CHARTING THE NEW NORM?

LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF THE SULAWESI EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

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HUMANITARIAN ADVISORY GROUP

PUJIONO CENTRE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photos: Mamboro Fishing Village, Central Sulawesi. Mamboro fishing village was totally wiped out. When the earthquake struck, people ran towards the sea in fear of their homes collapsing. Then the tsunami struck. Photos taken on 13 October 2018. OCHA / Anthony Burke.
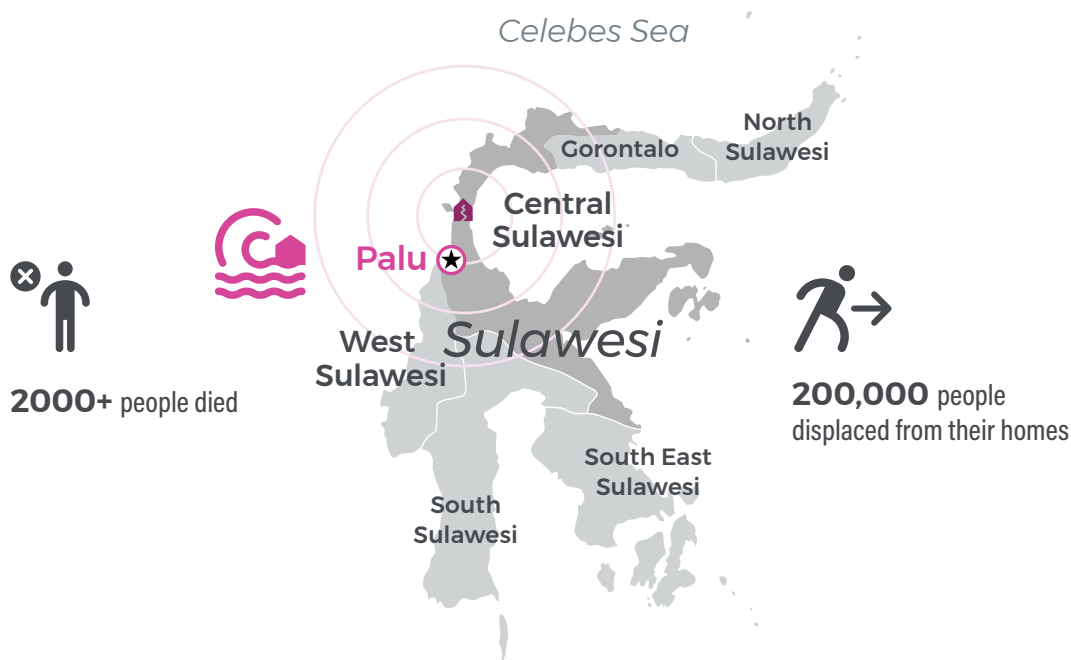
INTRODUCTION

On 28th September 2018 a tsunami triggered by a 7.4 magnitude earthquake devastated the coastal township of Palu in Indonesia. Over 2,000 people were killed during the disaster and a further 200,000 people displaced from their homes.[1] Immediately after the disaster, the Indonesian government set what some have called a precedent for how international disaster response is delivered in this region.[2] It acted quickly to establish leadership, set limits on the types and quantity of assistance required from international organisations, and announced that all assistance needed to be channelled via national or local humanitarian partners.[3] International agencies without an established presence in Indonesia were required to rethink their operations. For national and local actors, this gave unprecedented scope to participate in humanitarian response.

This practice paper is a rapid analysis of the Sulawesi earthquake response, 100 days after the disaster.

It charts this so-called "new norm" by considering the extent to which the response was quantitatively and qualitatively different to previous responses, and the impact of these differences. Does the Sulawesi response bring us closer to a new and improved way of delivering humanitarian assistance as envisaged by World Humanitarian Summit commitments? If so, how do different actors need to adapt?

This practice paper is intended to stimulate discussion and inform practice. It forms a part of Humanitarian Advisory Group's research stream examining what happens when localisation moves from theory to practice.

The paper is divided into two main sections. The first articulates what was different about this response and describes the characteristics of this new way of working; the second explores the possible and probable implications if this approach were to become a new norm.

Celebes Sea

North Sulawesi

Gorontalo

Central Sulawesi

Palu ⭐

West Sulawesi

Sulawesi

2000+ people died

South East Sulawesi

200,000 people displaced from their homes

South Sulawesi

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1   AHA Centre Situation Update No.15 (FINAL), 26 October 2018, available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AHA-Situation_Update-no15-Sulawesi-EQ.pdf
2   Interviews 2, 6 and 10
3   https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/10/11/indonesia-restricts-foreign-helpers-in-central-sulawesi-to-avoid-more-work.html

METHODOLOGY

This practice paper is based on interviews and consultations with key national and international actors involved in the Sulawesi earthquake response. They include national and local government representatives, national, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), regional bodies, United Nations (UN) agencies, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, and donors. The research was undertaken in cooperation with the Pujiono Centre, a national partner which led on all in-country interviews and consultations. It is a high-level rapid analysis that seeks to provide insights into emerging themes and issues from the perspective of operational actors.

40 key informant interviews

24 document reviews

2 focus group discussions

91 responses to an online survey (in Bahasa-Indonesia)

4 observations of Cluster coordination meetings

ETHICAL RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

WHAT WAS DIFFERENT?

LEADERSHIP

> "We saw a shift in the ownership and face of the response."
>
> (International organisation representative)[4]

There is no question that the government of Indonesia took strong and visible leadership of the response. This was not a surprise to many actors on the ground. As one of the most disaster-prone countries in the region, Indonesia is experienced in disaster management and has invested heavily in national and local disaster management systems and capacities. Indonesia has also been explicit about avoiding a repeat of the response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, when a "second tsunami" of international agencies overwhelmed the island province of Aceh.[5]

98% 98% of survey respondents reported that the response was completely or somewhat nationally led.[6]

What made this response different to previous responses was the significant media attention and reaction to the government's decision to limit the role of international actors.[7] This created a very public forum for debate on the role of different actors in the response and put a spotlight on the subsequent engagement of international actors. It forced international actors to step to the side and rethink their assumed "traditional" humanitarian roles. It also encouraged and created space for national and local actors to take on greater leadership and implementation response roles.

National and local organisations such as Pos Keadilan Peduli Umat Human Initiative (PKPU HI), Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI – Indonesian Red Cross Society), Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (the Muslim Students' Association, Central Sulawesi Chapter) and Persatuan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia (the Indonesian Society for the Disabled, Central Sulawesi Chapter) activated their networks to assist in mobilising women's networks, student bodies and religious organisations.[8] For example, a national organisation, Dompet Dhuafa, opened an emergency command post at the disaster site and through radio broadcasting recruited 300 volunteers, including doctors and teachers, to support the emergency phase.[9]

> "We found ourselves suddenly coordinating the local joint responses including local resource mobilisation and deployment of village-level volunteers; and we represented these organisations in plenty of Cluster meetings from relief to early recovery." (National NGO representative)[10]

National NGOs acted as intermediaries to underwrite the administrative and financial requirements of international donors. For example, the PKPU HI used grants from 15

4   Interview 2
5   Interview 6
6   Online survey data
7   See, for example, http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2018/10/16/why-indonesia-s-rules-foreign-tsunami-relief-are-rattling-aid-sector ; https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/09/indonesia-orders-foreign-aid-workers-helping-with-tsunami-effort-to-leave ; http://www.devpolicy.org/why-indonesia-is-right-to-limit-ngos-post-disaster-20181018/ https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/10/11/indonesia-restricts-foreign-helpers-in-central-sulawesi-to-avoid-more-work.html
8   Interviews 20, 35, 37 and 39
9   Interview 40
10   Interview 32

international organisations to contract and mobilise 24 local partners.[11] There was also a notable increase in the presence and voice of national actors in coordination forums, and this contributed to greater local and national leadership in decision-making processes.[12]

Figure 1: To what extent did local and national NGOs lead on decision-making in the response?[13]

36% Always 57% Sometimes 4% Never 3% Don't know
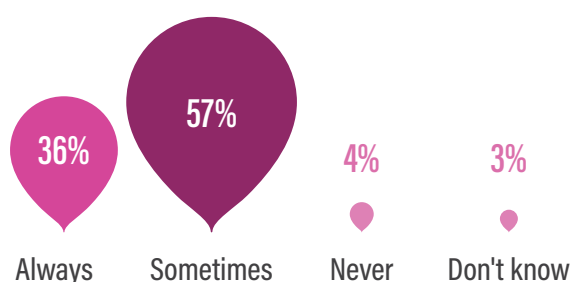
International actors underwent a shift in leadership – from visible positional roles to less visible support roles. The influence of international actors remained relatively high, but tangibly different in the way it was operationalised. For example, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) played a support role in mobilising Clusters, rather than a leading role.[14] International organisations – such as the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Child Fund – provided technical guidance in specialised sectors such as gender-based violence, reproductive health and people living with disability, rather than playing leadership roles in the implementation.[15] Respondents noted that this response was indicative of an emerging trend whereby international actors are required to step to the side, not necessarily to completely step back.[16]

> "As a local organisation, this was the first time for us to respond to an emergency. International partners quickly helped us realign our program into emergency response. They helped us to rent office space, supported administrative personnel and provided training on the management of relief funds." (Local organisation representative)[17]

Surge in the Sulawesi response

There was a significant shift in the way surge capacity was used in this response. International agencies initially sought Indonesian nationals for surge roles, and dramatically reduced the use of international surge mechanisms and personnel. This was largely because any international surge had to be approved by the government, and the restrictions were consistently enforced. In the immediate days and weeks following the disaster, internationals were stopped at the airport and asked to leave if they had not registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or their respective embassies.[18]

> "Letting foreigners enter disaster-hit areas without limitations and clear management would just give the country's task force more work." (BNPB spokesperson)[19]

Overwhelmingly, national and international respondents noted that this was a welcome shift, overcoming many of the cultural and language barriers and the sidelining of national staff that are often associated with large numbers of international deployments.[20]

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11 Interview 39
12 Observations from 4 Cluster meetings
13 Online survey data
14 Interviews 3 and 10
15 Interviews 4, 6 and 11
16 Interviews 2, 4 and 11
17 Interview 26
18 Why Indonesia is right to limit NGOs post-disaster, available at: http://www.devpolicy.org/why-indonesia-is-right-to-limit-ngos-post-disaster-20181018/
19 http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/10/11/indonesia-restricts-foreign-helpers-in-central-sulawesi-to-avoid-more-work.html
20 Interviews 10 and 11

PARTNERSHIPS

This response was delivered primarily through national and local partnerships. In the first weeks of the response, 96% of reported activities were implemented through national NGOs, PMI and the government (Figure 2). International organisations were not allowed to operate without a local partner, limiting their number and supporting the role of national and local organisations.

Figure 2: Organisations implementing humanitarian assistance 23–30 October 2018 (based on the number of activities being implemented)[21]

- Government — 6%
- National NGOs — 47%
- UN Agencies — 2%
- International NGOs — 2%
- Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement — 43%
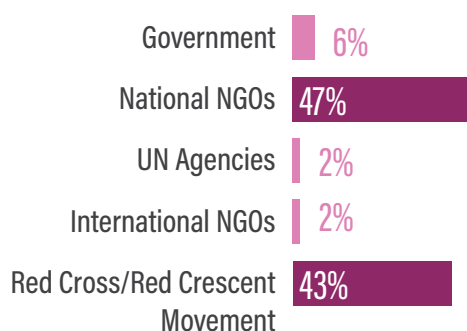
Some international organisations reported "radical shifts" in their partnership management.[22] Fewer international staff were deployed into partner organisations, and these were for specific technical and time-bound tasks.[23] In-country partners took strategic and operational decisions, on issues such as sector focus and operational scope, that resulted in greater local ownership of the response.[24]

This represents a shift from *working through* partners to *working with* partners.[25] International organisations best positioned to manage this shift had invested in longstanding pre-existing partnerships that could be rapidly mobilised.[26]

This shift was much less successful for rapidly established and opportunistic partnerships. Local NGOs were overwhelmed by the significant increase in international actors wanting to partner with them and were not always equipped to receive large amounts of donor funding.[27] Many local organisations were new to humanitarian response, either establishing or converting their operations at the onset of the emergency.[28] Local NGOs carried a large burden and their capacities were stretched. It was reported that in some cases local organisations very quickly opted out of partnerships with international organisations due to excessive financial and administrative requirements.[29]

> "Although there are plenty of local organisations, only a few formally partnered with international organisations."
>
> (Local organisation representative)[30]

Respondents noted the need for international actors, including donors, to rethink their partnership models to ensure longer-term effectiveness and to reduce heavy compliance requirements that are beyond the capacity of local partners.[31]

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21   Data provided by OCHA and the AHA Centre, available at: https://data.humdata.org/visualization/4w-palu/
22   Interview 2
23   Interviews 2, 4, 1o and 11
24   Interviews 4, 10 and 11
25   Interview 2
26   Interview 2
27   Interview 29
28   Interview 26
29   Interview 29
30   Interview 29
31   Interviews 2 and 9

The challenges associated with international–national partnerships were somewhat successfully addressed by the formation of more national–local partnerships and networks. For example, with support from Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB), the disability sector rapidly formed a consortium with local organisations and was able to use this forum to gather information and deliver assistance effectively.[32]

> "Our trained staff from the national office and local branches worked with twenty-four local Sulawesi organisations, companies and networks of volunteers. None of these were humanitarian NGOs."
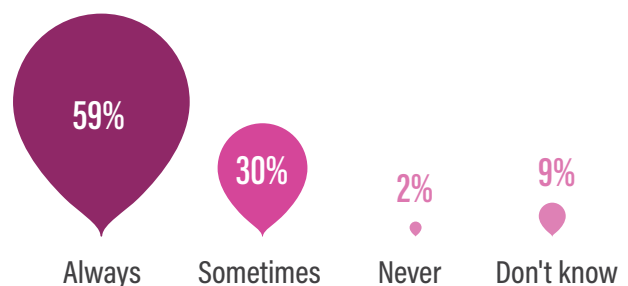>
> (National NGO representative)[33]

COORDINATION

> "... the Clusters allowed international actors to meet and match interests with local actors."
>
> (Local organisation representative)[34]

National, regional and local leadership shaped humanitarian coordination in this response. All Clusters were led by national or local government representatives; meetings were for the most part conducted in the national language (Bahasa), with translators used for non-Bahasa speakers as needed.[35] The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Disaster Assistance (AHA Centre) took on roles typically played by UN agencies – such as the issuing of situation reports and the coordination of international assistance.[36] The role of national NGOs was pivotal. NGOs such as Humanitarian Forum Indonesia

played an important role advocating for better coordination and providing coordination services for its faith-based humanitarian member organisations.[37] Local NGOs also organised their own coordination mechanisms and networks, establishing connections with the more formal Clusters as the response progressed.[38]

Figure 3: To what extent were Cluster meetings held in the national language?[39]

59% Always
30% Sometimes
2% Never
9% Don't know

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32 Interview 25
33 Interview 39
34 Interview 30
35 Interview 3, Observations from 4 Cluster meetings
36 Interviews 3 and 6
37 Interview 36
38 Interviews 27 and 29
39 Findings from online survey

Table 1: Clusters led by national actors (100%)[40]

Cluster	National lead	International support
Shelter	Ministry of Social Affairs	IFRC
WASH	Ministry of Public Works	UNICEF
Camp management	BNPB	IOM
Child protection	Ministry of Social Affairs	UNICEF
Gender-based violence	Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Indonesia	UNFPA
Health	Ministry of Health	WHO
Food security and livelihoods	Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries	FAO and WFP
Logistics	BNPB, with Ministry of Social Affairs as co-lead	WFP providing technical support
Education	Ministry of Education and Culture	UNICEF
Early recovery	BNPB, Ministry of Home Affairs	UNDP

International organisations largely supported this shift to national and local leadership of coordination mechanisms in a positive and complementary way, often supporting attendance and engagement via their Indonesian staff.[41] The Government of Indonesia adopted the Cluster system in 2014 as a part of its disaster management system, so international organisations with a long-standing presence in the country both expected and welcomed it. Most national actors recognised the important role that international organisations played in supporting effective coordination, especially in the early stages of the response, when there was a disconnect between national and provincial government authorities and their respective roles and responsibilities was unclear. [42]

"When we arrived there at the end of the first week, local government agencies were unaware of their responsibilities. NGOs had to introduce the concept of Cluster coordination and what it entails."

(Local organisation representative)[43]

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40 Online survey data
41 Interviews 3 and 37
42 Interview 37
43 Interview 38

Social media as an enabler for more locally led coordination

"Every day in the first few weeks of the response there were six hundred WhatsApp messages." (Local organisation representative)[44]

The use of social media as a platform for information management and coordination was unprecedented in this response, and an example of locally owned ground-up coordination emerging outside the traditional humanitarian structures. It was reported that there were some 45 WhatsApp groups operating during the emergency phase of the response, providing daily updates with critical data and information.[45] This included sharing sector-based information, policy-level guidance related to emergency alert levels, and government guidelines on the role of international organisations.[46]

"Every day I would scan the WhatsApp groups and collect the key data." (Local organisation representative)[47]

Respondents noted that platforms such as WhatsApp enabled more responders to engage in the response in a coordinated way. This included local NGOs, networks or volunteer groups who operated outside the formal Cluster system and did not necessarily have the resources to send staff to Cluster meetings.[48] Respondents also noted the challenges this medium presents in terms of formal record keeping and consistency of information sharing.[49]

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44 Interview 9
45 Interview 9
46 Interview 9
47 Interview 9
48 Interview 9
49 Interview 3

FUNDING

> "Funding in humanitarian response is not yet fair because many local institutions cannot access funds or programs from international institutions."
>
> (Local organisation representative)[50]

Funding allocations in this response do not reflect a shift towards more direct funding of national actors. Funding by traditional donors for the most part was channelled through UN organisations and international NGOs (over 65%), according to the OCHA financial tracking system (FTS) (see Table 2).

Table 2: Central Sulawesi Earthquake Response Plan (2018) – top funding recipients[51]

Funding recipient (type)	Total funding (USD)	% of total funding
INGO International NGO	4,773,889	34%
UN UN agency	4,578,311	33%
Government	2,143,579	15%
Private organisation or foundation	1,797,998	13%
Red Cross / Red Crescent	655,754	5%
NGO NGO (uncategorised)	95,908	1%

The level of direct and indirect funding to national and local partners was difficult to track. For example, the significant amount of funding raised by faith-based donors and national and local resources is not tracked in the FTS system. What is clear is that when funding is indirectly received by national and local partners, they are still not always benefiting from overhead costs that are included in budgets by international organisations (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Does the partnership fund local NGOs' overhead costs not linked to projects (e.g. administration, office rent)?[52]

30%	33%	26%	11%
Always	Sometimes	Never	Don't know

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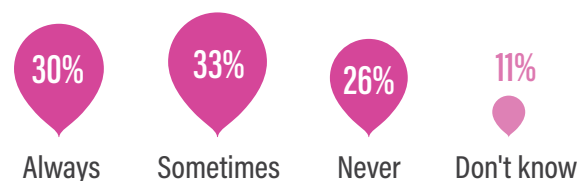
50 Interview 30
51 See https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/669/recipient-types, accessed 12 Feb, 2019
52 Online survey data

Donor compliance was identified as the main barrier to direct funding. International respondents referred to a "difference between narrative and reality", noting that donor compliance requirements remain too high for local partners to achieve.[53] It was noted that until compliance requirements are simplified, and practical arrangements established for direct funding, international agencies continue to act as go-betweens, carrying the risk and absorbing the overheads.[54]

> "Knowing that we do not have the capacity to do the large funding management and reporting, we don't accept funding assistance and prefer to distribute commodities instead."
>
> (Local organisation representative)[55]

Recognising the challenges in shifting donor compliance and international funding mechanisms, national and local organisations in Sulawesi began to create alternatives. Local and national organisations on the ground didn't wait for the international system to shift but raised income in-country by tapping into national and regional sources, such as local humanitarian stand-by funds and faith-based networks from other parts of the country.[56] These contributions to the Sulawesi response are not captured in traditional reporting mechanisms such as the FTS.

> "Only once did we receive relief goods from an international organisation. We just repacked the goods and distributed them. For the rest of the response, we sourced funds and relief goods from national donors and donations from our own networks in other regions in the country." (National NGO representative)[57]

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53 Interview 2
54 Interview 2
55 Interview 15
56 Interviews 20 and 39
57 Interview 20

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS? DOES THE SULAWESI RESPONSE MOVE US CLOSER TO A NEW NORM IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE?

The Sulawesi humanitarian response was an important step for national actors in the Asia-Pacific region; they took control of the response, regardless of whether international actors were ready to let it go. The timeline for the power shift is no longer being set by the international system in this region. The main implication is that the international system needs to change faster to fit into a new norm or risk becoming redundant and sidelined.

By providing a more localised response, the Indonesian government has provided the international system with rich learning on the implications of a new norm. It is on the basis of this learning that we summarise below some of the probable shifts on the horizon for our region. Much of this learning reinforces findings from previous research and thinking.[58]

National governments will increasingly place restrictions on the engagement of international organisations and personnel in humanitarian response

This requires a rethinking of business models for international organisations that fundraise from, and rely on, their engagement in humanitarian response. This is especially true when fundraising models depend on the deployment of international staff and specific nationalities to generate public connection and encourage international partner countries to provide funding.

More specifically, this response tells us that we need to rethink surge mechanisms and deployment of international personnel.[59] Donors need to prioritise support for new surge models that deploy national and regional personnel. This can draw on and support the models developed in the Transforming Surge Capacity project and national rosters such as that developed by the National Humanitarian Network in Pakistan.[60]

Equitable partnerships will be a defining feature of future humanitarian response

"Locally led response is happening. We are seeing a new model where partnerships should be based on pre-existing investment in stand-by agreements, capacities and

58 Christian Aid (2019), Accelerating Localisation: Research Summary, https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-02/Accelerating-localisation-research-summary-global.pdf; Humanitarian Advisory Group (2019), Localisation in Vanuatu: Demonstrating Change, https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Vanuatu-Baseline-Report_February-2019_FINAL.pdf; , Humanitarian Advisory Group (2017) When the Rubber Hits the Road: Local Leadership in the First 100 days of the Rohingya Crisis Response, https://humanitarianadvis,orygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/HH_Practice-Paper-1_Rohingya_FINAL_Electronic_180618.pdf; Australian Red Cross (2017), Going Local: Achieving a more appropriate and fit-for-purpose humanitarian eco-system in the Pacific, https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/fa37f8eb-51e7-4ecd-ba2f-d1587574d6d5/ARC-Localisation-report-Electronic-301017.pdf.aspx
59 IASC notes
60 See START Network Transforming Surge Capacity Project, available at https://startnetwork.org/start-engage/transforming-surge-capacity; and Surge Emergency Response Team (SERT Roster), National Humanitarian Network Pakistan, available at http://resourcecenter.nhnpakistan.org/rs-dash

> understanding of humanitarian principles." (International organisation representative)[61]

The international organisations that were able to effectively support and positively influence the Sulawesi response had pre-existing equitable partnerships with national and local actors. Partnerships will also be the most effective mechanism to build capacity and address quality questions and concerns such as the ability of national and local actors to meet best practice standards. International organisations and donors need to resource effective partnerships, including supporting multi-year partnerships and overhead costs.

> "We have a lot to learn in terms of how we adapt our systems to response – we need to build partnerships in advance of the emergency, and invest in NGOs and local entities." (International organisation representative)[62]

There is already a wealth of resources and research on building effective partnerships, most notably the recent reports from the Accelerating Localisation Through Partnerships project that contain recommendations for operationalising partnership-based humanitarian action.[63]

National and local actors will develop innovative ways to work around international systems if they are not made more accessible

The Sulawesi response presents interesting examples of local and national actors embracing new ways of working to circumvent burdensome international systems. Coordination was transformed by the use of social media (particularly WhatsApp), which became the primary mechanism for sharing information amongst responders. This was transformative in terms of enabling local and national actors to coordinate and contribute without being constrained by the protocol of Cluster meetings.

Financing barriers prevented local and national organisations from accessing funding through traditional mechanisms. In response, national and local actors identified different sources of funding through national and local networks, with national organisations acting as intermediaries to effectively channel funds to local organisations.

Regional bodies, including the AHA Centre, will increasingly play an important coordination role in responses in the region

The AHA Centre played a significant coordination role in the Sulawesi response. Some confusion was created when the Centre stepped into roles formerly occupied by international actors, but there were also some significant successes – not least the complementary roles played by the AHA Centre and OCHA that contributed to significant capacity strengthening for both.[64] While the role of AHA Centre in supporting national disaster management offices and non-governmental entities remains unclear, a continued and enhanced role for the AHA Centre is likely.

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61 Interview 2
62 Interview 10
63 https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-02/Accelerating-localisation-research-summary-global.pdf
64 Interviews 3, 6, 9

CONCLUSION

Humanitarian response that is locally owned and led is becoming the new norm for humanitarian assistance in the Asia-Pacific region. National governments are increasingly setting their own localisation agendas and requiring international actors to reconsider traditional humanitarian roles.

The Sulawesi response takes us closer to understanding the new norm and provides lessons for how humanitarian actors need to adapt. The authors of this paper do not want to suggest that no concerns or questions were raised about the locally led response in Sulawesi; as with all responses, there were questions about whether the affected population's needs were adequately addressed in a timely manner and how this could be improved.[65] However, this paper does provide a pragmatic view, recognising that in this region, at least, the decisions on when and how localisation will take place are being taken out of the hands of international actors. As such, we need to shift the discussion from whether localisation can provide a quality and timely response to how to support a quality and timely localised response. Localisation in our region is inevitable, and the role of international actors is still in flux.

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65   Interviews 7 and 8

Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) was founded in 2012 to elevate the profile of humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific. Set up as a social enterprise, HAG provides a unique space for thinking, research, technical advice and training that can positively contribute to excellence in humanitarian practice.

The Pujiono Centre promotes evidence-based policy making in disaster management and climate risk reduction through the provision of credible information for disaster policy making. Pujiono Centre's mission is to build effective multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral knowledge by expanding the capacities of practitioners and learners via innovations, tools and services.

We believe that we cannot provide research or technical support in countries without the support and guidance of national consultants. Our experience is that national consultants improve the quality of our work by ensuring we are focusing on the right/most relevant issues, providing contextual understanding to our projects, and enabling linkages into national and regional networks. We seek to engage national consultants for all our projects that involve in-country work; for us, this is both a principle and a standard way of working.

Humanitarian Horizons is a three-year research initiative. The program adds unique value to humanitarian action in Asian and Pacific contexts by generating evidence-based research and creating conversation for change. The program is supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. However, the views presented in this paper are entirely those of the authors and do not purport to represent the policies or official views of DFAT. More information about the program can be found here.