

Conflict to Development: role of non profit sector.

NGOs and CBOs are key contributors to the work of non profit oriented agencies in Sri Lanka. Their work covers the whole country. It is in this context that CHA with associated agencies sought to review and position our work in a period of transition. The review addressed challenges faced and questions which are commonly posed about the community.

Our focus is to partner Government and to identify common goals of parties and stakeholders such as the UN, Profit sector, Social Entrepreneurs, ensuring the different approaches and expertise of the sectors complement, rather than conflict, with each other. The goal is to centre stage human dignity in the lives of people in the quest for equitable access to development.

Principles and Shared Belief Systems

Non profits are value driven, the values lead to principles and codes of conduct; and principles lead to standards and a framework to hold us accountable. In doing so, we are not afraid to invoke core beliefs and principles from shared spiritual values from the religions that predominate in Sri Lanka, and fundamental human rights as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conventions.

What is the added value of non profits?

- Strength in community participatory approaches (e.g. participatory design and building homes)
- Clusters of agencies working with line agencies as teams on focussed tasks to share expertise, resources and maximise dividends.
- Work to common objectives and shared visions.

We work with different levels of government, recognising the relevant administrative processes of central Govt, Provincial Councils and local government and target support to the appropriate levels of decision making, including GA, DS and GN levels.

Our strength supports development focussing on transitional shelter, sanitation, livelihood development and supplementary community services.

We are keen to apply experiences which pay dividends from the past and effectively harmonise the use of national and international strengths.

We are keen to work to standards with specified indicators.

Non partisan nature of our work

A general perception is that I/NGOs are politically oriented, and funding meant for governments is channelled to these bodies instead. This perception has caused tensions between I/NGOs and Government bodies. While international bodies raise and allocate funds for nations struck by disaster and development, in reality these aid/funds fall into two categories;

- i. Aid/funds meant for governments
- ii. Aid/funds meant to be channeled through I/NGOs

NGOs can and do strive to be non-partisan from any political party or ideology. I/NGOs are mandated to look at humanitarian and development imperatives. Regardless of the origin of funds, I/NGOs work strictly under local laws and the guidelines as stipulated in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent code of conduct¹.

A definite way forward with minimal misunderstanding will be for all parties to be in constant dialogue. As I/NGOs have made known their imperatives, it would be mutually beneficial if the government would communicate their imperatives. This would also help I/NGOs align themselves with plans proposed by the government as we too believe that this is in the best interest of the nation as a whole.

Humanitarian imperatives

For all humanitarian bodies the humanitarian imperative is embodied in all overarching humanitarian efforts. Relief is executed on the basis of need alone, irrespective of any other human characteristics and associated circumstances. Accountability to all stakeholders, especially those whom we seek to assist is paramount, as is the inclusion of all stakeholders at all stages of a response and in reducing their vulnerability. It is by engaging beneficiaries as partners that we effectively manage aid and sustain solutions respecting culture and custom.

The humanitarian imperative within the current context of Sri Lanka can be considered across three phases; emergency; transitional and recovery. However it must be duly noted that beneficiaries of assistance need not have to go through each phase. For example it is possible for them to move from the emergency phase straight into recovery. When discussing recovery, this is more towards long-term recovery, with short-term recovery being more of a stage within the transitional phase. It is also recognised that the scope of assistance in the three phases is different – emergency assistance is usually only provided to those who are displaced or otherwise immediately affected, whereas recovery is a process that by necessity must include members of wider conflict affected community. All three stages may continue in varying degrees simultaneously with different populations. The different

¹ <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/code.asp>

stages will require specific standards which apply to those given contexts and a dialogue between actors to discuss the specification of standards and their implementation should take place. The “Guiding Principles” need to be applied in this context. Additionally “Do No Harm” principles must be adhered to in the setting of standards.

It is also vital to note that humanitarian and development efforts can often be found to be running parallel to one another; it must be noted that neither one should have to be compromised for the sake of the other. .

Accountability and Transparency

A humanitarian accountability framework is a set of definitions, procedures, and standards that specify how an agency will ensure accountability to its stakeholders. It includes a statement of commitments, a baseline analysis of compliance, and an implementation policy, strategy or plan. Commitments may include external standards, codes, principles, and guidelines, in addition to internal values, mandate, principles, charter and guidelines.

We report to 5 key stakeholder groups:-

- Beneficiaries and the community
- Government of Sri Lanka
- Donors
- General public
- Members/constituents.

NGOs frequently assert codes of conduct, and other frameworks and standards that we subscribe to – e.g. Guiding Principles for Humanitarian Assistance and Development in Sri Lanka, Red Cross Code of Conduct, Sphere Standards, Guiding Principles on Displacement and HAP Principles of Accountability and the HAP 2007 Standard etc. We will publicly disseminate and establish reporting and complaint mechanisms in relation to these principles/standards.

Beneficiaries as partners

Consistent evaluations globally of humanitarian responses over several decades has shown significant increased costs, poor performance and generation of additional problems for government and agencies, where there was a failure to sufficiently involve affected peoples in their own relief, recovery and development.

We recognise that beneficiaries are not dependent and have substantial resources and capacities of their own that they can use to improve their situation. To make best use of these capacities and ensure they are complemented by our assistance, beneficiaries need to be able to make informed choices about what is best for them and their families.

There needs to be space within any framework for people to make choices about how they participate. To achieve this, every beneficiary needs to be involved as much as is practical in all aspects of the process of programme design and delivery, and also need to have access to the fullest information practicable – about options, standards applicable to them, who is providing assistance, guidelines/codes of conduct and other relevant information.

Mechanisms and Tools

Tools are available to assist in reporting and accountability. Multiple reporting channels already exist, but not everybody participates fully. Examples include:

- Action Plans and Quarterly NGO reports (financial in nature, identify resources mobilised, what has been delivered, and what costs have been incurred)
- SAHANA reporting database
- E-DIMS system
- Financial audits as required by both donors and Government (Project audits, Annual organisational audits)

Reporting back and listening to communities is important. The means to do so include:

- Report card mechanism ²
- HAP framework³

Mechanisms need to be developed that capture the different expectations of beneficiaries and donors, and also the different phases of assistance (which may not necessarily be consecutive). It is important to capture all the work done in the country, and all aspects of it, and not focus only on geographical areas given occasional perception of skewed focus by non profits.

Coordination and partnership

Levels of engagement and coordination between different actors need to be clear and streamlined bearing in mind the complementary roles of the four sectors-

- Government sector
- Commercial sector
- Non-governmental sector
- Inter-governmental (UN, WB,ADB etc)

²Report cards are used as a tool to collect the opinions and concerns of beneficiaries against different service

³ “HAP” encourages agencies to have a ‘Humanitarian Accountability Framework’, which relates to the agency. It is not a HAP Framework, but rather an agency specific framework.

As the NGO Sector we bring a diversity of approaches to the process, and our strength is in our diversity with a particular relationship to the communities we work with.

We believe that it is important that sectoral interventions are led by the GoSL, with a combination of skills and resources required for tasks within given timelines being embedded in each process.

We also believe that Coordination and partnership must extend to the point of delivery being the village. It must be holistic in focus and blend the role of national enterprises with international assistance.

CHA, August, 2009.

Agencies associated are:

1. ACTED
2. Alliance Development Trust
3. American Jewish Distribution Centre
4. ASB
5. BRAC Sri Lanka
6. Care International
7. Caritas
8. Christian Aid
9. COHRE
10. Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA)
11. Dan Church Aid
12. Danish Refugee Council
13. Family Rehabilitation Center.
14. FORUT
15. Habitat For Humanity
16. Handicap International
17. HAP
18. Helpage
19. Institute of Human Rights
20. International Relief and Development (IRD)
21. JEN
22. KNH
23. Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya
24. LEADS
25. Malteser International
26. Medical Teams International
27. MERCY CORPS
28. Mercy Malaysia

29. Methodist Church
30. Muslim Aid
31. Non-violent Peaceforce
32. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
33. OFERR (Ceylon)
34. Oxfam – GB
35. Oxfam Australia
36. People in Need - Sri Lanka
37. Practical Action
38. PULSE Sri Lanka
39. Relief International
40. Rural Development Foundation
41. Sarvodaya
42. Save The Children in SL
43. Sewalanka Foundation
44. SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka
45. United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)
46. UNOCHA
47. USAID
48. Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO)
49. World Concern Development Organisation
50. WDP
51. World University Service of Canada (WUSC)
52. World Vision Lanka (WVL)
53. YGRO
54. Zoa Refugee Care- Netherlands