



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS: A Review of NGO Coordination in the Field

Case Study: Haiti 2010

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Background Note

During the 1990s ICVA supported NGO coordination in the field in various ways and published two resource books: “Meeting needs: NGO Coordination in Practice” and “NGO Coordination at Field Level: A Handbook”. Commissioned by ICVA in 2010, this review builds on that earlier work, comprising three parts: an Overview Report introducing some key issues in NGO coordination; a series of Case Studies providing insight into how NGOs respond to those issues in the field; and a Lessons Learned bringing together critical points identified in the Case Studies.

These Case Studies include responses to both natural disasters and complex political emergencies from a range of countries around the world. The studies are specifically concerned with formal coordination bodies convened by international NGOs, although some of them include or support national NGOs. While every effort has been made to present an accurate picture of each response, gaps in the record and errors in recollection are inevitable. However any errors in the studies are the responsibility of the consultants and ICVA, and corrections and updates are welcome.

Regardless of what is real or perceived, people act according to their perceptions and so perceptions are important (adapted from CDA 2010a). This is also true for NGO coordination in Haiti. The Haiti case study is an example of what happens when communication is lacking or ineffective - resulting in a perceived lack of transparency. The author apologises for any misunderstanding or misrepresentation, and uses references/quotes extensively to increase the transparency of this descriptive exercise while needing to protect sources of information. It is also recognised that much has occurred since October 2010 when this case study "ends" and does not pretend to represent the situation on the ground today.

BACKGROUND

Since independence, Haiti has experienced decades of political turbulence and violence, during which the government was unable to - and some argue not supported to - provide for the Haitian people. The Haitian people have learned to look to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), rather than the government, to provide essential services (Farmer 2010, Rencoret et al 2010). Funneling aid through NGOs was not without its consequences and has, at minimum, failed to contribute to increased capacity and accountability among Haitian government institutions (Oxfam 2011, Kristoff et al 2010, Smith in CDA 2010b).

2009 was heralded as a year of turning fortunes. There was an increase in foreign investment, employment and other macro-economic indicators (Farmer 2010, Perito et al 2010). Haitians were optimistic - urging outsiders to support the Haitian government and civil society with appropriate assistance (CDA 2010a). In September, donors publicly acknowledged the need to invest directly in the Haitian government (Kristoff et al 2010).

International NGOs in Haiti

Interpretation of the role and impact of international NGOs in Haiti is mixed. US NGOs argue their "long-term presence in Haiti...experience with civil society, participatory approaches, urban programming, emergency response...and importantly, each other...not only served to fill vital social service gaps but also worked with or alongside local NGOs" (InterAction 2010). While some of their own (and others') evaluations observed that the international NGO 'way of working' had not resulted in greater collaboration with - nor local capacity of - local NGOs (Benton et al 2001, CARE 2005 and 2009, Farmer 2010). Coordination, a prerequisite for increased collaboration, was "rudimentary at best" with INGOs "willing to cooperate as long as there [was] no loss of freedom". Benton et al note that before the earthquake, the INGO community had not yet demonstrated its ability to be inclusive with "larger international NGOs' efforts to coordinate amongst themselves [proving] successful, while smaller, grassroots organisations were facing constraints in time, money or modes of communication to access and coordinate with other like-minded organisations."

Beginning in 2000, the U.S. administration sought, often quietly, to block bilateral and multilateral aid to Haiti, having an objection to the policies and views of the administration of Jean-Bertrand Aristide ...How much influence we had on other players is unclear...;our own aid, certainly, went directly to NGOs, and not to the government (Farmer 2010).

Organised civil society in Haiti

Since 1983 Haiti's poor have organized themselves into self-help groups and community associations. By 2010, according to CDA, this meant a "very diverse, often politicised, but increasingly effective civil society" (CDA 2010b). During the earthquake response, large pre-existing Haitian networks made poignant statements regarding the situation of Haitians and the methods of aid distribution. They implemented projects and partnered with INGOs and donors as well as coordinated among themselves (Bell 2010, Duplat 2010).

The pervasive presence of INGOs in Haiti, and the preference of donors to channel support to Haitians through these INGOs, gave Haitians fair reason to believe that internationals didn't trust them (Rencoret et al 2010;

Estimates of the number of NGOs in Haiti range from 3000 to 20,000 (Kristoff and Panerelli 2010, Shwartz 2010).¹ According to UN Special Envoy to Haiti Bill Clinton, Haiti has the second highest number of NGOs per capita in the world implying organised Haitian civil society is omnipresent.² Yet, in Haiti as elsewhere, when INGOs are asked why they don't work more with local partners, "*les excuses avancées sont nombreuses: pas de temps, pas d'acteurs locaux, pas de confiance.*"³ Worried about politics and funding, "...NGOs exhibited reluctance to cooperate [with local partners]" (Benton 2001).

Doubts about the appropriate role of NGOs in Haiti's development have been present for decades. The 12 January earthquake accentuated these concerns. Certainly INGOs, and to a lesser extent LNGOs, did not enter a neutral operating environment.

Pre-existing coordination structures

Prior to the earthquake, significant effort had been made to improve existing disaster coordination – investing in the *System National de Gestion des Risques et des Desastres* (SNGRD) - a permanent secretariat coordinating 26 governmental and non-governmental organisations and the *Direction Nationale de la Protection Civile* (DPC), in charge of national, regional and communal operations and coordination. In actuality, mayors - politically affiliated - had more control at commune level. There were reports of corruption and misuse of humanitarian aid by officials in previous disasters (Grunewald et al 2010).

At a strategic level within the SNGRD, the Haitian government set up the *Groupe d'Appui de la Coopération Internationale* (GACI) bringing together UN agencies, the MINUSTAH, donors and international NGOs. Its role was to coordinate international actors' preparedness activities and, during an emergency response, mobilise funds and organise technical cooperation. Within the GACI, the *Comite Permanent Inter-Organisation* (CPIO or local IASC), established in 2008, represented the humanitarian community and included the UN and 9 INGOs; the latter with 7 revolving seats. There was some sectoral coordination between the Ministry of Water and Sanitation (DINEPA) and NGOs through the *Plateforme des acteurs francais pour l'eau et l'assassinisment en Haiti*.⁴ There was also the *Cadre de Liaison inter ONG* (CLIO) established in 2005 and included the same 9 INGOs plus 14 others and 4

¹ "Indeed, the entire issue of how many NGOs are in Haiti highlights the confusion over what NGOs are really up to and the lack of accountability. Bill Clinton (2009), for example, cited the World Bank for a figure of 10,000 NGOs in Haiti. At about the same time, Jean-Max Bellerive, Haitian Minister of Planning, reported that that only 400 NGO's are registered with the government but estimated that there are as many as 3,000; CIIR (2004) claims there are from 10-20,000." Schwartz 2010.

² India is quoted as having the highest number of NGOs per capita.

³ URD (2010) "The excuses are numerous: no time, no local actors, no trust or lack of confidence".

⁴ This existing platform allowed for noticeably more effective emergency response in the water sector (URD 2010).

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local NGOs. However members noted that local NGO participation “*c'etait imperceptible*”; CLIO “had been trying to reach out but the strategy wasn't working” (CLIO member).

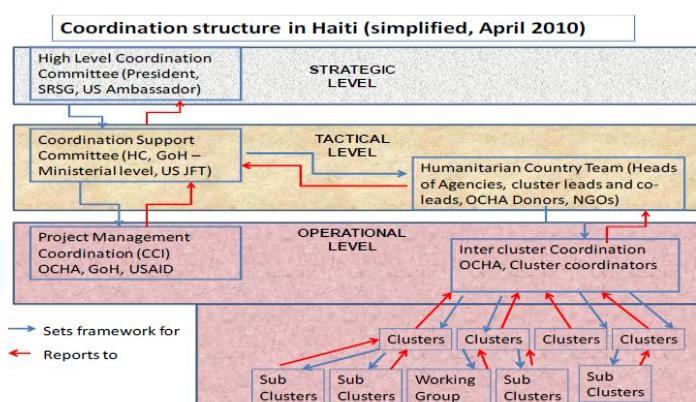
Coordination and planning between agencies and with the Haitian government was characterised by a lack of accountability: government struggled to get answers from donors and agencies about where money was being spent (Wah in ALNAP et al 2010, DAP 2011, Oxfam 2011). Various evaluations of humanitarian response noted the absence of key stakeholders such as national and local authorities and civil society in humanitarian coordination structures, specifically the cluster system (GPPI/URD 2010 and Grunewald et al 2010).

In this context, on 12 January, a 7.0 earthquake hit Port-au-Prince and surroundings - killing 220,000 people, injuring over 300,000, leaving 1.3 million homeless and 500,000 displaced (Grunewald et al 2010, IOM 2010).

Coordination structures after 12 January

The SNGRD and the DPC were themselves seriously affected by the earthquake. Though no Ministers were killed, many high-ranking civil servants and their families were badly affected. Civil servants were in a state of shock, offices destroyed, no or very little means of communication or transport, and often no electricity. The administration was confronted with considerable challenges to function (Grunewald et al 2010).

Within days the United Nations Disaster Assistance Coordination team (UNDAC) established a virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) on MINUSTAH Logs Base to coordinate 52 plus search and rescue teams. On 26 January MINUSTAH, OCHA, WFP, and the US military established the Joint Operations and Tasking Centre (JOTC), through which humanitarians could access the airport, influence flight prioritisation, request military assets for their activities, as well as military and police assistance - the latter through a “security escort centre” set up in MINUSTAH (ICVA 2010b). While to a certain extent effective, Logs Base was also “a trap” given difficulties to get in (and out) effectively isolating the international humanitarian community (Grunewald et al 2010).⁵



The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), simultaneously the Resident Coordinator (RC) and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG), could not “effectively discharge” these combined functions after the earthquake (IASC 2010a). It was more than a month before high-level support to the RC/HC/DSRSG arrived in Port-au-Prince (Grunewald et al 2010).

With the perception of a coordination deficit, the US government and military felt

⁵ Access to Logs Base by local NGOs and Government was limited while UN security restrictions limited movement of UN personnel out of Logs Base.

the need to supplement humanitarian leadership on the ground (IASC 2010a). The US played a leading role in establishing the Project Management Coordination Committee (PMCC) for humanitarian action (e.g. managing debris, clearing drainage canals and resettlement), which in turn was supervised by the Coordination Support Committee (CSC) (Figure 1 Grunewald et al 2010). International NGO influence in the PMCC/CSC was limited to representation by the HC/OCHA respectively.

While strategic vision or overall coherence of the humanitarian response was missing, clusters were quickly operational (IASC 2010a). However within days the clusters were submerged by the massive arrival of new humanitarian actors most of whom did not know Haiti well nor had French- or Creole-speaking personnel. The majority of cluster meetings were held in English and therefore not very or not at all accessible to the majority of Haitians (government and local NGOs) (Grunewald et al 2010).

Two weeks after the earthquake a letter was written by the HCT-INGOs⁶ - INGOs who had participated in the CPIO/IASC prior the earthquake - requesting to convene the HCT. While the HCT-INGOs were some of the largest INGOs⁷, they did not pretend to represent the larger INGO community. Weekly HCT-INGO meetings were quickly established to discuss issues and strategy for the subsequent HCT. These meetings were considered by other NGOs to be exclusive (INGO interview). Already (20 January) at IASC meetings in New York (NY), the UN observed "some differences among NGOs...[and] the growing tension between pre-existing national and international NGOs" (IASC 2010b). At a later NY-IASC teleconference, in response to a statement by the Chair that the "HCT would soon be up and running", Oxfam "hoped that coordination would involve smaller NGOs too" (IASC 2010c).

ESTABLISHING NGO COORDINATION

The number of INGOs arriving after 12 January skyrocketed; at least 400 NGOs and hundreds of others were registered by OCHA (IASC 2010a). Coordination was made complicated by the great number of particularly US-NGOs, often faith-based, with varied mandates and experiences (Grunewald et al 2010).

As was the norm for Haiti, the bulk of humanitarian assistance was channelled through INGOs. US-NGOs alone raised a collective USD1.2 billion, 90% of these resources for 15 organizations (InterAction 2010a). Six months after the earthquake, USD 1.8 billion had been promised to Haiti, with less than 2.9% to the government (Farmer 2010): "This time [the emergency] was different...for the first time NGOs had more money than the UN and even some donors"(INGO interview).⁸

Within days, USAID asked InterAction, a network of over 190 US NGOs (82 in Haiti), to set up an NGO coordination office. InterAction agreed with USAID that the office would be located as close as possible to OCHA's leadership and work closely with OCHA; its primary role would be to provide support to coordinate the major operational international NGOs; it would serve as a liaison with USAID and the U.S. military, but primarily between INGOs and OCHA; and it would close by the end of 2010.

⁶ Action Contre le Faim, ACTED, Care, Catholic Relief Services, Concern, Lutheran World Federation, Medecins du Monde, Oxfam, Save the Children.

⁷ And later it turns out managed nearly 50% of the humanitarian funds for Haiti (Chronical of Philanthropy 2010)

⁸ Donors in fact invited some of the larger INGOs to the daily donor meeting encouraging these INGOs act more like donors themselves and redistribute their significant funds to smaller INGOs and local NGOs (Donor interview).

InterAction proposed adding ICVA - a network of global NGOs many who were also present in Haiti - to co-manage the office and a full-time position be dedicated for local civil society outreach.

With confirmation of funding, the two networks rapidly sent two senior HQ staff as co-team leaders to Haiti, both however with limited experience of Haiti and limited operational experience in field-based coordination. By end of January, an InterAction co-team leader and NGO liaison officer were in-country. By early February, ICVA and the InterAction Logistics Officer completed the start-up team. The nature of the initiative – instigated by a donor and employing the HQs of NGO networks – was unprecedented in inter-network collaboration combined with the simultaneous deployment of HQ staff.⁹

According to interviews, InterAction and ICVA had (and have) different work-styles and priorities that could be in fact complementary (not unlike the range of approaches in emergency response). It was hoped that by combining “pragmatism” with “principles”, that InterAction/ICVA collaboration would result in a more cohesive and effective NGO emergency response. But this didn’t happen on the ground: differing priorities, the lack of effective communication and an agreed-upon work plan contributed to tension among the start-up team members.

The first two weeks of the NGO coordination start-up team's deployment was spent in consulting stakeholders in small groups; i.e. existing NGO coordination bodies including local NGO networks, donors, other NGO support services¹⁰ and preparing for a series of NGO general meetings. Local NGO networks expressed their interest to participate.¹¹ However participation of local NGOs was problematic as the team struggled with which local NGO network might “represent” the others. The team also facilitated meetings between NGOs and VIPs including the Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes, the new Deputy HC, and the only (self) organised meetings of INGOs - the HCT-INGOs. And discussed the INGO and LNGO role in the Rapid Needs Assessment in Haiti and Post-Disaster Needs Assessment. However, the latter discussions did not result in any significant contribution of LNGOs in either assessment; a common criticism by LNGOs (see Box 5).

It took two weeks to finalise a first draft TOR and circulate to in-country I/LNGOs. In fact, the two separate drafts - InterAction's in their proposal to OFDA and ICVA's based on a 2 February interagency consultation in Geneva - were quite similar (InterAction 2010). Differences were ironed out, a name was agreed upon - NGO Coordination Support Office (NCSO) – and TORs circulated on 16 February.

Three weeks after the team's arrival in country (February 20-22), three NGO meetings were organised; two in town and a third on Logs Base. The agenda included the concept of the NCSO, ideas on how to best support the work of NGOs (local and international) were solicited and a potential governance structure discussed. The various meetings were in Creole, French or English. However there was confusion within the NCSO team on the agenda for the different meetings making them less productive than hoped for. Meetings were perceived to be “chaotic” by some participating agencies. Meeting participants were also very mixed including both NGOs that had a high-awareness of humanitarian systems and where an NGO coordination office would “fit in”, and those that did not. Regardless, feedback was constructive - largely reinforcing the need for support to NGO coordination and joint

⁹ USAID/OFDA has previously supported InterAction to support coordination in Iraq (see Iraq Case Study).

¹⁰ HAP/Sphere, RedR and People in Aid

¹¹ PAPDA, POHDH, ICKL and others (for acronyms see Box 6); however they were not contacted for follow-up.

advocacy, facilitating the inclusion of local NGOs (and community-based organisations and other civil-society organisations), establishing links with the Joint Humanitarian Security Forum for NGOs (JHSF), all levels of government and other coordination structures being established, e.g. *Comite Intérimaire pour la Reconstruction du Haïti* (CIRH). It was also important to those participating in the general meetings that the NCSO be able to handover its work and activities after 6 months to any existing NGO platform that brought together local, national and international NGOs.¹²

The NCSO start-up team agreed that an international staff would manage the NCSO and that he/she would spend their time between Logs Base and an external site facilitating access for local NGOs. The NCSO team approached CLIO, the only existing international and national NGO network, to host the NCSO. However, CLIO's office had been destroyed, the President of CLIO injured and subsequently unavailable for the first 3 weeks and CLIO's own capacity was in question (Schwartz 2010, Mathurin 2008). The message that NCSO wanted to work and perhaps co-locate with CLIO was discussed at the first post-earthquake CLIO General Assembly on 23 February. CLIO later turned down the request to host the NCSO. In the absence of a local counterpart, ICVA insisted on co-habiting outside of Logs Base with the Quality & Accountability initiatives¹³ to support quality programming in line with negotiated the NCSO TOR.

In the case study interview, the CLIO President remarked that the NCSO was specific to the emergency and did not have a role beyond the crisis stage. He believed the NCSO was to cater to INGOs that required assistance with registration, security, and contact with the UN - not necessarily linking in with existing networks or local NGOs. And once the government's *Unité pour la Coopération avec Organisations Non-Gouvernementales* (UCAONG) was functioning again it was logical that the NCSO would close down.¹⁴

Simultaneously, there were numerous efforts to promote greater collaboration and coordination between international and national organisations initiated independently by local NGO networks or in collaboration with Haitian-American NGOs and INGOs, e.g. Oxfam, Church World Service, Action Aid, Jesuit Refugee Service, etc (Box 5). One such initiative included 39 local NGOs and civil society organisations who met in Port-au-Prince to develop a shared perception of Haiti's needs and a strategy to communicate with the international humanitarian system (Box 1). Another initiative

Box 1. Local NGO attempts to engage with the mainstream

On 23-24 February, 39 civil society organisations convened in Port-au-Prince expressing their desire that 'the vision of relief and recovery had to be seen from a Haitian perspective'. They set as objectives for the conference to:

- 1) agree on our needs, priorities, and perspectives in regards to the important sectors in the national life of the country,
- 2) translate these needs, priorities, and perspective in the language of the international community,
- 3) identify those who will bring these views to international meetings, where decisions will be made to respond to the disaster,
- 4) establish an evaluation mechanism to measure the results of international response throughout the land,
- 5) inform the national and international press regarding this initiative. At the same meeting, the international humanitarian system was explained, e.g. the HC, OCHA and clusters, and a strategy on how to engage decided (HRC 2010).

¹² Annex 4 Timeline and analysis of TOR Development

¹³ RedR, Bioforce, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International, Sphere, People in Aid and VOICE

¹⁴ The UCAONG is in the Ministry of Planning.

announced in January included 4 local NGOs and 2 LNGO networks who together established a coordination office in Canapé Vert. However the NCSO never managed to establish a working relationship with these complementary efforts.

Nearly two months after the earthquake, there was agreement among the start-up team on TORs, a structure and a job description for the proposed senior international staff. On 6 March, the ICVA co-team leader returned to Geneva for 2 weeks. However prior to ICVA's departure, InterAction Washington posted a job announcement for a NCSO Director and NGO Liaison without first consulting the in-country NCSO staff or NGO stakeholders. The positions proposed did not reflect the InterAction/ICVA in-country team's discussions. It was assumed that the misunderstanding would be resolved between Geneva and New York.

However, by mid March InterAction had recruited a Director and sent him to Haiti. ICVA had no role in the selection process but was informed of his appointment. As the description of the candidate sounded acceptable to ICVA, no problems were foreseen. By 23 March, when the ICVA co-team leader returned, the InterAction co-team leader had left, and the NCSO had two new staff, the NCSO Director who reported to Washington DC, and a new "officer manager" who had been hired in-country.

During the first meeting of the ICVA co-team leader and the new Director, he explained that "the situation had changed and the TORs were no longer relevant" (Director's interview). The Director felt that the priorities and activities described in the TOR were inappropriate. Instead he referred to USAID-InterAction's objectives of January (page 4) having identified four groups of stakeholders: the HCT-INGOs who were already meeting regularly, the broader INGO community, local NGOs and non-NGO stakeholders such as the UN. For the first group this involved the NCSO directly participating in pre-HCT and HCT meetings as a "catalyst" urging the take-up of issues, decision-making, and setting deadlines, e.g. defining an NGO "common position on coordination" vis-à-vis the government (signed by 11 INGOs). Unfortunately, the approach was perceived by many of the HCT-INGOs as "coercive" and by mid-June the HCT-INGOs were holding meetings without the NCSO Director (INGO interview).

For the second group, the Director focused on creating a more accurate mailing list: two months after the earthquake, OCHA was still struggling to create functioning list-serves. The Director invited the NGO community to NGO-only meetings prior to the OCHA-led Humanitarian Forum. Topics included issues relevant to NGOs, e.g. registration, customs, the deliberations of the CIRH, etc. These meetings, on Logs Base, had the benefit of increasing attendance at the OCHA-led Forum which was "rapidly becoming irrelevant", and was therefore "very appreciated by OCHA" (Director's interview). Participation ranged from 30 to 40 largely INGOs and 1-2 HCT-INGOs. Unfortunately, the meeting was simultaneous to the JHSF forcing NGOs with less staff to choose between the two.

Local NGOs were "inaccessible", not least because the Director "could not get the UN to hold a meeting in French" and he had "no national staff dedicated [to the job]". To meet the needs of the fourth stakeholder group (the UN) the NCSO intended to increase direct representation of NCSO staff in cluster meetings. However "too few staff" meant these activities were never implemented. The NCSO never established an off-Logs Base office nor committed to any substantive work with the Q&A initiatives. Instead the NCSO agreed to act as a "conciierge" - circulating announcements of trainings and other opportunities. Disagreements between the Director and ICVA delayed ICVA's decision to provide comparable direct support to the NCSO leaving InterAction's HQ responsible for management. By July,

some stakeholders felt the Director was operating according to his "own" or "InterAction's" agenda and was not accountable to stakeholders on the ground (INGO interviews and NCSO survey).

Without an in-country steering committee for the NCSO, there was no local supervision of NCSO activities. In the absence of any field-based mechanism to express any favour or discontent, INGOs made comments to their headquarters or affiliate networks, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and ICVA. Between April and June there were a series of discussions, letters and agreements between the chairpersons/presidents of the SCHR, ICVA and InterAction to develop a shared vision of NGO coordination and the role of the NCSO. This vision included the NCSO's role in facilitation, liaison, and support; need for greater transparency in [the NCSOs] communications with NGOs and with NGO consortia; a renewed focus on consultation with local/national NGOs on issues taken to the main coordination bodies, e.g. the HCT, CSC, CIRH; the need for a Steering Committee with representatives of local/national NGO coordination platforms and finally, the development of a representation model that was both democratic and transparent. ICVA/SCHR prioritised closer collaboration between the NCSO, Sphere, HAP, and other NGO-led Q&A initiatives and ensuring that the NCSO was more accessible to local NGOs (ICVA/SCHR 2010 and ICVA/SCHR/InterAction 2010). However, according to interviews, between April and June nothing changed on the ground.

Additional suggestions were made by both HQ/field-based stakeholders including the need for the balanced management of the NCSO, with ICVA taking a more pro-active role (the ICVA co-team leader had left for a second time on 2 April and was not to return), and a review of the Director's contract. However in June, InterAction extended the NCSO Director's contract to end of July when he was to be replaced. ICVA never filled the Deputy position in line with earlier discussions.¹⁵

Box 2. Ongoing criticism of NGO coordination by national and regional bodies

At the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Summit at the beginning of July, outgoing CARICOM Chair and Prime Minister of Dominica Roosevelt Skerritt criticised the NGOs in Haiti for lacking a "level of order" and "basically doing what they want": "We believe that the situation is untenable, and we should put an immediate stop to it. We must call on the international institutions and Government to desist from putting the resources into NGOs." The NCSO Director was quoted; "The claim that there exists a lack of coordination is a very mundane criticism, a sort of tiresome cliché that doesn't hold up to investigation" (IPS 2010).

In July, 5 months after the earthquake, an NGO meeting attended by 60 organisations, elected an 11 member Steering Committee (SC) for the NCSO.¹⁶ No local NGOs participated. Simultaneously the debate still raged regarding the role of INGOs in the emergency response and their degree of coordination (Box 2). InterAction continued to report on successful efforts to improve NGO coordination in Haiti (Box 3). In August, InterAction and USAID/OFDA decided to close the NCSO and the NCSO Director left Haiti.

In September and October, INGOs worked together to reconcile the previous efforts and to "start fresh". The 9 HCT-INGOs plus the additional 5 SC-INGOs (of the 11 elected to the NCSO-SC 6 were already on the HCT) fused into a core group of "the willing" whose responsibility was to develop TORs for a new

¹⁵ In August, ICVA sent a letter to InterAction clarifying their reasons for not continuing their support to the NCSO including the recruitment of a Deputy Director.

¹⁶ ACTED, Care, CLIO, CRS, ACT (Fin Church Aid), Habitat, Handicap Intl, Mennonite CC, Oxfam, Plan, and WV

NGO Forum and its Coordinator. Mirroring other NGO coordination efforts elsewhere, ECHO is funding Oxfam to host the Coordinator (and an NGO security advisor). Key functions of the Coordinator include inter-NGO coordination and communication, partnership, external relations and representation; the latter task emphasising the Coordinator's role in advocating and negotiating on behalf of the INGO community. The Coordinator proposes, convenes, and decides agendas and inputs on strategic materials. He/she also supports the INGO Representative to the CIRH as a “deputy”. While the Coordinator is expected to improve relationships with local civil society, knowledge of the country context is not essential. While it is essential that the Coordinator be excellent at relationship building, sensitive to cultural differences and self-aware of his/her own emotional and health conditions related to workload and capable of recognising when his/her relationships with others is creating conflict.¹⁷

As of October 2010, CLIO was active again with an information and resource centre: "Time will tell if INGOs find the two forums duplicative" (NGO interview).

Box 3. Statement to US Congress on NGO coordination

On 20 July, InterAction testified to US Congress on that the NCSO was set up with ICVA in the UN logistics base. They reported that in addition to day-to-day coordination and troubleshooting, the NCSO hosted weekly meetings to discuss registration, customs, human resources and other issues, facilitated NGO participation in UN coordination systems, and supported the participation of local Haitian organizations in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment and in the March 31st international donors' conference (InterAction 2010a).

GOVERNANCE/STRUCTURE/MEMBERSHIP

As already mentioned, the two *Terms of Reference* (TOR) drafted separately by ICVA and InterAction were combined and circulated by email to hundreds of NGOs both local and international two weeks after the arrival of the start-up team. Activities therein focused on relations between international NGOs, local NGOs, and the UN, facilitation of communications and information exchange, promotion of humanitarian principles, the Code of Conduct, Q&A, and coordination with military and civil protection forces and governments. The NCSO was to function in two locations: 1) the OCHA compound, to allow for ease of coordination with OCHA, UN agencies, and clusters, and 2) (as soon as conditions permitted) in town to ensure independence and ease of access for local and national NGOs. Oversight of the NCSO was to be through a steering committee of in-country representation of ICVA and InterAction members (8 members) with representation from local/national NGO coordination bodies. By the end of February, there was an agreement among the NCSO start-up team members on the NCSO TOR, structure and job description for the senior international staff. By mid-March, the NCSO Director was hired and the TORs were not referred to again and no office was ever established outside of Log Base. As of 2011, a new NGO Forum Coordinator will be based in Oxfam's office.

Four months after the earthquake, in May, InterAction drafted a TOR for the in-country *Steering Committee* (SC). The SC's function was to demonstrate 'good standing' in the NGO community (be in-line with Haitian law and practice good governance), actively contribute to NGO coordination, be objective and seek to represent views of the wider NGO community, be available for immediate contact

¹⁷ Terms of Reference (October 2010) NGO Coordinator, NGO Forum, Oxfam Job Announcement

by NGOs and other stakeholders as well as facilitate the establishment of an international NGO and Haitian civil society platform by end of 2010. Two months later, the SC was elected and functioned for one month before the NCSO closed down. Later a core group of HCT-INGOs and SC members agreed to "rethink" support to NGO coordination and established new TORs. No local NGOs have been represented in either the first NCSO-SC or the more recently established NGO Forum.

The original *structure* proposed to OFDA included 2 co-team leaders, an international NGO liaison and an international logistics officer, 2 national programme assistants and 3 full time administrative staff. The NCSO start-up team (the 4 internationals) agreed that after their departure, there would be a senior international staff split between two offices, two senior nationals, a database manager with translators and drivers hired as needed. Instead InterAction Washington advertised internationally for a Director and a NGO Liaison Officer (LO) and nationally for an NGO Outreach Officer who would liaise with Haitian institutions including local NGOs. The Director, who was a "representative of InterAction" was to report to InterAction Washington Director of Disaster Response and liaise with InterAction's CEO and its Humanitarian Policy and Practice Team members. Per the job description, he was to supervise the NGO LO and manage a national staff of 5-7. Eventually in addition to the Director, a Deputy Director of Communications and an NGO Outreach Officer were employed.

In the early stage of the response, no mention was made of *membership* however the NCSO would make services available to any NGO, local or international, who requested it. The NCSO would provide information on registration however it was not to contribute to any verification or vetting of NGOs based on their "legitimacy".

Communication with stakeholders were notoriously difficult and many months were spent on building a comprehensive NGO contact list. Intermittent mobile phones, text

Box 4. Evaluations of Coordination as of October 2010

- ...coordination between the international humanitarian community and their national and local counterparts within the Haitian government and civil society has been particularly weak, resulting in weak national and local ownership (Duplat and Perry 2010, Grünewald and Renaudin 2010)
- The coordination system began to go round in circles and the scale of coordination efforts was oversized in relation to action (URD, 2010).
- [We] need to outreach to local structures. Not creating mechanisms that only serve our own purposes (Grunewald in ALNAP/DAC/UNEG).
- There was a distrust and arrogance of some pre-existing NGOs and new NGOs (interview, IASC 2010a);
- “Some NGOs withheld security information that would have led us to make better security-related decisions” (interview)
- “At first we (LNGO) were involved in joint advocacy...we had access to and could influence some of the big INGOs. Then the meetings stopped. We don’t know why.” (interview)
- A lack of inclusiveness on the part of the international community has been attributed to a range of factors such as ambiguity on how to engage with clusters (ICG 2010); difficulties in transport and access to the main humanitarian operation hub ...where most cluster coordination meetings are conducted; linguistic challenges whereby many important coordination meetings hosted by international actors are conducted in English, while those of national actors are in French; and a scarcity of valuable coordination and information materials in French or in appropriate formats (the main information Web platform, OneResponse, is largely in English) (Duplat and Perry 2010, Grünewald and Renaudin 2010)(in Rencoret et al 2010).

messages, email and Skype were available. The NCSO also had a coordination webpage on OneResponse (OCHA) however the page only ever held a few minutes from meetings, notes on NGO registration and job announcements. InterAction members separately contributed to "Haitiaidmap" - an online tool for information sharing - to which the NCSO did not contribute directly.

The NCSO was the first attempt at joint field coordination by InterAction and ICVA. ICVA sent a first draft *Memorandum of Understanding* to InterAction in March. It was returned by InterAction 6 weeks later in April with apologies for the delay given the need to get "a clearer idea where the office was headed". Given the significant discrepancy between the two MOU's, it was not signed before 15 September when it was decided to close the NCSO.

In June, InterAction and ICVA (the latter translating the survey to French) surveyed NGOs in Haiti to *evaluate NCSO performance*. Given the short time for survey implementation (3 days), only 32 NGOs responded, only one an HCT-INGO. Of these, 20 organisations (62%) said they were happy "all of the time" with the performance of the NCSO. The comments ranged from appreciating staff, particularly the assistance with administrative issues, registration and customs, to providing a forum that was "NGO-only". Equally prevalent were some very frank comments on the need for clarity of objectives and mandate, the difference in approach between the NCSO start-up team and the staff that followed, being too associated with the UN (both the general humanitarian forum and Logs Base) and/or InterAction, and lack of LINGO involvement. Evaluations of coordination in general in Haiti remain critical (Box 4).

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **The existence of numerous coordination fora with over-lapping agendas is counter-productive and can create confusion and unhelpful competition.** In such situations, 'support to' coordination should prioritise activities that streamline and make more efficient and accessible existing coordination services (the latter particularly for local and small international NGOs) and/or fill essential gaps.
2. **Coordination should not become an exercise in itself.** It is only there to improve the effectiveness of aid delivery.
3. **Conversely, lack of coordination around certain issues in Haiti resulted in a more inefficient and inappropriate response.** This included security, militarised distributions, information sharing and collaboration with host populations, engagement with local NGOs and government agencies.
4. **Support to NGO coordination must reconcile to the extent possible different stakeholder needs (and perceptions of what makes a disaster response more effective) and focus on a few "quick wins".** Previous experience can help with problem identification and rapid stakeholder consultation will help identify priority needs. This needs to be balanced with immediate and relevant service provision. Coordination cannot be everything to everybody.
5. **Support to coordination doesn't necessarily mean supporting participation in mainstream mechanisms, e.g. clusters.** There may be more appropriate types of support, e.g. an accessible structure/staff providing directly - or a clearing house for - bi or multi-lingual information,

materials/guidelines, training, small working groups, and INGO/LNGO matchmaking. These services can also be provided by separate but complementary initiatives.

6. **A structure, preferably local, with the mandate and capacity to manage and hold coordination staff to account for their performance is essential.** Coordination can capitalise on pre-existing NGO coordination mechanisms and/or quickly establish representative and effective steering committees and/or other management structures to ensure accountability to in-country stakeholders.
7. **Coordination requires 'connectors' not 'dividers'.¹⁸** The ability to engage, communicate, include, liaise, facilitate, negotiate, mediate and win trust is more important than operational experience. The ability to build new relationships and respect old ones, to be self-aware enough to perceive ones' impact on others, is more important than the ability to represent. In fact, representation should only occur when the responsibility is conferred upon coordination staff.
8. **Any participation in a decision-making body needs to uphold the principles of transparency, information sharing and consultation.** Driven by the perception that broad consultation is inefficient, decision-making structures are often exclusive. Not only might the lack of consultation result in inappropriate decisions, the perception that organisations are not sharing power, assuming representation, compounded by a lack of information sharing, creates divisions in a time when accountability, trust and partnership are paramount.
9. **At the beginning of an emergency, it is better to err on the side of too much information sharing.** Of course communications are important and the means by which coordination staff can communicate are increasingly varied. Coordination is not limited to hardware and software and can include the creative exploitation of networks (faith-based, local NGO networks and initiatives, technical working groups).
10. **Particularly at the beginning of the emergency, when humanitarian requirements take precedent and when local NGOs are less likely to be partisan, don't waste time trying to differentiate between local NGOs. Err on the side of inclusivity.** Local NGOs are a product of the environment they live in. Of course they will be political if their country has been torn apart by politics.
11. **If local NGOs (and other local stakeholders) are to participate in coordination – it's basic – language and location.** Providing a neutral forum for open discussion enables LNGOs to make their own decisions regarding participation and if necessary representation. Providing training in humanitarian principles, quality and accountability gives them the tools to make better decisions. To repeat – this can also be done in separate but complementary initiatives.
12. ***For InterAction and ICVA:** All of these lessons are relevant for future collaboration. Other case studies have reiterated that the most successful NGO coordination initiatives are those that are initiated and managed from the field (LL6). If member agencies and/or donors request assistance*

¹⁸ The way coordination is implemented can either be a Divider (threats to peace and stability) or Connectors (supports to peace and stability) among the humanitarian community. This concept, developed by CDA and used in the ALNAP/DAC/UNEG Haiti evaluation framework, is also reflected upon in this case study.

from network HQs, it is the responsibility of these respective offices to effectively communicate with each other and their members, agree on priorities, build on each other's strengths and reconcile differences (LL4). This may include what practical actions can be done in advance of an emergency, e.g. rosters (LL7), financing and management scenario and how to avoid the pitfalls of LL 1-3.¹⁹

Box 5. Various efforts attempting to improve intra-INGO and INGO-LNGO coordination:

Comite pour la Coordination des Organisations Progressifs (Feb 2010 to present) ; NGO Coordination Support Office (February – August 2010); Joint Humanitarian Security Forum (JHSF) for INGOs; CLIO Information and Resource Centre (re-opened October 2010; InterAction's Haiti Aid Map ; UN Special Envoy Registration of national and international CSOs; Accountability and Learning Working Group (ALWG); Communication with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC); Cash Programming Working Group, (I)NGO Forum (January 2011 to present).

Facilitated LNGO representation:PAPDA at CBC Congressional Hearing; PAPDA, GARR and POHDH at Global NGO Consultation, UN Special Envoy; Voices of the Voiceless, UN Special Envoy, MINUSTAH and others

INGO-LNGO Joint Advocacy and LNGO Advocacy: (JOINT) Movimentos (South American NGO networks and the Haitian networks of PAPDA, POHDR, SOFA); The Ad Hoc Haiti Advocacy Committee published the following 10 LNGO and Diaspora advocacy statements: After the Catastrophe: Our Country Can Rise Again, Compiled by the CCOP with SAKS, ICKL, POHDR; HRC National Conference Press Briefing, Issued by the HRC (40 local NGO and CSOs) ; Haitian NGOs Decry Total Exclusion from Donors' Conferences on Haitian Reconstruction, Compiled by JRMS; Helping Haitians Help Themselves: Strategic Plan to Defend Life & Rebuild Rural Agricultural Economy, by FONDAMA; Letter from Camille Chalmers, Sent from PAPDA; Letter from Jean Valéry Vital-Herne, Sent from The Micah Challenge; Rebuilding Haiti, Prepared by TransAfrica and KONPAY; Tet Ansanm Pou Yon Nouvel Ayiti: Reflections on the reconstruction of Haiti from a meeting of representatives of national NGOs and displaced persons from the camps Port-au-Prince, compiled by Oxfam International, UN Commission on the Status of Women 54th Session Oral Statement on the Topic of: Ensuring Haitian Women's Participation and Leadership Are Institutionalized in All Stages of National Relief and Reconstruction, Submitted by the Huairou Commission; A Vision and Principles for Rebuilding Rural Haiti: PDL and Groundswell International **(LNGO)** A Gender Shadow Report of the 2010 Haiti PDNA, 18 March 2010 Statement issued by 26 Haitian groups, including the women's groups, Enfofam and SOFA, decrying the quasi total exclusion of Haitian civil society in the deliberations during the donors' conference in Santo Domingo that addressed the "Plan for Reconstruction of Haiti", 22 March 2010 Statement issued by CONAP, refusing to support the PDNA process and urging that all steps aiming at the construction of Haiti, cannot occur without the genuine participation of the populations, 17 March 2010 Plateforme Femmes Citoyennes Haiti Solidaire advocating for equality between women and men in the vision and plan of action for a new Haiti, and the immediate inclusion of Haitian women's voices and their equal participation in all sectors related to the reconstruction of their country.

Acronyms: Coordinating Committee of Progressive Haitian Organisations (CCOP) [composed of PAPDA, POHDH, ICKL, PAJ, SAKS and ITECA], Fondasyon Men Lan Men Ayiti/ Hand in Hand Haiti Foundation (FONDAMA), Haiti Response Coalition (HRC), (GARR), Institut Culturel Karl Léveque (ICKL), Institut de Technologie et d'animation (ITECA), Konbit Pou Ayiti (KONPAY), Partenariat pour le Développement Local (PDL), Plateforme haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (PAPDA) [composed of Solidarite Fanm Ayisyèn (SOFA), Centre de Recherches Actions pour le Développement (CRAD), Mouvman Inite Ti Peyizan Latibonit (MITPA), Association Nationale des Agroprofessionnels Haïtiens (ANDAH)], Plate forme des Organisations Haïtiennes des Droits Humains (POHDH) [composed of Justice et Paix (JILAP), Centre de recherches Sociales et de Formation pour le Développement (CRESFED), Groupe Assistance Juridique (GAJ), Sant Karl Lévèque (SKL), Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH), Conférence haïtienne des Religieux (CORAL-CHR)], Programme alternatif de Justice (PAJ), Sosyete Animasyon ak Kominikasyon Sosyal (SAKS), Solidarite Fanm Ayisyèn (SOFA).

¹⁹ ICVA are in the process of drawing some lessons from Haiti and other NGO coordination scenarios, e.g. 10 case studies. In January 2011 InterAction held a workshop on NGO Coordination. It is ICVA's intention to discuss these findings with their own membership and InterAction to further advance good NGO coordination during emergencies.

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