC Director of Humanitarian Affairs noted the importance of disaster responses being tailored to the needs and the local context of each country. All too often, international actors pay insufficient attention to the particular contexts in which they operate. In the same vein, local actors need to be given more space in terms of decision-making and financing: a proper financial accountability has to involve local actors. Most of these concerns can be addressed with more inclusive approaches between national and international actors.

Dr Tjokorda Samadhi, Deputy Minister/Head, President's Delivery Unit, Indonesia referred to the experience of his government following the Indian Ocean Tsunami: lessons from this experience have enabled the government to strengthen its capacity to supervise and oversee humanitarian responses. His government has gathered a series of lessons learnt from that period: for instance, there is a need to reduce any conflicting regulations that might affect the effectiveness of the disaster response; it is also important to build correct perception and knowledge among the parliament members on what disaster response and management mean in practice; creating robust platforms to accommodate external humanitarian support is also critical; and finally, it is important to build a common understanding on disaster response and budget allocation amongst law makers. Dr Samadhi shared two key lessons: one is that resettlement can only be done long after the disaster because of land issues, and second, that disaster preparedness and capacity building programmes should be prioritized.

Senator Richard J. Gordon, President, the Philippines Red Cross shared the experience of the Philippines Red Cross in the recent Haiyan response. A total of 48 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were supporting the response. As highlighted by colleagues, the situation in the first days and week was very chaotic, like in many other disasters: there was no communication, access was very difficult, and there were some cases of lootings. In this context, it is critical to determine how to access the affected areas and bring the necessary goods on time, and based on needs. Coordination of all actors is critical in this context, but is not sufficient: as important is that there must be a good understanding of the role of all actors prior to the disaster. For Senator Gordon, emergency preparedness can be captured in 4 "Ps": predict, plan, practice and preposition. In addition, having the right laws in place is also a key precondition of effective disaster responses: some adjustments may be needed in terms of better articulating the roles of governments and humanitarian actors. Finally, it is important that the international community does not forget other disasters when a major disaster hits: "silent disasters" do not reach international headlines.

Nan Buzard, Executive Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies shared some of the challenges from the perspective of non-governmental organisations (NGOs): while national NGOs often provide an important part of humanitarian assistance in situations of disasters, their voice is insufficiently heard at the national, regional and international levels. Strengthening the representation of national NGOs in relevant platforms and supporting high-quality partnerships among humanitarian stakeholders is a priority for ICVA. A similar gap exists in terms of humanitarian financing: international actors – particularly the multilaterals – have the lion's share of funding. Ensuring greater access to humanitarian financing for those best positioned is therefore a priority for ICVA's members.

Lota Sylwander, HC/RC a.i., UNICEF Country Representative in the Philippines reflected on the “level-3” declaration following Haiyan: the international humanitarian sector was criticized for declaring an L-3 in a middle-income country, and with very little consultation with the government. This mechanism should be kept for contexts where national capacity is very weak. In the future, international responses must be much more tailored to the context: this requires some preparedness activities to make sure we have clear coordination, information sharing and response protocols in place in advance of a disaster. In large-scale disasters, coordinating the various actors is often challenging and existing systems become rapidly overwhelmed. The challenges can be mitigated by ensuring that all responders have a common awareness of each other and the established coordination mechanisms set in place by the Government before a disaster strikes. Finally, Mrs Sylwander emphasized the need to have systemic mechanisms in place to ensure that the voices of the affected people inform decision-making processes: this is critical for ensuring that appropriate, targeted and efficient assistance is provided during a disaster



4. Presentation

4.1 Background study “addressing the perennial problems in disaster response”

Mr. Ed Schenkenberg, Executive Director of HERE-Geneva, presented the background study commissioned by the Disaster Response Dialogue. The study explored three sets of issues summarized below, which guided the working group discussions in the second part of the Conference:

- Strengthening trust and relationships – interviews conducted for the study highlighted a strong recognition that more time and attention should be invested in building trust among all actors: changes of behaviour would help ensuring a better cooperation between international and local actors, and should not be too difficult to implement. In particular, it was noted that humanitarian organisations should not “hide” behind humanitarian principles to avoid close collaboration with national authorities. There is also a need for governments from disaster affected countries to be more involved in the multiple international initiatives in humanitarian sector, particularly those aiming at strengthening accountability.
- Making cooperation more effective – there are some tensions between two parallel priorities: the emphasis on strengthening the lead role and capacity of the governments of disaster-affected countries and the strengthening of the capacity of the international humanitarian system. It is time to clarify how these priorities work together. Regional organisations are increasingly involved in disaster response, but their role with regard to the national and international level of the response needs to be defined more clearly. It was also pointed out that the affected state, which has the primary responsibility in the response to a disaster, is not a homogenous entity and the politics between ministries and between capital and regional levels are important elements to bear in mind.
- International humanitarian financing and the affected state – the large majority of humanitarian funding is provided through the international humanitarian system, with very little inclusion of governments affected by disasters. It raises the question whether more finances should be channelled directly through disaster affected governments as an alternative approach in future responses to natural disasters?

In conclusion, the study has shed some new light on a range of old, well-known issues. These issues are inextricably linked and no single actor can solve them on its own. Perhaps politics, power and money are the elephants in the room. The study notes that trust comes with more honesty and transparency about motivations and intentions. It concludes that it is time to get serious about finding solutions collectively.

4.2 DRD learning review

David Fisher, Coordinator of the Disaster Law Programme, IFRC, presented The Learning Review in the Philippines. The review was undertaken jointly by the Government and DRD between 6-16 May 2014. It received support from the NDRRMC, particularly DFA, DSWD, and OCD, and well as logistic support from OCHA. Its objective was to capture top-level lessons in terms of the cooperation between the Government of the Philippines and international responders. Field visits were done in Regions VI, VII & VIII and interviews in Manila. A total of over 130 persons were interviewed and a review of the literature was conducted.

Yolanda (internationally known as Haiyan) is the largest typhoon ever to strike the Philippines – it affected 16 million people, displaced 4.1 million, and killed over 6,000. On the heels of a series of large disasters, both domestic and international capacities were already stretched.

The key findings of the learning review include:

- *Trust and attitude*: the review found a remarkably cooperative spirit in the Yolanda response, with respect for the role and principles of humanitarian responders, and respect for the role of authorities and domestic civil society. Only minor negative notes were reported, which can be expected in such a large scale response. The importance of building relationships prior to the response was highlighted.
- *Coordination*: on the cluster system, the government has internalised the cluster approach to an unprecedented degree. This has added real value, but some areas of confusion and incompatibility at sub-national level were observed. It was also noted that needs assessments were largely carried out separately. The good experience of “co-locating” national and international actors in coordination hubs in Roxas and Ormoc were major successes.
- *Facilitation and regulation*: entry procedures for personnel were remarkably light and the entry of relief goods and equipment extremely rapid thanks to the one-stop shops (OSS); some quality problems in international response were reported however, and the overall approach to facilitating and regulating incoming assistance remained somewhat ad hoc.
- *Transparency of funding*: there were difficulties for both local and national officials to get a full picture of humanitarian funding. The FAiTH website rapidly set up by the government was a creative mechanism for greater transparency, yet there remain challenges in terms of monitoring how international humanitarian funding was used.
- *Emergency preparedness*: the preparedness of local authorities was inconsistent and inadequately resourced in several areas, and was furthermore impacted by changes of local leadership. There is a need to support local capacity to manage international support as well.

In conclusion, the Yolanda response was a very successful example of good cooperation, where both systems and procedures, and the softer elements of trust and attitudes played a key role in the success.

5. Working Groups discussions

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5.1 Strengthening trust and relationships

“Trust is a prerequisite for disaster response, yet it is often overlooked”

The groups discussed what trust between national governments and humanitarian actors means in practice. Governments and their citizens expect humanitarian actors to work in a context-sensitive manner, to be transparent on how they spend their funds, and to be motivated by humanitarian objectives rather than driven by political motivations. People want to see results and trust comes when you are able to show achievements. It was noted that sometimes inappropriate behaviour of international staffs and visibility of their financial superiority, such as expensive cars and big salaries can nurture mistrust between the affected community and the international actors. On the other hand, humanitarian actors expect governments to respect humanitarian principles as well as to act in the interest of their people, recognizing this varies across contexts. While trust is a prerequisite for effective disaster response, it is not naturally given, requires time to build, and is often overlooked.

The group discussed different ways in which trust between different actors could be strengthened:

- International organisations should consider using more permanent country delegation staffs in major relief operations or deploy surge staff with previous knowledge and relationships in the country. Alternatively, they could second international staff to national government agencies or units, preferably prior to a disaster. This helps to augment national capacity and trust between international and national actors.
- Simulations and other similar exercises are another avenue for strengthening trust between different actors, as individuals gain a better understanding on how to work together. However, simulations tend to be insufficiently inclusive, missing important opportunities to strengthen mutual understanding.
- Common needs assessment was also suggested as a practical way in which trust can be strengthened: often, disagreements over the number of people in need of assistance can be a source of tension. Conversely, a joint needs analysis can also contribute to strengthening trust and could also be useful for local governments who often need support in this area.
- Building personal and institutional trust takes time and requires continuous interaction. For example, the long-term presence of actors in-country such as the Red Cross/Crescent National Societies enables to build trust over time. Building trust with affected communities is particularly important, and thus the proximity of humanitarian actors to those communities was noted as very important.

“Communication and information sharing is critical”

The groups identified the lack of mutual understanding as a key driver of mistrust. Shared understanding of respective mandates, roles, limitations and strengths is

paramount for trustworthy cooperation. Communication and information sharing is therefore critical, and should be prioritised at local and national levels – not just with headquarters and donors. In particular, international actors should communicate clearly with local people about their intentions and modus operandi, with a view to dispel negative perceptions such as the fact that some actors may have hidden agendas. The lack of proper communication platforms involving all stakeholders at national and sub-national levels was highlighted as an issue.

It was pointed out that humanitarian actors, while working within the government structure whenever possible, should place focus on accountability to affected populations: this is a key element of trust. In order to be accountable, the first step is for organisations to clearly explain to the people why and how they have been selected; explain that there are certain targeting criteria to reach the most vulnerable, and then allow them to provide feedback through a clear mechanism. Evidence has shown that trust can be built more easily when affected people are involved in the response process.

“The lack of regulation of the humanitarian sector is problematic”

In the first weeks of a natural disaster, international action is often vital to provide the necessary speed and volume in the face of overwhelmed national and local capacity. However, the overall lack of regulation in the humanitarian aid “industry”, compared to the development sector, was noted as a problem for national governments: when a disaster strikes, unsolicited assistance and influxes of volunteers could at times pose as hindrance to an effective response and overburden already stretched coordination mechanisms. There is a need to strengthen the accountability of humanitarian agencies, which is currently overwhelmingly geared towards donors, and insufficiently towards governments and affected people. This also creates multiple reporting and review processes to meet donor accountability, which places strains on national capacities. Ultimately, in cases of natural disasters Governments must vet organizations allowed to work in their country. They cannot trust humanitarian actors if these actors don’t comply to what they have agreed to do or with basic humanitarian principles. There needs to be more discipline from international actors as well as access by international and regional actors to address unmet humanitarian needs.

Different views were expressed by the groups in terms of what the solutions may look like. Participants highlighted some successful experiences in terms of fast-tracking entry of people and goods linked to pre-assessment and registration of humanitarian actors with MoUs. Similarly, experiences with one-stop-shops have positively contributed to the quality of disaster responses. The usefulness of a pre-registration mechanism of some sort was highlighted, which would have the dual benefit of strengthening the predictability and quality of international disaster assistance, while guaranteeing simplified processes for international actors. While some thought that “umbrella agencies” such as OCHA, the IFRC or NGO networks could play a gate keeper role, it wasn’t clear how this would work in practice. An easier avenue that was also discussed is for humanitarian actors to have bilateral agreements with governments. Finally, there was a strong call for governments to further institutionalize rules and laws which guide and facilitate international disaster responses, as suggested by the IDRL guidelines which were adopted by the state parties to the Geneva Conventions in 2007.

5.2 Making cooperation more effective

“There needs to be more contextualized approaches”

One of the key challenges which hampers cooperation between national and international actors is the tendency of the humanitarian sector to apply a “one-size-fits-all” approach, regardless of the context. The groups identified the need to calibrate international disaster responses on the basis of the different capacities of governments and types of disasters. There should be differentiated models of cooperation depending on the type of crisis, its scale, the nature of people’s vulnerabilities, and the capacities and willingness of the government in leading the response. Such models should include the contextualization of humanitarian standards which also tend to be applied universally, regardless the country context. There was a strong call in particular for looking at middle-income countries in a different paradigm, where the government has to be in the driver seat. Recent changes in the humanitarian architecture such as the cluster system and the transformative agenda have not led to more contextualized humanitarian assistance, as highlighted notably in the conference background study.

“More efforts are needed in emergency preparedness”

The groups all agreed that more efforts are needed in emergency preparedness: while this is a self-evident, it remains insufficiently done in practice. In addition to the obvious benefits for the quality and effectiveness of responses, emergency preparedness activities can strengthen mutual understanding and trust amongst national and international actors and can also contribute to greater predictability in disaster responses.

An important step is for national governments to increase their awareness of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities in order to preposition resources and, if necessary, be able to quickly articulate requirements for external support to international partners. One of the challenges in preparedness cooperation is how to include agencies and people who have no long-term presence in the country prior to disasters. In this regard, international actors not present in the country also need to be brought into emergency preparedness processes, such as joint planning and simulation, or be engaged through DRR platforms when applicable.

The group identified a number of possible options for strengthening emergency preparedness of all actors:

- A number of practical preparedness activities could be done more systematically, and in a more inclusive manner: worst case scenario contingency planning, table top and simulation exercises as noted above. involving the different international partners, with the aim of building relationships and fostering interoperability outside times of disaster.
- Appropriate coordination mechanism between the national government and international actors should be agreed upon, and tested as part of the preparedness activities. This may include the institutionalization of international coordination mechanisms in existing government structures.
- International Organizations should be aware of the national Disaster Risk Management system in the national government so that it can work within the system,

and adhere to prevailing legislation or policies. At the very least, staff should be provided with a formal briefing package on country coordination context which should be developed as part of national preparedness.

- Similarly, national governments should be better informed on the international humanitarian system so that they know all the tools and mechanisms that are available. Products such as the OCHA Guide for Disaster Managers in Asia and the Pacific can be used as a reference.
- Platforms for joint decisions and for strengthening mutual understanding between national and international actors could be established at national level.
- There was also a suggestion to revisit the triggers for international responses, particularly based on lessons from the activation of the “level 3 emergency” following typhoon Haiyan, so that a good balance be found between the activation of an international response and the national capacity.

“The role of other actors should no longer be ignored by the humanitarian community”

The groups recognised the growing importance of other actors, such as regional institutions, the military and the private sector, which need to be embraced by the international humanitarian community as they are increasingly part of the response. The role of regional institutions in particular was highlighted as being increasingly important. For example, ASEAN played a critical role in the response to cyclone Nargis, as a bridge between the international humanitarian system and a government. In this “win-win” experience, the response benefited from the established tools and capacity of the international system, while ASEAN had the necessary leverage with the national government. Regional institutions can play multiple roles : they can provide a platform bringing together national governments where lessons and experiences can be shared; they can support logistics coordination when a request for assistance is activated or an offer of assistance is accepted; and they can engage with a wide range of actors such as civil society organisations or sometimes the military or private sector.

Similarly, the military can play a significant role in some natural disaster responses, particularly in sudden-onset disasters. The fact that the military have strong expertise in planning, training and conducting exercises contrasts with the very limited resources available and time dedicated to these activities by humanitarian actors. It may be worth drawing on some of this expertise, within the parameters set by the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (the Oslo Guidelines). In many countries however, the very people affected by the disaster may feel unsafe or threatened by increased military presence. This should be taken into consideration when mobilizing the military for humanitarian assistance.

It was also noted that the private sector plays a growing role in preparedness and response efforts, particularly around the maintenance of critical services and the supply chains for key relief items. Engagement with the private sector remains too ad hoc and requires a more sustained commitment, with the establishment of common platforms for dialogue. The diversity of the private sector was also noted, with different degrees of capacity and motivations.

5.3 International humanitarian financing and the affected state

“There is a need for greater transparency”

While affected governments are appreciative of the financial and in-kind donations received in the aftermath of major disasters, greater transparency is needed around international humanitarian financing in terms of who gives the money and to whom. Often, the affected population holds their government accountable for the assistance they receive, yet governments may have limited information on international financial flows, let alone any influence on decisions regarding where funding goes as most funds are not channeled through established national mechanisms. The groups therefore identified a need for humanitarian funding streams to a particular disaster response to be more clearly presented, particularly to the media and the affected population. This would help promote greater transparency by providing the affected communities with information on the assistance being provided and would as a result reduce the risks of abuse and tensions. This same transparency is needed by states and local authorities as well.

Some good practices and lessons were shared. It was noted that for the Haiyan response, the Foreign Aid Transparency Hub (FAiTH) was established by the Government of the Philippines to track incoming contributions. Yet, a limitation is the fact that international humanitarian financing is not systematically reflected, as there is no requirement on international donors to report through FAiTH or any other similar mechanism.

Lastly, it was suggested to utilize existing reporting mechanisms such as the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) to support national tracking systems. There is a need to increase awareness of these mechanisms. While international donors tend to report to FTS, private donors often do not use the service. It was also recognized that voluntary reporting has limitations in fully capturing the impact and implementation of donations at the field level. It was noted that while international organizations are reporting, these may not be in line with the format of national governments. There is a need to facilitate mutually agreed accountability mechanisms and ensure inter-operability between existing systems and for governments to identify priority information that is required.

“More direct financing to national actors needed”

International agencies should ensure that national capacity for disaster response is strengthened to ensure sustainable response to future disasters. However, the majority of humanitarian funding from OECD/DAC donors is channelled through international actors, out of concerns of potential risks related to a direct support to national actors, in particular national governments. This may include concerns over the respect for humanitarian principles, fears of possible misuse of funding, or perceived lack of capacity of the government. This practice generates significant transaction costs and can result in some unnecessary delays. However, it is important to note that “non-traditional donors” often operate outside the multilateral system, supporting governments bilaterally.

It was suggested that donors, particularly OECD/DAC donors, should consider more direct support to affected states and other national actors when appropriate, as there

are trustworthy national actors which have accountability systems in place. At the same time, international actors, should display stronger commitment to supporting national actors. It was suggested that middle income countries have a key role to play in pushing this agenda forward, as donors and UN agencies have thus far failed to address this important issue.

The group discussed some of the possible options for more direct support to the national actors:

- Given the reluctance to support affected governments more directly in some contexts, it was suggested that regional organisations could play an active role in setting up regional pooled funds, which would provide some guarantees in terms of risks and accountability. Regional organizations are in a strong position, as they have privileged relationships with national disaster management offices and could also engage donors and the UN system to encourage them to disburse funding through local actors.
- In middle-income countries, the recovery phase could be faster and emergency relief should not be drawn out in these contexts. It was suggested that humanitarian financing should be channeled directly through credible partners closest to the beneficiaries to avoid additional transaction costs. This would imply a mechanism such as prequalification, for the identification of such partners. The capacity of the private sector and partnership between private donors and communities should be strengthened. Tailored humanitarian financing approaches with middle-income countries may be required.
- National government agency systems are not adequately linked. Affected states (across national agencies) should develop and present a coherent and holistic disaster response plan to international donors while at the same time ensuring that national resources are adequately committed to the plan. This may provide stronger incentives to donors for supporting a nationally-led plan.

Ultimately, the groups argued that there is a need for a paradigm shift in approach with a view that investment in preparedness will ultimately translate to reduction in emergency response costs. It was also suggested to flag the gap in the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 agenda ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit.

6. Conclusion

Based on the plenary session and the working group discussions, the following issues were highlighted as being critical to address:

- **A lack of trust between national authorities and international humanitarian actors** has been a major challenge in some response operations. Negative perceptions and a lack of transparency were highlighted as important drivers for this problem.
- The current **“one-size-fits-all” approach to international humanitarian responses** was identified as problematic, as it does not sufficiently take into account the specific nature and context of a crisis and the capacity of national actors, including national and local government.
- **Emergency preparedness** remains insufficiently supported and ad hoc. Roles and responsibilities between national coordination structures and international actors are rarely defined prior to disasters and should be part of preparedness and risk reduction activities.
- The **overall lack of regulation of humanitarian action** was raised as an important concern. This is the primary role of national governments, yet they often lack the capacity to regulate international assistance.
- **Humanitarian financing** from OECD/DAC donors is overwhelmingly channelled via international humanitarian actors, with very little direct support to national governments and local civil society, even though they are expected to play a primary role in disaster response.
- The **“humanitarian – development divide”** was noted as impacting on affected governments as well as within the international community. The gap of clear responsibility for funding disaster preparedness was noted as a casualty of this.
- **The growing role of regional institutions** is a positive trend, but more clarity is needed about how their emerging role can efficiently interact with those of global and national actors to add value to existing arrangements.
- The **private sector is a key stakeholder** in disaster preparedness and response, but it is not fully engaged in most national or international coordination arrangements.
- **Greater cross-fertilisation** between the post-2015 development agenda, the post Hyogo framework for action process, and the World Humanitarian Summit is required. The recommendations from the DRD global conference will make a particular contribution to these processes, particularly the World Humanitarian Summit.

7. Recommendations

National, regional and international stakeholders should focus on preparedness and build relationships prior to a disaster. Local and national capacities should always be the first resort for responding to a disaster; regional and international efforts should complement their efforts, carefully avoiding the potential to undermine or displace them.

The following recommendations are offered to achieve this:

1. International responders and donors can and should do more to support national capacities to respond to disasters by: (a) respecting the central role of the national government in organizing the response; (b) maintaining the apolitical character of humanitarian aid, consistent with humanitarian principles; and (c) ensuring international responses are in line with national disaster response plans.
2. National governments are encouraged to include in their national disaster preparedness rules, plans and procedures: (a) procedures for the solicitation, management and facilitation of international assistance, drawing on guidance such as the IDRL Guidelines and past successes, such as the “one-stop-shop” approach¹ and (b) a comprehensive assessment of national vulnerabilities and domestic capacities in order to be in a position to determine and articulate their likely needs for international support.
3. International responders should support the development of national disaster preparedness plans with a mapping of key external actors and assets likely to be available in disaster situations. In addition, agencies such as OCHA, NGO networks and the IFRC may usefully provide advice to national governments on the roles of various agencies.
4. Greater understanding is needed of the different tools and capacities available at national, regional and international levels, and on how they may be made “interoperable” in situations of disasters. This may include considerations for embedding international surge capacity within interested domestic institutions.
5. International disaster responses and coordination systems must be contextualized and tailored to the domestic system and context of each affected government. As a means to achieve this, consideration should be given to developing a typology of disasters and domestic capacities in order to develop more context-sensitive approaches for international disaster responses.
6. National and international actors should put greater emphasis on multi-stakeholder simulations, training exercises, and more inclusive coordination structures as concrete ways to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation.
7. National governments should work with the private sector to encourage and institutionalise its engagement in disaster preparedness and response. Regional and international actors should support national governments in this respect, including through gathering and sharing information on good practice in public-

¹ *One-Stop-Shop approach is meant to expedite custom clearance, as described in the “Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance”, IFRC, OCHA and IPU, March 2013 (using the term “single window international facilitation teams”).*

private partnerships and in developing arrangements such as regional compacts with private sector actors.

8. Donor signatories to the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles should ensure that recommendation n°8 which calls for the strengthening of the capacity of affected countries and local communities is implemented².
9. More transparency on international humanitarian expenditure is needed by national governments and the public. OCHA's Financial Tracking Service and the International Aid Transparency Initiative are possible avenues for increasing transparency by all parties.
10. Domestic and international actors, including new and emerging funders such as the private sector, should work with national governments and civil society to develop financing tools and mechanisms which will provide resources directly to national responders

² GHD Recommendation 8:
"Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners".

Annex I: Conference agenda

| DAY 1 | |
|-------------|---|
| 09:00-09:15 | <p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Keynote by the Government of the Philippines, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Secretary Dinky Soliman</p> <p>Introduction by the Dialogue Conveners and Facilitator</p> |
| 09:15-10:30 | <p>High-level panel discussion and questions from floor</p> <p>Chair: H.E. Ivo Sieber, Ambassador of Switzerland in the Philippines Lesley Cordero, Under Secretary, Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery, Philippines Alicia Dela Rosa Bala, Deputy SG ASEAN Ambassador Fuad Maznaee, OIC Director of Humanitarian Affairs Tjokorda Samadhi, Deputy Minister/Head, President's Delivery Unit, Indonesia Dr. Gwendolyn Pang, Secretary General, the Philippines Red Cross Nan Buzard, Executive Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies Lota Sylwander, HC/RC a.i., UNICEF Country Representative in the Philippines</p> |
| 10:30-11:00 | Coffee break |
| 11:00-12:30 | <p>Presentation of DARA report and DRD learning review followed by table and plenary discussion</p> <p>Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop, Chief Executive, DARA David Fisher, Coordinator, Disaster Law Programme, IFRC</p> |
| 12:30-14:00 | Lunch |
| 14:00-15:30 | <p>Working groups – sharing key lessons</p> <p>Theme 1: Strengthening trust and relationships Theme 2: Making cooperation more effective Theme 3: International humanitarian financing and the affected state</p> |
| 15:30-16:00 | Coffee break |
| 16:00-17:30 | <p>Working groups - sharing key lessons</p> <p>Theme 1: Strengthening trust and relationships Theme 2: Making cooperation more effective Theme 3: International humanitarian financing and the affected state</p> |
| 17:30 | End of the day |
| 18:30 | Dinner |

| DAY 2 | |
|--------------------|--|
| 09:00-10:00 | Chairs of the working groups share key outcomes from day 1 |
| 10:00-10:30 | Coffee break |
| 10:30-12:30 | Working groups – identifying specific recommendations Theme 1: Strengthening trust and relationships Theme 2: Making cooperation more effective Theme 3: International humanitarian financing and the affected state |
| 12:30-14:00 | Lunch |
| 14:00-15:30 | Set of draft recommendations presented by chairs of working groups Small group discussion on the implications of recommendations |
| 15:30-16:00 | Coffee break |
| 16:00-16:30 | Plenary session to discuss the way forward |
| 16:30-17:00 | Closing remarks |

Annex II: List of participants

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ALNAP

Dr. Alice Obrecht, Research Fellow

ASEAN

Ms. Alicia Dela Rosa BALA, Deputy Secretary General

Ateneo University

Dr. Mary Jean CALEDA, Associate Dean for Research and Governance Practice

Australia

Mr. Bill Tweddell, Australia's Ambassador to the Philippines

Mr. Steve Darvill, Humanitarian Advisor, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Ms. Anne Orquiza, Australian Embassy in Manila

Australian Red Cross

Ms. Catherine Gearing, Country Coordinator - Philippines

British Red Cross

Mr. Samuel Carpenter, Humanitarian Policy Adviser

CFSI

Mr. Steven Muncy, Executive Director

Civil Society Disaster Platform

Ms. Zeynep Munevver Sanduvac, Independent DRR consultant

FAO

Mr. Alberto Aduna, Emergency Coordination Officer

Mr. Jose Luis FERNANDEZ, FAO Representative in the Philippines

Guatemala

Mr. Alex Waldemar CAL CAL, Finance Director, CONRED
(Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres)

Haiti

Mr. Abel NAZAIRE, Deputy Chief of staff, Prime Minister's Office

HERE-Geneva

Mr. Ed Schenkenberg, Executive Director

ICVA

Ms. Nan Buzard, Executive Director

Dr. James Munn, Regional Representative for Asia

IFRC

Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Director, Asia Pacific

Mr. Marcel Fortier, Head of delegation

Mr. David Fisher, Coordinator, Disaster Law Programme

ILO

Mr. Lawrence Jeff-Johnson, Director

Indonesia Red Cross

Mr Budi Atmadi ADIPUTRO, Secretary General

Indonesia

Dr. Tjokorda SAMADHI, Deputy Minister/Head of President's Delivery Unit

Iran

H.E. Esmaeil Najjar, Deputy Minister of Interior and Head of National Disaster Management Organization (NDMO)

Mr. Mombeini Ashkhan, Interpreter

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Mr. TAKUYA AKIYAMA, Second Secretary, Embassy of Japan

Jamaica

Ms. Karema Aisha Aikens-Mitchell, Senior Director (Actg), Mitigation, Planning & Research, Office of Disaster Preparedness & Emergency Management

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Mr. KOJI OTANI, Second Secretary, Embassy of Japan

Jindai School of International Affairs

Dr. Urvashi ANEJA, Associate Professor

Kenya Red Cross

Mr. Mahdi Mohamed ADAN, Head of Disaster Management - Operations Adviser

KCOC

Ms. Young Sun NOH, Manager

Lydia Poole Consulting Ltd.

Ms. Lydia Poole, Director

Madagascar

Mr. Charles Désiré Alexandre RAMBOLARSON, Deputy Chief, Bureau National de Gestion des Risques et des Catastrophes (BNGRC)

Mercy Malaysia

Mr. Faizal Perdaus, President

Myanmar

Ms. Khine Mon Mon Ei, Assistant Director, Relief and Resettlement Department, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

Nansen Initiative

Ms. Chirine El-Labbane, Communication Officer
Mr. Abdul Saboor Atrafi, Events & Communications Officer
Mr. Atle Solberg, Head
Ms. Kara Siahaan, Adviser to Southeast Asia

New Zealand

Ms. Hannah Walton-France, Aid programme manager, New Zealand Embassy in Manila

Nigeria

Mr. Aliyu Baffale SAMBO, Deputy Director, Disaster Risk Reduction, NEMA

OCHA

Mr. Oliver LACEY-HALL, Head, OCHA Regional Office for Asia-Pacific
Mr. David Carden, Head, OCHA Philippines
Mr. Joseph Tabago, Humanitarian Affairs Officer
Ms. Agnes Palacio, National Disaster Response Adviser
Mr. Mel Schmidt, Civil Military Coordination Officer
Ms. Fragkiska Megaloudi, Humanitarian Affairs Officer

OIC

Amb. Fuad MAZNAEE, Director of Humanitarian Affairs

OXFAM

Ms. Orla Murphy, Regional Humanitarian Manager

PDRF

Mr. Rene Jose MEILY, President

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Ms. Corazon JULIANO-SOLIMAN, Secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development
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Mr. Jesus R.S. DOMINGO, Assistant Secretary, Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations, Department of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Teodulo R. ROMO Jr., Assistant Secretary, Operations and Programs Group, DSWD
Ms. Thelsa P. BIOLENA, Director IV, Disaster Risk Reduction and Response Operations Office, DSWD
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Mr. Rene Jose MEILY, President, Philippine Disaster Recovery Foundation
LtGen Roy DEVERATURDA, General Officer (Retired)
Ms. Lorena Joy BANAGODOS, Director, Office of the United Nations and International Organizations, Department of Foreign Affairs

Dr. Joel BUENAVENTURA, Chief Program Health Officer, Department of Health

Mr. Ariz Severino Convalecer, Department of Foreign Affairs
Ms. Sharon Johnnette M. AGDUMA, Philippine Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations, Geneva, Switzerland

MGen Aurelio Baladad, Commander, Eastern Mindanao Command, AFP

Philippines Red Cross

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Ms. Gwendolyn Pang, Secretary General
Mr. Roderick Salve

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Mr. Gene Alfred Morales, Director, PWC Philippines

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Mr. Amaraweera MAHINDA, Minister, Ministry of Disaster Management

Switzerland

Amb. Ivo SIEBER, Switzerland's Ambassador to the Philippines
Mr. Raoul IMBACH, Deputy head of the mission

Tanzania

Mr. Harrison Christopher CHINYUKA, Director (Actg), Disaster Management Department, Prime Minister's Office

Timor-Leste

Mr. Nominando Soares MARTINS, Secretary State for the Environment

United Kingdom

Ms. Suzette Tongson, Executive Assistant to HM Ambassador and Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy in Manila

UN-Habitat

Mr. Warren Ubongen, DRR-Shelter Specialist

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Ms. Lotta Sylwander, UNICEF Representative in the Philippines

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