



A NETWORKED RESPONSE?

What can we learn from humanitarian networks in Asia?
New research in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Philippines shares some vital lessons on how national humanitarian actors can approach collaboration and create meaningful networks.

A discussion document presented by:



DISCUSS

What can we learn from humanitarian networks in Asia?

This discussion starter is based on the recent ALNAP study *A Networked Response? Exploring National Humanitarian Networks in Asia* (July 2013) and draws out the main ideas in it. In many emergencies, organisations based in the affected area play a vital role: as first responders and in accessing populations beyond the reach of international actors (whether due to logistical or security constraints), estimates from 2009 suggesting that as little as 1.9 per cent of government funds to NGOs flow to organizations headquartered in affected countries (GHA 2011).

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A Networked response? explains how national actors are currently engaged in networks. The research seeks to document the current nature of networking at the national level, to capture instances of achievements, attempting to draw conclusions about the factors influencing the success of national level networks. It also explores how these national level networks can best link with humanitarian coordination structures and other networks at the regional and international level.

In this research, we define a network as:

1. Ongoing, voluntary, and dynamic relationships;
2. Between autonomous organizations;
3. With a recognizable membership;
4. With the explicit purpose of improving humanitarian performance or reducing the impact of disasters and conflict.

So it doesn't look at:

1. Informal networks of colleagues and peers
2. Professional individual networks
3. Social media networks
4. Intra-organisational networks
5. Networks between Church, Islamic or other religious groups

What do networks do?



Community building
Creating and sustaining relationships of trust



Convening
Bringing together and building social capital among diverse groups of actors



Knowledge management
Administering the exchange of knowledge and relevant information, ensuring coordination and shared learning



Amplification & advocacy
Extending the reach and influence of individual members, and engaging with others outside the network to bring about change



Resource mobilisation
Accessing and channel resources (both financial and technical), to increase the capacity and effectiveness of members



Implementation
Conducting operations, coordinating the delivery of relief services, and directly implementing humanitarian programmes or projects

Eight success factors for national humanitarian networks

Aims

Successful networks demonstrate clear aims and goals, creating cohesion and mobilising action among network members.

Structure

Organisational forms and structures should enable a network to perform its given functions.

Support based networks, with a relatively informal structure and secretariat function appear suited to capturing and sharing knowledge between members, larger, looser networks are more suited to external advocacy function, in some cases where the secretariat has considerable agency.

Governance

For networks to function sustainably, they must develop and maintain clear, transparent governance structures, avoiding competition and duplication.

Success factors here include the formal role played by networks in brokering these relationships, but also the more tacit role they have played in increasing the mutual accountability of their members and their credibility to external actors (who can struggle to judge the capacities of national organisations, particularly during response).

Membership

A network's membership should be of a size and composition that creates cohesion and supports its functions.

Funding

To succeed, national humanitarian networks and their supporters must identify sustainable funding models that protect network independence.

In Bangladesh, NIRAPAD has been developing an innovative network structure that allows it to access to funding and resources through the provision of consultancy services to international actors, using these resources to support national members.

Principles

National humanitarian networks can benefit from adhering to and promoting humanitarian principles and standards.

Leadership

Networks need strong leadership to succeed, but it must be based on consensus and humility.

Committed, passionate individuals are central to the success of networks, but more collective, distributed leadership models are also important for maintaining engagement and ensuring network sustainability.

Links

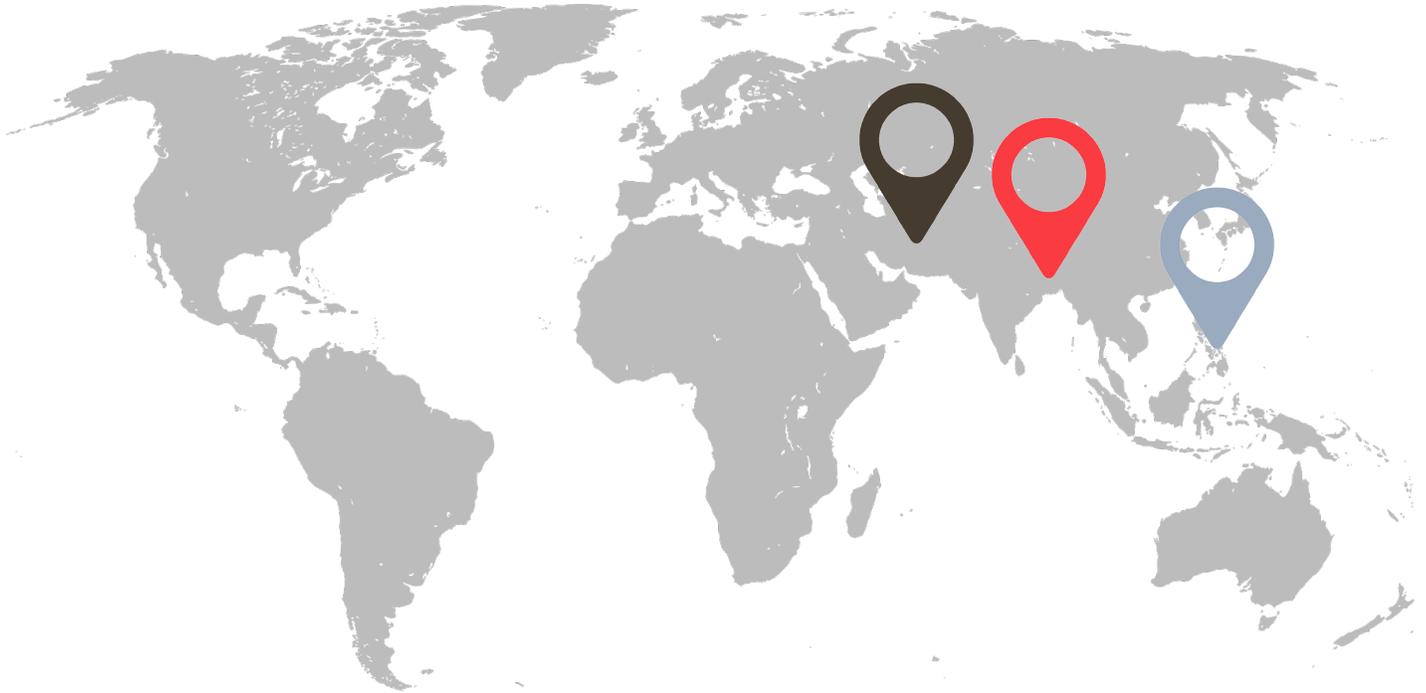
National humanitarian networks can benefit from fostering external links, both nationally and internationally.

There is however a danger of creating parallel structures, and links should be built on the basis of an understanding of these structures relative merits, with awareness raising and information sharing an important first step. The role of gatekeepers may play an important role here, as they leverage existing links and relationships for the benefit of the network.

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ACTIVE LEARNING
NETWORK FOR
ACCOUNTABILITY AND
PERFORMANCE IN
HUMANITARIAN
ACTION



What networks were involved in the research?

New research in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Philippines shares some vital lessons on how national humanitarian actors can approach collaboration and create meaningful networks.

Afghanistan

Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)
Southern and Western Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC)
Afghan NGO Coordination Bureau (ANCB)
Coordination of Afghan Relief Network (CoAR)
Afghan Women's Network (AWN)
Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSFo)

Bangladesh

Network for Information Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster (NIRAPAD)
Disaster Forum
Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC)

The Philippines

Building Disaster Resilient Communities Learning Circle (BDRC-LC)
Citizens Disaster Response Network (CDRN)
Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR)
DRR Network Philippines (DRRNet Philippines)
The Humanitarian Relief Consortium (HRC)
Mindanao Emergency Response Network (MERN)

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The full study that this paper is based on, as well as the three in-depth case studies, are available at:
www.alnap.org/ourwork/networks.aspx
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