NGO Perception on the State of Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Accountability

The ICVA survey on NGO perceptions of the state of humanitarian leadership, coordination and accountability was conducted between 10-30 June 2014 with responses from 244 NGO field workers in 21 different humanitarian crises across the world. The objective of the survey was to gather international and national NGO perceptions of the state of humanitarian leadership, coordination and accountability to affected populations in ongoing humanitarian crises.

244
NGO FIELD WORKERS SURVEYED

The survey (conducted in English, French and Arabic) was built on the November 2013 InterAction/ICVA survey: Perceptions on the Transformative Agenda. The questionnaire was modified, based on lessons learned from 2013. The results are not meant to be conclusive, but rather to offer a window into how the Transformative Agenda is seen and used.

The results from this survey should be considered in conjunction with the outcomes of other relevant surveys carried out by donors, WFP and UNICEF, ACF and InterAction. ICVA proposes that interested actors meet to evaluate the potential usefulness of a common tool to monitor the implementation/impact of the Transformative Agenda.

At a minimum, stakeholders could identify common indicators for measuring progress and reduce potentially divergent approaches.

The following report provides a brief analysis on the major findings in the areas of humanitarian leadership, coordination and accountability.

21
DIFFERENT CRISES WORLDWIDE

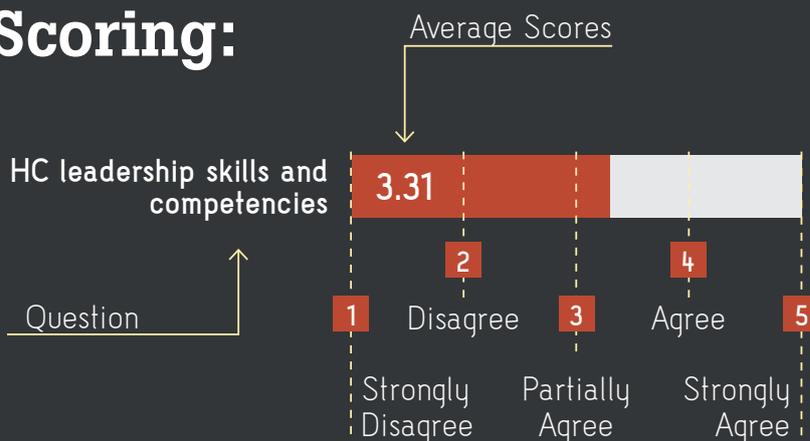| ASIA	AFRICA
Sri Lanka, The Philippines, Pakistan, Myanmar, Afghanistan	Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Ethiopia, DRC, Chad, CAR
MENA	**LATIN AMERICA**
Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Yemen	Haiti, Colombia

ICVA
International Council of Voluntary Agencies

General analysis

Compared to the November 2013 NGO survey, there are notable improvements in the NGO perceptions of humanitarian leadership provided by HCs and HCTs. Strategic response plans are seen to be more coherent and convincing and, to a greater extent, based on joint analysis and prioritization. There is also a positive trend in the perceived quality of coordination and cluster leads' abilities to separate cluster interests from those of their agencies.

The picture is far from consistent, however. Much greater efforts to engage international and local NGOs as equal partners are warranted. OCHA plays a stronger role in supporting the inter-cluster coordination. More needs to be done to ensure transparent management of pooled funding, including enabling access by INGO and NGO partners. Furthermore, compared to the survey in November 13, there is not much change in the perceived level of information and implementation guidance on the Transformative Agenda, even in L3 emergencies. Equally, there have been no perceived positive changes in the implementation of the third pillar of the TA: Accountability to Affected Populations.

Scoring:

Average Scores

HC leadership skills and competencies

3.31

Question

1 — Strongly Disagree
2 — Disagree
3 — Partially Agree
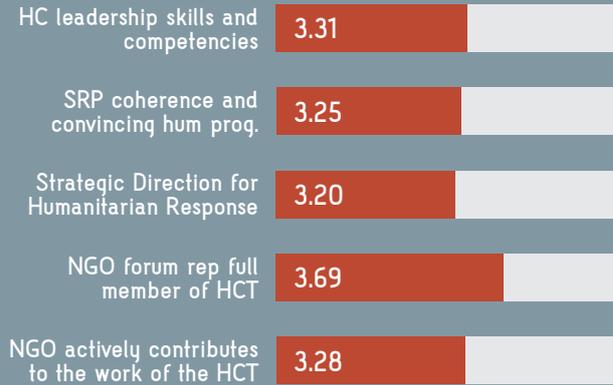4 — Agree
5 — Strongly Agree

Humanitarian Leadership

The perception is that there has been improvement in the HC/HCT leadership in several of the surveyed countries. In many countries the HCs are demonstrating solid leadership in the strategic planning and humanitarian response as well as taking the lead in advocacy on access issues, as well as principled humanitarian action.

The picture, however, is far from consistent. NGOs indicated that double hatting (RC/HC) and, in particular, triple hatting (DSRSG/RC/HC) affects the HCs' capacity to assume effective humanitarian leadership and "ability to be as neutral and impartial as an HC should be."

In several countries, the HCTs remains a forum for information exchange while strategic humanitarian decisions is made elsewhere in informal settings or the UNCT.

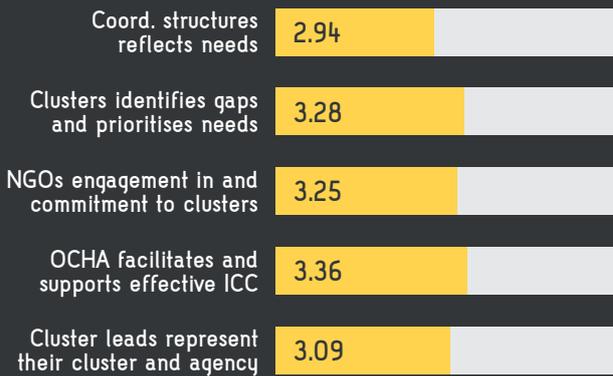|	
HC leadership skills and competencies	3.31
SRP coherence and convincing hum prog.	3.25
Strategic Direction for Humanitarian Response	3.20
NGO forum rep full member of HCT	3.69
NGO actively contributes to the work of the HCT	3.28

"The HC in Palestine is indeed very much engaged in advocacy and more specifically in terms of humanitarian access and principles. He is speaking on behalf of the humanitarian community and relays its messages at global level."

"HC is very committed, knowledgeable, takes a holistic approach and helps identify the priorities of which there are many in Yemen"

Humanitarian Coordination

"The accountability of the cluster leads is rather weak, and many agencies are acting on behalf of their agency rather than the collective interests of the cluster."

This statement echoes across the continents. There is a strong desire from NGOs that the relationship between the UN and NGO community should "develop beyond the implementing partner level toward a strategic relationship where NGOs are involved more coherently in decision making and advocacy processes." Lack of NGO engagement in the cluster system is related to relevance, effectiveness and "value for time". Furthermore, many national NGOs that potentially would be involved are excluded because they are not aware of the cluster system and UN cluster leads do not always take this into account. Sometimes they are "difficult to access - you have

Coord. structures reflects needs	2.94
Clusters identifies gaps and prioritises needs	3.28
NGOs engagement in and commitment to clusters	3.25
OCHA facilitates and supports effective ICC	3.36
Cluster leads represent their cluster and agency	3.09

to know who the lead is and approach them multiple times to be added to the mailing list."

The role of OCHA is not always well understood: "I've a problem understanding the ways of working of OCHA since they have done what they call the "humanitarian reform" … before OCHA was really facilitating coordination between NGOs and UN (and often authorities) … it has become something else since the reform…"

Accountability to Affected Populations

The general perception among the NGOs is that more needs to be done to strengthen accountability towards affected communities and final beneficiaries.

Only 17% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that systematic communication with affected populations happens throughout the program cycles. Lack of access and technical expertise were mentioned as the major obstacles in accountability to affected populations and while Humanitarian Leadership has occupied most of the attention of the Emergency Directors Group.

AAP has largely been ignored.

Priorities of affected communities reflected in HPC — 3.29

Systematic Communication with affected communities — 2.69

AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE

that systematic communication with the affected population takes place

17%
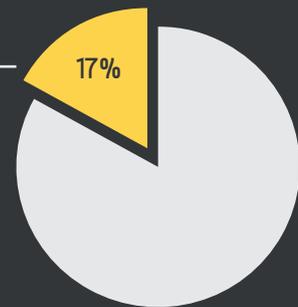
Pooled Funding

The general perception is that pooled funds management is inefficient and slow. As one NGO worker reported, "funding from pooled funds are not timely, and overly bureaucratic procedures hampers effectiveness."

Furthermore, there is a perception of lack of openness on the criteria for allocation of funds, and the pooled funds "remain difficult for NNGOs to access."

Transparent management of pooled funds — 2.86

"Funding from pooled fund, though increased, are not timely and overly bureaucratic procedures hampers effectiveness."

"There have been good improvements on management of pooled funds, after a lengthy period of inefficiency - these funds remain difficult for NNGOs to access, which is an area needing improvement."

Response and preparedness capacity of national NGOs

The following statement from Syria reflects a general view on response and preparedness capacity development of local NGOs:

In Yemen on the other hand,

"The HCT is very much dominated by Northern actors, with little room given to national and local NGOs to play a role. If anything, there is less space now for national and local NGOs to play a role in response given concerns over risk, both by UN agencies and donors. Little efforts are made to improve the capacity of national and local NGOs to respond, which would require time and resource commitments. The HCT also seems to operate in parallel to, as opposed to in partnership with, national authorities."

"A clear strategy on local capacity building exists; Yemen Humanitarian Response plan has a clear objective on capacity building; funding conditionality includes engagement with local NGOs."

Response preparedness capacity of NGOs — 3.10

Countries that need follow up: Haiti, Sudan

Transformative Agenda

It is notable that 45% of the respondents clicked N/A to the statement on information and guidance on the Transformative Agenda, and the general response indicated a general unawareness of the TA as a whole. As one respondent put it: "there is some information but no enthusiasm."

The most surprising result is that the L3 countries scored significantly lower than the average survey score on the statement on the Transformative Agenda. Observations from these countries indicated that although some information was available, the guidance to implement the TA was largely absent.

Also, these results could reflect a gap between growing expectations and reality on the ground. As one of the NGO staff operating in one of the L3 emergencies put it: "I guess the main question is whether this is trickled downwards - to which the answer is not really."

Information and guidance on TA implementation — 3.19

Answered N/A — 45%

"There is some information but no enthusiasm."

"I guess the main question is whether this is trickled downwards - to which the answer is not really."

Conclusion

This survey demonstrates a clear need to revisit humanitarian principles (with regarding to double and triple hatting humanitarian leadership) and the Principles of Partnership (with regard to including national actors and affected populations) in the program cycle. In addition, it underscores the need for accelerated engagement of teams on the ground to explain the relevance of the TA to their daily work.

Selected Results

Questions	Average Ranking (all 21 countries)	L3 countries	DSRSG/RC/HC
HC leadership skills and competencies	3.31	3.26	3.09
Advocacy/action on hum operational issues	3.53	3.50	3.24
Response preparedness capacity of NGOs	3.10	2.79	2.72
Devlopment of strateteqic response plan	3.36	3.08	3.09
SRP coherence and convincing hum rpogram	3.25	2.88	3.03
Strategic Direction for Humanitarian Response	3.20	2.91	2.59
NGO reps equal partners in HCT	3.08	3.04	2.86
NGO forum rep full member of HCT	3.69	4.10	3.31
HCT management: effective NGO representation	3.28	3.16	2.86
NGO actively contributes to the work of the HCT	3.28	3.37	3.04
Transparent management of pooled funds	2.86	2.67	2.46
Information and guidance on TA implementation	3.19	2.87	2.58
Coordination structures reflects needs	2.94	2.71	2.72
Clusters identifies gaps and prioritises needs	3.28	3.00	2.86
NGOs engagement in and commitment to clusters	3.25	3.06	2.89
OCHA facilitates and supports effective ICC	3.36	3.17	3.13
Cluster leads represents their cluster and agency	3.09	3.00	2.71
Priorities of affected communities reflected in HPC	3.29	3.24	3.07
Systematic Communication with affected communities	2.69	2.44	2.35
Total score	3.21	3.06	2.87