

The Humanitarian Donors Group – Afghanistan: A Case of Coordination

Raseema Alam

Humanitarian Donors Group

Context

- Emergency Situation
 - Afghanistan moves from one emergency to another. There are 169 natural events per year.
 - Afghanistan according to some experts is a protracted crisis with a constant load of refugees or IDPs; one of the highest food insecurity and malnutrition rates in the world; water is scarce and harvest are absolutely dependant on water cycles not water distribution systems.
- Humanitarian Budgets
 - Donors were spending in 2010 almost \$1B in humanitarian assistance. The top donors in this sector were the EU, Canada and the USA. The need for coordination of information in order to best serve Afghans

Members and their priorities

- Donors: Participating countries
- Resources
- Information and Coordination

The participating donors in the beginning were: ECHO, USA, Canada, DFID and SIDA. The initial discussions were of coordinating information we were receiving from partners and from UN Agencies.

The budget for Canada was over \$100M in this sector alone and as a group donors were contributing almost \$1B in Afghanistan. Donors were contributing to areas such as refugees, food security, emergencies and disaster preparedness.

Donors recognized with the numerous events and large budgets it was important to coordinate activities.

The information which was available at the time was ISAF reports, OCHA reports and ANSO security incident reports.

Developing the Priorities for The Group – How?

- The group asked themselves what the reasons for membership were
 - Facilitated the group discussions
 - Outcomes: were an accountability spreadsheet
 - Outcomes: Financial Tracking System inputs
- The group developed tasks and responsibilities
 - Each person had a responsibility to set meetings and objectives
 - Minutes and track progress
 - Developing a monthly report

The importance of evidence was necessary for each donor. The types of information which were important were from partners, UN agencies and the cluster system.

- Which reports were important; how did we triangulate information? What was prioritized?
- What happens in the cases of conflict
- Meeting often in order for the group to ‘form’ instead of ‘storm’

The important aspects of group meetings were to gather information for decision making.

- Buy-in was readily available from the start as the objectives for all were unanimous
- Setting priorities
- Tools
- Using the decision making tools
- Setting meetings and responsibilities

In 2011, drought fell upon Afghanistan. But information was slow and inconsistent. Donors had to make quick informed decisions on what action to take.

- Donors met early to discuss the drought and where it affected
- Donors with resources allocated ‘fact-finding’ missions to gain understanding on the causes and remedies
- It was found that the water shortages were caused due to poor water point maintenance
- It was found that the drought was affecting 14 out of the 28 provinces
- Canada decided to continue to fund food delivery programs but coordinated with our investment in the National Solidarity Programme and its investment with ICRC to strengthen water maintenance programs

The key to working together was to communicate often and clearly. First we had to build trust and develop personal relationships. The group agreed that donor coordination was imperative in an environment where funds were changing and diverse.

- Establishing meetings to discover priorities and who knows what?
- Inviting other donors to the group in order to understand goals and priorities in the Humanitarian Sector
- Voluntary participation
- Sharing of information
- Prioritization of information

When I arrived in Kabul, Canada's head of aid suggested to the health officer and myself that we establish a donor group. Why? Because she encouraged leadership in our sectors.

My recommendations for someone who wanted to do this exercise in another country would be to be patient, dedicate the time and effort to this exercise and to have a manager which is supportive to champion leadership.

Canada's programming goals were changing and one goal was to take a leadership role within the sector. Canada is committed to donor harmonization, managing for results and implementing the Accra Agenda in all sectors. Establishing the donor coordination group was one way to meet our organizational goals of implementing Paris.