

What's next?

The project is working to enhance the effective engagement of NGOs in humanitarian reform. This includes:

- Supporting more effective national and international NGO engagement with clusters
- Improving NGO access to pooled funds including direct access for national NGOs
- Enabling better involvement of, and accountability to, affected populations, particularly in the work of the clusters
- Promoting closer collaboration on sharing needs assessment frameworks, vital for improving the appropriateness of humanitarian aid
- Advocacy for better humanitarian leadership including monitoring of performance
- Global level advocacy to instigate broader improvements in the various elements of the reform process
- Facilitating workshops for NGOs at the country level on humanitarian reform and related issues
- Documenting and sharing good practice with key humanitarian stakeholders



Ethiopia – camels at a well in dried up river bed in Shinile zone

How can NGOs get involved?

NGOs from outside of the consortium, especially national NGOs, as well as other humanitarian actors, are strongly encouraged to contact the Humanitarian Reform Officers (HROs) or other project members, to learn how they can engage with the project.



Kavere (left) and Kanyere trying to cook in the rain at Goma DRC Kibati camp for displaced people

The HROs are contactable as follows:

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Cover photo by Katie Holt/Shoot The Earth/ActionAid – November 2008
Woman and her family return home after fleeing fighting in Eastern Congo

The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project

A chance to influence the humanitarian system



actionaid

CAFOD
just one world

Save the Children



How did the project begin?

The humanitarian reform process, launched in 2005 by the UN following the Humanitarian Response Review, aimed to improve the timeliness and predictability of the international response to humanitarian emergencies in order to better meet the basic needs of affected populations.

To date, the reforms have included:

- Introduction of a system of cluster leads (cluster approach) to provide predictable leadership, coordination, accountability and act as the provider of last resort in the various response sectors.
- Establishment in 2006 of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to increase funding available to UN agencies and the IOM, and to complement more widespread use of country level pooled funds: the Emergency Response Funds (ERF) and Humanitarian Response Funds (HRF), which had started to be used in the mid 1990s.
- Strengthening the role of Humanitarian Coordinators in humanitarian response to better support field coordination.
- The subsequent endorsement of the *Principles of Partnership* by the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007 to improve the ways humanitarian actors work together complemented the initial elements of the reform.

Despite progress being made, many NGOs, particularly national and local NGOs, remain marginalised from the reforms, unable to adequately engage, with insufficient influence in UN-led humanitarian response policies and practices and unable to access sufficient funds in a timely manner from pooled funds. NGOs, which typically deliver the majority of humanitarian aid, need a powerful voice in these mechanisms and this project, which started at the end of 2008 and runs for 3 years, presents an opportunity for them to influence the humanitarian reform process.

So what exactly is the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project?

The *NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project* aims to strengthen the effective engagement of local, national and international humanitarian NGOs in reformed humanitarian financing and coordination mechanisms at global and country levels. By supporting NGOs to better understand the reforms and highlighting where barriers exist to successful implementation of the reforms on the ground, the project will help improve international policies related to humanitarian reform and, improve the delivery of humanitarian aid and accountability to crisis-affected people.

The Project has a Project Manager, based in London, and Humanitarian Reform Officers (HROs) working in the four project focus countries: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. The HROs engage with the humanitarian reform process in-country and report on issues faced by NGOs. The project also generates field-based evidence and lessons learnt to increase knowledge of good practice for effective engagement of NGOs in humanitarian response.



Afghanistan

Project findings and key issues

- Inconsistent coordination: lack of clarity on the roles of cluster co-leads or co-chairs and a need for more effective NGO participation in the clusters
- Weak partnership: barriers which limit the involvement of NGOs, particularly national NGOs, in reform processes need to be more consistently addressed
- Leadership gaps: Humanitarian Coordinators and cluster leads often have insufficient humanitarian experience and training
- Accountability to crisis-affected communities: clusters need to devote more attention to ensuring accountability to affected populations
- Humanitarian financing: limited local and national NGO access to country-based humanitarian pooled funds and slowness of disbursement to NGOs of ERF and HRF funding, and lack of direct access to the CERF or transparency of allocations

Who is involved?

Six NGOs - ActionAid, CAFOD, CARE International UK, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, and Save the Children UK - together with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), a global NGO network, make up the project consortium. In some of the project focus countries other international NGOs participate in the project consortium on a non-contractual basis. The project is funded by DfID and runs until October 2011.

Work so far

In July 2009 the project published *Mapping Studies* assessing the current state of global humanitarian reform efforts in five countries: Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Sudan. A subsequent Synthesis Report was produced in October 2009: *Review of the engagement of NGOs with the humanitarian reform process*.