NGOs and Humanitarian Reform:

Mapping Study Inception Report

FOR: ActionAid, CAFOD, CARE, ICVA, IRC, Oxfam, Save the Children

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This inception report is one of the outputs for the Mapping Study stipulated in the Terms of Reference. It outlines the methodological approach to be used in the five case studies in Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Sudan and Zimbabwe and the key questions to be addressed[1]. It is important to adopt a common approach in the case studies in order to ensure comparability across them.

1. CONTEXT

The backdrop to this study is the widespread feeling of malaise in the humanitarian enterprise and the efforts, since 2005, to reform the humanitarian sector. The IASC and donors have reached high-level agreements aimed at reforming existing coordination, funding and leadership mechanisms. The stated objectives of these agreements are to promote needs-based, effective, well-coordinated, predictable, transparent and timely humanitarian responses with the overall goal of improving the quality of assistance and protection activities and the accountability of agencies, both to donors and to beneficiaries.

The IASC and donors have launched a number of initiatives to implement these objectives: the Cluster approach, a reformed Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), country-level Common/Pooled Humanitarian Funds (CHF) and the strengthening of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) system. NGOs have been concerned that these initiatives were designed and introduced without adequate consultation and tend to be UN-centric so that NGOs have a limited and unclear role. As a result, the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform project aims to increase the engagement of NGOs in humanitarian reform mechanisms and to improve policy and practice on these mechanisms more broadly.

The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform project is starting with this mapping study, which is a practical attempt to verify the extent to which humanitarian reform initiatives have actually translated into improved action on the ground. The focus of the overall project is on the engagement of NGOs in humanitarian reform, since they are the primary deliverers of humanitarian action (after affected communities themselves). However, the success of the reforms depends to a large extent on the role of different actors (donors, UN agencies, government and civil society actors) and partnerships between them. Therefore, the focus of the mapping study will be wider and the researchers will strive to inform the study with the perspectives of other actors on the ground. It is also important to recognise that the research will be essentially qualitative in nature and that it may be difficult to separate changes resulting from internationally-promoted reforms from those due to more local or country-based developments because of the different country situations, coordination agreements and patterns of leadership on the ground.

2. OBJECTIVES

The ToR for the mapping study list three specific objectives. These are to:

- Produce an evidence-base to engage stakeholders around the project's activities at global and field levels;
- Provide baseline indicators for monitoring the success of the 3-year project;
- Inform the design of activities for the next phase of the project in-country and the job description of the Humanitarian Reform Officer position, who will be responsible for coordinating NGO engagement in the next phase.

3. SCOPE

The 3-year NGOs and Humanitarian Reform project will take place in 4 main countries – Afghanistan, the DRC, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe – and cover three cross-cutting issues:

- partnership (NGO-NGO, NGO-UN, NGO-donor),

[1] The issues covered in the DRC case study may be slightly different as this will have a separate ToR.

- accountability (both peer accountability between humanitarian agencies and downwards accountability to beneficiaries), and
- impact of reform on beneficiaries and NGOs.

These cross-cutting issues are reflected in the list of issues to be covered by each case study report (as outlined in the ToR):

1. Coordination mechanisms and processes (UN-NGO, NGO-NGO etc), including analysis of the relevance of global clusters to field realities and particularly focusing on the experiences of national and local NGOs
2. Reformed humanitarian financing mechanisms and sources, including analysis of the interaction between different funding channels, also particularly focusing on the experiences of national and local NGOs
3. Examples of best practice for NGOs (including national and local NGOs) engaging in humanitarian coordination and financing
4. Key challenges facing NGOs (including national and local NGOs) engaging in humanitarian coordination and financing
5. A short overview of how the project's 3 cross-cutting themes of partnership, accountability and impact inter-relate with coordination and financing

The issues of accountability to beneficiaries and the impact of the reforms on them are important because the reason for introducing reforms is to deliver better quality humanitarian action in a more timely way. To date, assessments of humanitarian reform mechanisms and funding (such as the evaluations of the CERF, Common Humanitarian Funds and Clusters) have focused on process rather than impact and neglected the "view from below". They are also constrained by their often very short timeframes. Given its longer time-frame of 3 years and the fact that it is being undertaken by organisations in the frontline of aid delivery rather than external consultants, the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform project can add value by analysing whether and how humanitarian reforms have improved the delivery of assistance and protection, ensured accountability to beneficiaries and had a positive impact for them. Focusing on these issues would also create common ground for engagement with the UN and donors (addressing the issue of partnership). This will be critical to the eventual success of the project because it will be impossible to change coordination and funding mechanisms without buy-in from the UN system and the donor community.

The mapping studies cover five countries – Afghanistan, the DRC, Ethiopia, Sudan and Zimbabwe. They have relatively short time-frames, with up to 15 days for field visits. Therefore, while these studies will examine mechanisms for accountability to beneficiaries and consult crisis-affected communities on the timeliness, coverage and appropriateness of humanitarian response, it will be difficult for them to assess the impact of the reforms. Instead, the case-study reports will suggest ways in which the on-going project can try to do this.

The ToR provide the following list of baseline data to be collected in each case study:

- The number of national and international NGOs represented in clusters, IASC/Humanitarian Partnership Country Teams
- The number and nature of national NGO humanitarian coordination structures
- The number and nature of mechanisms for accountability to beneficiaries
- The number of "co-facilitator" or co-leadership positions for NGOs in clusters
- If there are country-specific pooled funds, are NGOs (local and international) involved in decision-making structures?
- The number of national or local NGOs that obtained humanitarian funding from global sources in the last year

- The perceived level of transparency and effectiveness[2] of coordination and funding processes (measured as a score out of 5)
- The average time taken to receive funding for humanitarian interventions from reformed financing mechanisms as compared to other funding sources
- The transaction costs (amount of time and resources) involved in participating in coordination mechanisms and accessing humanitarian funding from reformed financing mechanisms (compared with other funding sources)
- The number of times in the last year that NGOs have undertaken needs assessments and evaluations jointly with beneficiaries (where and in which sectors).

For the mapping study to address the broader themes of partnership, accountability to beneficiaries and measuring the impact of humanitarian reforms, the research team feels it would be helpful to broaden the issues to be covered in the country case-studies to include the following, though not as baseline indicators:

- Main barriers to NGO (including local NGO) participation in coordination and pooled funding mechanisms
- Effectiveness of Cluster/coordination meetings
- Formal vs. informal coordination mechanisms
- Main barriers to timeliness of response to emergency situations
- Nature and content of mechanisms for accountability to beneficiaries
- Nature of relationship between international NGOs and UN agencies on one hand and national and local NGOs on the other
- Nature of NGO relationships with donors

These issues and baseline indicators are translated into specific questions and related to particular data collection tools in the next section.

4. METHODOLOGY

An individual researcher will undertake each country case-study, with logistical support and advice from the lead consortium member agency in the country. This will include hiring translators locally, if required for interviews with local NGOs and beneficiaries.

The mapping studies will adopt a mainly qualitative approach in order to explore the range of issues outlined in the previous section. However, it will also involve the collection of some financial data on funding mechanisms and quantitative data for the baseline indicators.

4.1 Data Collection Tools

The mapping study will use a range of data collection tools:

- Desk review of existing evaluations and literature on reformed humanitarian coordination and funding mechanisms.
- Search of websites, annual reports and agency accounts for data on funding from mechanisms like the CERF, ERFs and CHFs.
- Telephone and face-to-face interviews (including group interviews) with NGOs, UN agencies, donors, beneficiaries and government officials, both in the mapping study countries and at headquarters level (as appropriate). These will be based on the standard questions listed in section 5.

[2] Transparency in relation to coordination mechanisms is based on accessibility of information on the timings and content of meetings and how inclusive the meetings are. In the case of funding mechanisms, transparency will cover decision-making processes and the availability of information of funding data. The study will explore participants' definition of effectiveness in relation to coordination and funding processes. Measures of the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms can include the production and use of shared data within clusters; comprehensive mapping of needs and actors on the ground; the reduction of gaps and duplication in humanitarian interventions.

- Surveys of NGOs to obtain feedback on coordination and funding mechanisms.
- Participatory techniques to obtain NGO perceptions of the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms and the perceptions of crisis-affected communities about accountability mechanisms and the timeliness and quality of humanitarian aid.

4.2 Key Informants at HQ

Comment [TM1]: Consortium members to provide contacts and facilitate interviews

- **Consortium members** to discuss partnerships with donors, UN agencies and local NGOs, engagement in global Clusters, barriers to participation in reform mechanisms, accountability mechanisms (particularly for beneficiaries), procedures for responding to emergencies.
- **Jock Baker** (CARE International), **Nick Stockton** (HAP) on accountability to crisis-affected communities.
- **NGO representatives on the IASC** to discuss the role of NGOs in coordination and funding mechanisms
- **Humanitarian Reform Support Unit**
- **2-3 key individuals in global Clusters** to explore the links between global Clusters and field realities.

4.3 In-country Key Informants

- **Consortium member representatives** to discuss partnerships (donors, UN agencies and local NGOs), involvement in Clusters and other coordination mechanisms (including barriers), funding from country-based mechanisms as well as UN agencies, accountability mechanisms, factors that facilitate or hamper a timely response to emergencies, views on direction of project over 3 years and role of HROs.
- **Humanitarian Coordinator** to cover coordination and funding mechanisms, impact of reforms, relationships between UN and NGOs, role of local NGOs, accountability to beneficiaries.
- **Head of OCHA** (if there is an OCHA office in-country. Otherwise appropriate alternative informants) to obtain data on Clusters, funding mechanisms and to discuss transparency of funding data, coordination, role of local NGOs.
- **Managers of funding mechanisms** like the CERF, CHF, ERF to get data on funding and to discuss funding to NGOs (international and local) and accountability to beneficiaries.
- Key people in **UN Mission**, if there is one, to discuss coordination and relationships with NGOs.
- **Government officials** working on humanitarian issues in capital as well as outside to understand their role in coordination, relationships with NGOs, impact of reforms, timeliness and quality of humanitarian response, and accountability to beneficiaries.
- **UN agency representatives** (UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and WHO) to discuss timeliness of funding from reform-related funding mechanisms, onward CERF funding, relationships with NGOs and mechanisms for accountability to beneficiaries.
- **Key Cluster leads** to obtain data on number and type of Cluster meetings and involvement of NGOs
- **Donor representatives** to discuss relationships with NGOs, funding to country-level funds like ERFs and CHFs and the impact of humanitarian reforms.
- **Non-consortium international NGOs** to discuss partnerships with donors, UN agencies and local NGOs, experience of Clusters and coordination mechanisms, funding from country-based mechanisms and onward funding from CERF, accountability mechanisms, factors that facilitate or hamper timeliness and quality of response, views on the future role of an HRO.
- **Local/national NGOs** to discuss partnerships with donors, UN agencies and international NGOs, experiences with Clusters and coordination mechanisms, funding

experiences, accountability mechanisms (particularly for beneficiaries), factors that facilitate or hamper timeliness and quality of response, views on role of an HRO.

- **Crisis-affected communities** to discuss timeliness, quality, coverage and coordination of humanitarian response and accountability mechanisms.

4.4 Key Documents

CERF

CERF Disbursement and 'pass-through' Mechanisms – Background Paper (FAO 2007)
CERF One year on (Oxfam 2007a)
CERF Review of First Year of Operations (CIDA 2007)
CERF Two Year Evaluation (OCHA 2008a)
Elements for the Pre-agreements for NGOs to access the CERF Save the Children's suggestions - CERF Partnership Taskforce (Save the Children 2007b)
Exclusion of NGOs – The fundamental flaw of the CERF (Save the Children 2007a)
Final CERF Interim Review (OCHA 2007a)
Care Experiences with UN Humanitarian Financing (Care 2007)

Cluster Approach

Cluster Approach Evaluation Report (OCHA 2007b)
Global WASH Cluster Liberia Visit Summary Report (UNICEF 2006)
Interim Self-Assessment Cluster Approach (IASC 2006)
Mission Report Cluster Roll Out DRC (ICVA 2006a)
Position on ICVA's Involvement in the Humanitarian Reform Process, in Particular with Regards to the Cluster Approach (ICVA 2006b)
The Cluster Approach: How did you make it work? Workshop Summary Report (OCHA 2008b)
Informal survey of ECHO field experts on implementation of the cluster approach (ECHO 2008)

Common Humanitarian Funds

Common Funds Monitoring and Evaluation Report (Center on International Cooperation 2006)
Evaluation of the Expanded Humanitarian Response Fund Iraq (OCHA 2008c)
Humanitarian Financing Workshop Addis Ababa (OCHA Ethiopia 2007)
Interim Standardization Guidelines Common Humanitarian Funds (OCHA 2008d)
Evaluation of Common /Pooled Humanitarian Funds in DRC and Sudan (OCHA 2007c)

Various

Lost in Translation – Managing Coordination and leadership reform in the humanitarian system (HPG Brief No 27, 2007)
Strengthening NGO Participation in the IASC - A Discussion Paper prepared by Beth Ferris, ICVA Chair, in consultation with ICVA, InterAction, and the SCHR (ICVA 2006c)
Summary Paper on the Financing and Partnerships between UN and non-UN Humanitarian Organizations - Background Paper 4 (OCHA, ICVA, SCHR, InterAction 2006)

Case Studies

NGO Position on CERF in Afghanistan (author? Year?)
Impact of humanitarian reform mechanisms in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Oxfam 2007b)

5. Key Questions

This section lists the key questions that the study will address. They are categorised under the themes of coordination, funding, accountability and partnership.

5.1 Coordination

- How many local and international NGOs are represented in Clusters and the IASC/Humanitarian Partnership Country Team?
- How many 'co-facilitator'/co-leadership positions are there for NGOs in the Clusters/equivalent?
- In which coordination mechanisms do NGOs participate (formal and informal, at capital level, district level and village level)? Do staff spend a lot of time in coordination meetings? Do NGO staff regard participation in coordination meetings as a cost-effective use of their time?
- What are the specific coordination challenges for local actors (host government, local NGOs, communities)? Are there good practice examples of "non-traditional" coordination systems that rely less on meetings and e-mail and more on outreach, particularly to local actors?
- How is information about Cluster/coordination meetings (notice of meetings and discussions) shared and with whom (e.g., local NGOs, INGOs, authorities)?
- Are government representatives involved in coordination mechanisms?
- How useful/effective do NGOs and UN agencies find the coordination mechanisms? How do these organisations define effectiveness? Do they include notions of gap-filling, comprehensive response, complementarity of action, spill-over benefits of coordination, better results due to peer pressure, involving leadership and therefore leading to more accountability
- Examples of how coordination mechanisms have worked well (to facilitate better response) – what were the key factors that led to success, that could be replicated. Examples of problems with them? How could they be improved?
- What are the barriers to greater NGO participation in coordination mechanisms? To what extent are these related to resources and capacity (time, money to travel etc)? How could/should these be addressed?

5.2 Funding

- What pooled funding mechanisms operate in the country, how much funding do they channel and from which donors? [Get data from OCHA. Doesn't apply to Afghanistan where there are no pooled mechanisms other than CERF] How much funding do NGOs receive directly from donors/UN? Possible to track how much onward funding (for implementation of CERF and CHF projects, not pass-through funding) from UN agencies to NGOs?
- How are these pooled funding mechanisms managed (extent of shared project/reporting formats, decision-making procedures)?
- On average, how long does it take to sign a project agreement and receive funding from pooled funding mechanisms? If there is a delay in receiving money, how much of a problem is this? How does this compare with other funding sources?
- Are the pooled funding mechanisms viewed as more needs-driven, flexible and predictable than other funding sources or less?
- What proportion of an NGO's country-specific funding comes from pooled funding mechanisms? Has this changed substantially since 2005 (CERF and CHFs became operational in 2006 so useful to test change, if possible)? [Ask consortium NGOs]
- What are an NGO's sources of international funding [ask local NGOs to get idea of whether pooled funding mechanisms are an important source of funding for organisations that very few donors fund directly]?
- If there is a new emergency, what sources of funding would the organisation approach first (i.e., how useful/fast do they find pooled funding mechanisms)?
- How have the new funding mechanisms facilitated or hampered response? Are they more or less flexible (about the spend period, changes to activities, covering different types of costs) than other funding sources?

- How many NGOs submit applications for pooled funding? How many applications are successful, on average? Do the NGOs regard their participation in decision-making processes as worthwhile?
- How transparent are the decision-making processes for pooled funding mechanisms? Are they more or less transparent than other funding sources?
- What are the barriers to accessing pooled funding? How could these be addressed?
- What examples are there of good funding practice?
- Are there examples of unintended impacts, for example, is there evidence that humanitarian financing systems influence formation of clusters?
- If there is an ERF and/or CHF, how many NGOs are on decision-making boards?

5.3 Accountability to crisis-affected communities

- What mechanisms in place to ensure accountability to crisis-affected communities? How do these operate? What communication systems exist (notably to provide feedback to communities? How are they monitored? [NGOs and UN]
- To what extent have beneficiaries been involved in needs assessments, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects?
- Are there complaint mechanisms in place for beneficiaries?
- In what ways have reform mechanisms facilitated or hampered accountability? [NGOs, UN, donors]
- Beneficiaries – What information do you receive about the assistance to be provided, when it will be provided and who is to provide it? How is this information given? If there is a problem, what can you do about it? Who do you raise problems with?
- Use interactive techniques to explore perceptions of timeliness and appropriateness of assistance [beneficiaries, NGOs]

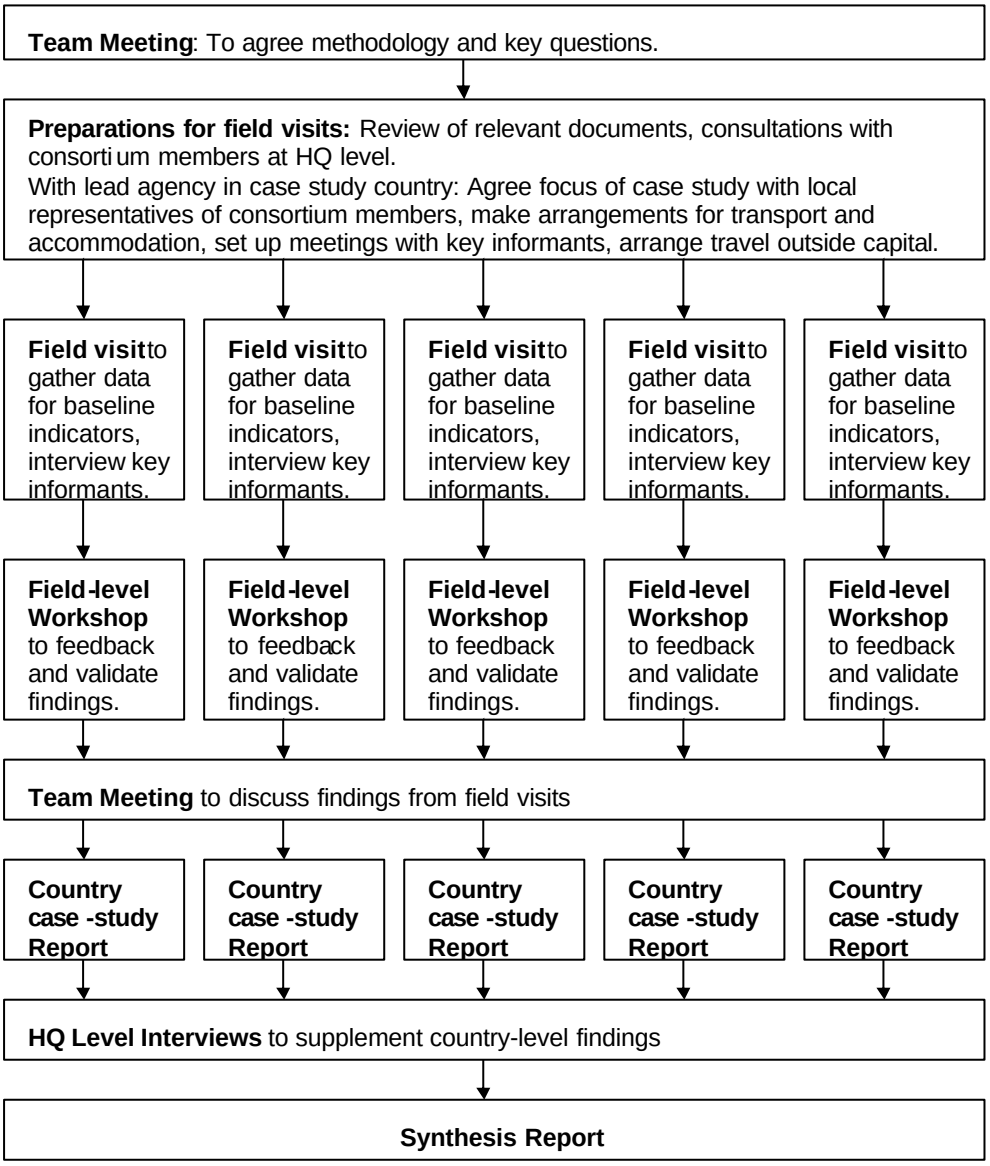
5.4 Partnerships

- How do different actors (donors, local authorities, UN agencies, NGOs) define partnership (what are the characteristics of a real partnership)?
- To what extent do relationships with local NGOs include capacity building? What are the views of both sets of partners on the effectiveness of this capacity building?
- To what extent do they believe these characteristics are reflected in donor-NGO, UN-NGO, international-local NGO and implementing agency-government relationships?
- Are there any formal partnerships (framework agreements, MoU, or similar)?
- Are there examples of partnerships that have improved humanitarian response? In what ways?
- What are government views of humanitarian reform mechanisms (coordination, funding, UN leadership)?

6. Process

Figure 1 below provides an overview of the process of the mapping studies.

FIGURE 1: PROCESS OUTLINE



7. OUTPUTS

As shown in Figure 1 above, the mapping study will result in three main outputs:

- **In-country workshops:** To feedback findings to a broad range of stakeholders in order to validate them.
- **Country case-study reports:** An approximately 20 page (5,000 word) report on each case-study, covering the issues listed in section 2. In addition, the reports will include a confidential section for consortium members with:

- Draft proposals for appropriate in-country activities for the next phase of the 3-year project, based on consultation with the consortium members and partner agencies
- A short, confidential risk analysis, with suggestions on how to mitigate those risks, for the consortium steering group to inform project roll-out at country level
- Pointers for the job description for the post of Humanitarian Reform Officer to coordinate NGO engagement with the project in-country.

The reports will be produced by the researcher undertaking the case study and will use a standard format for ease of comparison and in order to feed into the synthesis report systematically.

- **Synthesis report:** This will capture the key findings and messages from the case-study reports. It will be circulated to external stakeholders (including UN, NGO partners, donors and national governments) in order to engage them in the on-going NGOs and Humanitarian Reform project.

8. Workplan

Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Inception Report	TM, with input from AD & RO	Draft shared with consortium by 13 Nov
Team Meeting		17 Nov
Preparation for field visits, including document review and consultation with consortium members	TM, AD, RO with lead agency at country level	November-December (early Jan for DRC visit)
Ethiopia field visit	TM	1-16 December
Zimbabwe field visit	RO	3rd week of January
Afghanistan field visit	AD	4-22 January
DRC field visit	TM	19th Jan for 12 days
Sudan field visit		
Drafting of Ethiopia report	TM	December-January
Drafting of Zimbabwe report	RO	February
Drafting of Afghanistan report	AD	January-early Feb
Drafting of DRC report	TM	February
Drafting of Sudan report HQ level consultations		End November-January
Drafting of synthesis report	TM with support from Global Programme Manager & comments from AD, RO	End February-March