

Community Engagement: Examples from Relief Efforts

Forum on Good Governance, Public Accountability and Transparency thorough Community Engagement

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“the realization of justice is dependent upon universal participation and action among all members and agencies of society...” (Prosperity of Humankind)

Outline

1. Backgrounds & Research findings: Existing Challenges / Learning
2. Relevant Principles/ Skills/ Capabilities
3. Case Examples

1. Background

- 3-year project examining post-disaster governance models; funded by the Government of Hong Kong Research Grants Council
- Survey of humanitarian aid/disaster response practitioners in 18 countries / regions (69 respondents); 6 case studies: Haiti, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Thailand, and New Orleans to examine lessons learned in local engagement
- The purpose was to offer insights into how practitioners (@international, state and public/private levels) are learning to effectively engage with communities in the wake of disaster response.



Emerging norm of local participation

Legal instruments adopted by states, and self-regulatory mechanisms demonstrate a progressive codification of an obligation to ensure local participation in relief. Examples include:

- **The 1991 Declaration on Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance** of the UN which states that country level coordination should include the use of locally available relief capacities;
- **The 2005 Hyogo Declaration**- affirms the necessity of community level capacities as a mechanism of diminishing disaster risk.
- **The 2008 European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** provides that humanitarian activities by the European Union have the objective of supporting ‘local responses to humanitarian crises through a partnership approach with the affected communities.’

Key survey findings

- Engagement/participation is critical to recovery
- statistically significant correlation between program effectiveness and community engagement in disaster response.

Response	Level of Engagement		Total
	Highly Engaged	Minimal Engagement	
Very Effective	39 (58%)	15 (22%)	(54)
Limited Effectiveness	4 (6%)	9 (13%)	(13)
Total	(43)	(24)	67

Benefits of Local Collaboration [survey]

- Relief aid workers noted that when local based partnerships in planning take place, this has lead to a number of positive outcomes including
- more “effective communication”
 - “better long term sustainability”
 - “ownership in work”
 - “flexibility,”
 - “partnership,”
 - “trust”
 - “good relationships with the community”
 - a more “culturally accepted” approach.

Challenges– limited effectiveness

- Unfortunately – few recovery programs achieve high levels of partnership: only 7% viewed their relief program as “highly effective”.
- the majority of survey participants viewed relief program’s as “generally or somewhat effective” (61%).

Challenges in Disaster Aid

1. integrating diverse viewpoints “with various worldviews and needs”
2. achieving unity of action and movement “in the same direction”
3. lack of situational [culture/context/environment] awareness
4. Corruption/unfair distribution of resources
5. Top down policies/donor priorities
6. Prejudice/stereotypes [recipients/partners]

Structural challenges

- “factors of inequality contribute to producing higher rates of vulnerability” in disaster contexts and usually reflect “the profound asymmetry that divides those who decide from those who will be affected by such decisions.” (Izzo, 2014)
- The origins and effects of disasters are “global and local at the same time.” (Izzo)

Misunderstanding of concept of “participation”

- Some relief workers saw participation as “convincing the local public and government to [get] involved in the programs” and “getting all partners on board with response.”
- often a response is designed in a way that is “not necessarily made to meet the real problems of beneficiaries but ... rather meet[s] the will and objectives of donor regarding bilateral cooperation”.
- Case examples: Haiti, Katrina...

Practitioner suggestions

- “systematic decentralized decision making for response”
- “use of locally sourced goods” based on “real needs of people on the ground using local human and material resources”
- “increased meaningful participation”
- “integrated but decentralized approach”
- “exchange lessons learned” and “engage local partners with their traditional response skills and knowledge”

2. Relevant capacities

1. Participation, consultation
2. Judicious use of funds
3. Learning-orientation

Good Practice: participation, consultation, judicious use of funds

- “when an effort is participatory, in the sense that it seeks to involve the people themselves in the generation and application of knowledge, as all forge together a path of progress, dualities such as ‘outsider-insider’ and ‘knowledgeable-ignorant’ quickly disappear.” (Statement on Social Action)
- “institutions observe prudence and a high degree of economy in the expenditure of that money...”

2nd SE Asian Nation – Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004

- CDD program run by the WB and local NGO – consisted in forming local councils, in many cases of 9 individuals elected on the basis of merit and trustworthiness
- Lengthy process of training/moral leadership
- councils compare proposals submitted by village members
- at least two women and one man are present and decide on which proposals will be funded
- Occasional follow up by NGO's/journalists

Outcomes:

- While greater upfront investment in time/resources – training (moral leadership) - Projects completed 18 months ahead of schedule, produced more output, and cost 56 per cent less
- occupancy rate for housing built by the CDD project was 97 per cent, compared to 82 per cent
- less duplication of efforts.
- materials procured locally rather than internationally
- less prone to corruption.

Continued reading / relevant articles

Books

Ali, S. *Governing Disasters: Engaging Local Populations in Humanitarian Relief* (Cambridge University Press: 2016).

Journal Articles

Ali, S and Kabau, T. (2015) *A Human Rights Based Approach to the Global Regulation of Humanitarian Relief: The Emerging Obligation to Incorporate Local Participation*, Brooklyn Journal of International Law

Ali, S. (2015) *Toward Peer Presence in Post-Disaster Governance: An Empirical Study*, Hastings International and Comparative Law Review

Ali, S and Kabau, T. (2014) *Non-State Actors and the Evolution of Humanitarian Norms: Implications of the Sphere Charter in Health and Nutrition Relief*, Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies, Brill/Nijhoff.

Ali, S (2014). *Crowd Sourced Governance in a Post Disaster Context*, International and Comparative Law Quarterly, Cambridge University Press.

Ali, S. and Kabau, T. (2014). *Self Governance by Humanitarian Non-State Actors in Health and Nutrition Relief*, DePaul Journal of Health Law.

Discussion
