



Lessons from the coordination of refugee responses

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23 October 2017

Question

What lessons are there on what has made mixed humanitarian coordination models (with two or multiple coexisting lead agencies) most successful?

What lessons have we learnt about supporting the capacity of host governments and local authorities to lead on and coordinate a response to large-scale and/or protracted refugee or displacement response?

Contents

1. Overview
2. Inter-agency coordination lessons
3. Coordination initiatives
4. Host state capacity support lessons
5. References

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1. Overview

The literature review found little evidence of successes in coordination of refugee responses involving multiple lead agencies. Rather, it identified some clear lessons to emerge from recent experience of refugee response coordination, in particular from the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. While host governments are assigned primary responsibility for refugee responses in international law, they face many challenges and, in practice, it is aid agencies who lead these – often bypassing host state actors. The literature highlights the need to involve host states and stresses the importance of capacity building to support this.

Key lessons to emerge in relation to inter-agency coordination are as follows:

- **Sharing leadership** – The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has the global mandate to lead refugee responses, and has been forceful in asserting this. However, this can cause tensions with other agencies and undermine coordination. UNHCR needs to be willing to share leadership, particularly in sectors where other agencies have greater technical capacity and experience.
- **Coordinated assessments** – Assessments are a vital part of any refugee response but, as seen in the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, multiple assessments by multiple agencies are detrimental (e.g. duplication of effort, assessment fatigue among beneficiaries, datasets that are not comparable). Coordinated assessments are needed conducted jointly, with consensus on information needs, sharing of data and findings, and establishment of countrywide monitoring systems.
- **Response coordination: sectoral working groups vs. clusters** – UNHCR does not see the cluster approach as applicable to refugee responses and sets up its own sectoral working groups. However, often international agencies also set up clusters leading to parallel structures, duplication of effort and costs, and confusion among those familiar with the cluster approach. Ideally either sectoral working groups or clusters should be set up, not both. Clusters would appear more logical, but could be resisted by UNHCR.
- **UNHCR lead coordination role** – UNHCR needs to make particular efforts to strengthen its coordination practice: promote positive attitudinal change within the agency towards coordination; deploy a corps of staff members with specific coordination skills to deploy in refugee emergencies; be more open to inter-agency secondments from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and others; focus on information management and sharing, among and within sectors.
- **Inter-agency competition** - The desire by humanitarian agencies to assert their own mandates, have their own programmes, and the rivalry and competition that exists between different actors in the humanitarian sector, undermine coordination of refugee responses. Agencies need to look beyond their narrow interests and work towards the wider goal of helping those in need through an effective refugee response.
- **Linking humanitarian and development responses** – An initial focus on humanitarian responses during a refugee crisis can undermine longer-term development responses. The two need to be linked from the outset of an emergency, and response coordination mechanisms need to reflect this. Thus, for example, rather than setting up a new humanitarian coordination team (HCT) (as well as refugee response coordination body),

the existing UN Country Team (UNCT) should be capacitated to support humanitarian and development actions, thereby avoiding duplication of time, effort and costs.

Concerns over lack of capacity and/or misuse of aid by affected host states mean that the 'norm' in international humanitarian assistance models has been 'state avoidance', with aid agencies taking the lead in refugee responses. Some wealthier developing countries are now asserting their lead role in responding to disasters, but capacity can still be a constraint. Key lessons to emerge in relation to supporting host state capacity to coordinate refugee responses are as follows:

- **The central government should lead coordination of emergency responses** at the national level and support the involvement of municipalities in local and regional coordination frameworks;
- **Humanitarian actors should make a far greater effort to coordinate with local authorities** at the onset of crises and as emergencies unfold over the longer-term;
- The central government and humanitarian agencies should promote medium- and long-term programmes through government-led response plans to ensure greater coordination;
- **Humanitarian agencies can strengthen national capacity in diverse ways**, e.g. training, action research, coaching and mentoring, knowledge sharing through collaborative projects, community of practice approaches, and long-term supervision.
- **Where states are willing to take a lead role but face capacity issues, agencies need to adopt a 'smart alignment' approach**, whereby they assess government capacity, develop strategies to build this, work in line with government priorities, and substitute or complement government capacity where there are gaps or weaknesses.

2. Inter-agency coordination lessons

Sharing leadership

Issue

The lead mandate for responding to refugee crises rests with UNHCR: its Statute stipulates that it 'shall assume the function of providing international protection...and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees' (UNHCR, 2014: 4). It is also empowered to 'invite the cooperation of the various specialised agencies' in the performance of its mandate, but the latter remains with UNHCR – 'in no situation, stand-alone refugee or mixed, can accountability for refugees and persons of concern be transferred to another UN entity or other actor' (UNHCR, 2014). Micinski and Weiss (2016: 2) note that UNHCR has, in addition to its role in relation to refugees, stretched this to include internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 'has assumed the role of coordinator of the cluster response in emergencies'. However, other agencies do have important roles to play in refugee/humanitarian responses. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM), for example, is – alongside UNHCR – the lead agency for refugee camp coordination and management. And UNHCR shares the lead with respect to emergency shelter with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

UNHCR's determination to preserve its leadership role in refugee responses can lead to tensions with other agencies, and undermine overall coordination and effectiveness. The agency was criticised for its role in the response to the Iraqi refugee crisis: 'UNHCR has a distinctive "go it alone" culture, derived from its strong operational orientation, its mandated focus on a very specific population group, and its readiness to confront governments on protection and human rights issues that development-oriented agencies that work in close tandem with state structures find more awkward to address' (Crisp et al, 2009: 48).

Case study: refugee crisis in Lebanon

Following the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, the refugee response was led by UNHCR consistent with both its mandate and its relatively rapid initial scale-up after the crisis. However, as well as the overall refugee response, UNHCR also assumed co-leadership in sectors where other agencies felt they had a competitive advantage. This was partly because other agencies faced initial constraints in deployments and operational delivery. However, Kelley (2017: 92) points out: 'UNHCR could have more readily relinquished its co-leadership of these sectors as soon as its operational partners were able to take them on, and focused instead on areas in which UNHCR's capacity and leadership are recognised: protection shelter and overall coordination of the refugee response. This would have helped to ease the tension and competition between agencies which characterised the early years of the response'.

Lessons

UNHCR needs to strengthen sharing leadership responsibilities with other UN agencies/humanitarian actors, in particular allowing those with greater technical capacity and experience to take the lead in specified sectors.

Coordinated assessments

Issue

Needs assessments provide the evidence basis for strategic planning, as well as the baseline information upon which monitoring systems rely. The timeliness and quality of assessments helps determine the effectiveness of any refugee response. It is important for agencies involved in a refugee response to carry out coordinated assessments in partnership with all humanitarian actors in order to identify the needs of refugees and host communities. Carrying out coordinated assessments helps address a number of recurring issues during emergencies (IASC, 2012):

- Lack of capacity to validate and analyse assessment information in order to identify priorities and guide planning of the humanitarian response;
- Certain populations or situations are over-assessed while others are never measured at all;
- Assessment data is all too often insufficiently shared or used, and datasets from different assessments are not comparable;
- There is insufficient time to aggregate data from multiple assessments, information needs are not sufficiently prioritised and data collection processes are cumbersome.

The benefits if agencies coordinate assessments and use shared information management systems are enormous: ensuring solid inter-sectoral analysis during crises and therefore better decision-making and planning; increased coverage; efficient use of resources; reduced duplication of effort; minimising beneficiary ‘assessment fatigue’; promoting a shared vision of needs and priorities (IASC, 2012).

Case study: Syrian refugee crisis

An evaluation of assessments undertaken in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, both in Syria and in neighbouring countries (Lebanon and Jordan), found many of the problems highlighted above (SNAP, 2013):

- Lack of coordination of assessment activities among humanitarian actors – as well as increasing quantity and scope of assessments, not all followed international standards; there was little joint analysis of results at a sector working group level; and information was not shared in a timely manner. Consequently the information available was often patchy, it was difficult to make comparisons between different sets of information, and information did not contribute to a country- or region-wide picture of needs.
- Assessment fatigue among affected populations, especially where delivery of assistance was limited or non-existent – both in Syria and in refugee hosting countries. In Jordan, for example, assessment fatigue led to a significant number of refugees refusing to participate in assessments. Continuous assessments were necessary, however, because the situation was so dynamic.

Lessons

Drawing on the experience of assessments in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, the following recommendations for wider assessment practice emerge (SNAP, 2013: 2):

- Assessment working groups in each country should actively encourage and foster a culture of coordination by:

- Agreeing on key information needs to be included in every assessment;
- Encouraging the sharing of assessment plans, data and findings, at least among participating organisations;
- Promoting and facilitating joint or harmonised assessments, wherever possible.
- The establishment of countrywide monitoring systems would also contribute to a shared understanding of trends and patterns and reduce assessment fatigue among the population.

Coordination mechanisms: refugee response sectoral groups vs. humanitarian clusters

Issue

UNHCR tends to establish sectoral groups under any refugee response it leads. These are separate from clusters and the cluster approach, which forms the basis of the international humanitarian coordination structure. 'Refugee protection and assistance is linked to the finding of durable solutions, which goes beyond the coordination of an emergency and humanitarian assistance and the intended scope and timeframe of the cluster approach' (UNHCR, 2014: 5).

In practice, this can result in the establishment of both sectoral working groups under UNHCR's refugee response and clusters. Often the former mirror the latter. This leads to obvious problems of duplication, inefficiency in use of resources and time, and confusion on the part of humanitarian agencies and other actors. 'For a new generation of humanitarian personnel who have become accustomed to working in the Cluster Approach, UNHCR's leadership role in refugee settings is not always understood or appreciated' (Crisp et al, 2013: 8). For its part, UNHCR sees attempts by the international community to introduce the cluster approach into refugee operations as something that 'would serve to dilute and ultimately undermine the international refugee protection regime' (Crisp et al, 2013: 8). Consequently, it 'generally seeks to underscore its preeminent leadership and coordination role in refugee settings'.

Case studies: Lebanon and South Sudan

As part of its response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, UNHCR set up eight sectoral working groups. These mirrored the clusters set up under the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). Little (2014) is highly critical of UNHCR's approach: 'While UNHCR is certainly mandated to lead/coordinate refugee responses, introducing a sectoral response (different from the cluster system largely in name only) caused confusion and delays amongst humanitarian actors more familiar with a cluster approach refined in recent crises'. It also added to costs. Little claims that, of the USD 881 million mobilised for the refugee response in 2013, only 50-60% of this was converted into assistance and/or services that reached the beneficiary end user 'with the balance likely to have been absorbed by a range of in and out of country administration/operating costs' (Little, 2014: 2).

In response to the influx of Sudanese refugees into South Sudan in 2011-12, UNHCR – consistent with its perception that the cluster approach did not apply to refugee situations – set up a parallel coordination structure covering the same key sectors, e.g. WASH, health, education. 'This dual coordination structure led to a duplication of efforts, with the same issues being discussed at various meetings' (Begum, 2013: 13). Moreover, 'UNHCR's partners in the refugee response were used to working within the cluster coordination system and did not

understand UNHCR's role as lead agency coordinating the refugee response' (Begum, 2013: 13). This caused uncertainty among agencies about standards of operating and coordination.

Lessons

A key lesson that could be derived from the experience of having parallel sectoral groups under a UNHCR-led refugee response *and* clusters would be to have one or the other. Adopting a cluster approach would appear more logical, given the wide familiarity with this among humanitarian agencies. But reconciling this with UNHCR's perception of its unique mandate could be problematic.

Other recommendations specifically for UNHCR to strengthen its coordination practice are as follows (Crisp et al, 2013: 8):

- Attitudinal change is needed, an outcome that could be attained by means of intensive training, particularly for new emergency operations. At the same time, positive attitudes and approaches towards coordination should be explicitly modelled, expected, monitored and rewarded by senior managers;
- UNHCR should develop a corps of staff members with specific coordination skills who can be deployed in refugee emergencies. The organization should also make itself more open to inter-agency secondments from OCHA, other UN bodies and NGOs;
- UNHCR should give particular attention to the issue of information management and sharing, among and within the sectors. Information management plays an increasingly central role in relation to inter-agency coordination and is critical to the development of an effective collective response to a crisis.

Inter-agency competition

Issue

The desire by humanitarian agencies to assert their own mandates, follow their own approaches and have their own programmes, and the rivalry and competition that exists between different actors in the humanitarian sector, undermine coordination of refugee responses.

Case study: refugee crisis in Lebanon

The refugee response to the crisis in Lebanon has involved multiple UN and other agencies. Mansour (2017: 2) makes a number of criticisms of their role in relation to coordination:

- The politicization of humanitarian funding in response to the Syrian conflict has had a negative impact on coordination between the major international humanitarian actors. For their part, UN agencies and international humanitarian organizations appear more focused on winning big contracts than drawing up and implementing effective strategies to coordinate the humanitarian response to the Syrian conflict and its consequences in Lebanon.
- The legacy of tension and power struggles among UN agencies, on the one hand, and between UN agencies and external international organizations, on the other, hinders coordination. Internal dynamics and the double or even triple hatting of some agencies has further exacerbated that struggle and made coordination more difficult still.
- There is a consensus among international humanitarian actors that coordination is necessary among the different organizations providing assistance. However, the

understanding of what coordination entails and the extent to which it should be prioritized varies significantly from organization to organization.

Lessons

UNHCR and other agencies need to make a 'genuine' commitment to coordination in refugee responses, based on appreciation of the fact that this is vital for ensuring effective help to refugees as well as affected host populations. They need, in other words, to think beyond their own narrow interests and look at what is best for the wider purpose of helping those in need. Implementing this in practice, however, will be challenging.

Coordinating humanitarian and development responses

Issue

UNHCR has a mandate to lead refugee responses, but responsibility for longer-term development rests with other UN agencies (and other development agencies) such as UNDP. There is increasing recognition that humanitarian and development responses need to be linked, and from the early stages of a refugee crisis rather than once it becomes protracted. Initially focusing largely on provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees can undermine longer-term development efforts. Crisp et al (2009: 48) note that: 'UNHCR has a tendency to assume a leading role when an emergency erupts, and at a time when the situation has a high degree of visibility and when funding is readily available. But as time passes by and the situation becomes a progressively protracted one, UNHCR expects other members of the UN system to step in and to assume responsibility for the longer-term dimensions of the programme. "By then," in the words of one UN partner in the region, "it is too late."'

Case study

As well as the refugee response with its eight sectoral working groups led by UNHCR in Lebanon, two further coordination mechanisms were established: a) a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) consisting of UN agencies, IOM, NGO representatives and others, including later donors, all led by the Humanitarian Coordinator; and b) the UN Country Team (UNCT) responsible for the longer-term development response.

As noted earlier, there were strong parallels between the sectoral groups established by UNHCR and the clusters under the HCT. The decision to set up a HCT rather than reorient the work of the UNCT to strengthen Lebanese institutions and support communities affected by the Syrian crisis has also been criticised (Kelley, 2017: 92). It led, for example, to agencies having to attend separate and frequent HCT and UNCT meetings, often covering the same agenda items. The additional HCT layer 'depleted the already stretched time and resources of humanitarian and development partners' (Kelley, 2017: 93). Eventually, coordination mechanisms were consolidated with UNHCR leading the refugee response and UNDP on the resilience and stabilisation side.

Lessons

A key lesson is that in humanitarian emergencies the existing UNCT should be capacitated to holistically support a country with its humanitarian and development challenges: 'this would prevent duplication and reflect the growing consensus that humanitarian and development actions should be linked from the outset of an emergency' (Kelley, 2017: 93).

3. Coordination initiatives

While there is clearly scope for improvements in refugee response coordination, it is relevant to note that several initiatives in this regard have been undertaken recently.

Refugee Coordination Model (RCM)

In December 2013 UNHCR issued the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) which provides a framework for leading, coordinating and delivering refugee operations. 'It articulates and consolidates coordination practices with the goal of achieving the best possible protection of and assistance to refugees and addresses situations where large-scale responses require UNHCR's support and that of international humanitarian actors' (UNHCR, 2014: 1). The aim is to make refugee coordination more predictable, inclusive and collaborative.

The standard elements of the RCM are as follows (UNHCR, 2013):

- **Direct advocacy** on all international protection matters with the host Government **by the UNHCR Representative**.
- **Strategic planning** for all phases of the response led by the Representative with operational partners in the development of a protection and solutions strategy, including development actors.
- An inclusive **Refugee Consultation Forum** at national level, co-chaired by the Government (wherever possible) and the Representative, on the overall refugee response.
- A **UNHCR Refugee Coordinator** to lead and coordinate a multi-sectorial response and ensure participation of sector-leads and all players at the field level, supported by a **Multi-sector Operations Team** with expertise and capacity to facilitate needs assessment, planning, monitoring, reporting and information management across all sectors.
- A UNHCR-led **Refugee Protection Working Group** responsible for the coordination of protection services and for mainstreaming protection throughout other operational sectors.
- **Service-delivery sectors**, led by Government line ministries and/or (co)chaired by partners and/or UNHCR. Sectors are intended to connect to Government-led development mechanisms, if feasible.
- **Arrangements on sector coordination and delivery** with multiple potential partners, to ensure a predictable response. Agencies may wish to draw upon Global Cluster resources to support the delivery of services.

UNHCR stresses that the RCM is 'designed to be compatible with the other coordination mechanisms such as the cluster approach and other humanitarian and development systems' (UNHCR, 2014: 1).

In 2014 UNHCR and UNOCHA issued a joint note on coordination in mixed situations where a Humanitarian Coordinator has been appointed and a UNHCR-led refugee operation is also underway. The note (UNHCR & OCHA, 2014) details the division of responsibilities between the two agencies in relation to leadership, strategic planning, operational coordination, delivery, resource mobilisation and advocacy.

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)

On 19 September 2016, at the UN Summit on Addressing Large Scale Movements of Refugees and Migrants, 193 Member States unanimously adopted the New York Declaration, expressing their commitment to a comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) in the event of significant or large-scale movements of people seeking international protection, as well as protracted refugee situations (Turk & Garlick, 2016). Consistent with its mandate and past practice, the initiation of a comprehensive arrangement, whenever a relevant situation arises, would lie with UNHCR, working with States and other partners, with a view to facilitating its implementation in practice. The response, specifically designed for each situation, would promote an equitable sharing of responsibilities, entailing various specific contributions by States and international and non-governmental actors, based on good practices and tested approaches. It would also include measures to support the impact on host countries, including host communities, and refugees' timely access to solutions (Turk & Garlick, 2016). As with the RCM, the CRRF 'is not a new coordination mechanism, but rather builds on existing mechanisms' (including the RCM).¹ The CRRF is currently being piloted in the Somali refugee response.

4. Host state capacity support lessons

Issues

Host state responsibilities

Host states being primarily responsible for victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders is clearly recognised in international law (Harvey, 2009). The roles and responsibilities of states in relation to humanitarian aid are four-fold (Harvey, 2010): a) 'calling' a crisis and inviting international aid; b) providing assistance and protection themselves; c) monitoring and coordinating external assistance; d) setting the regulatory and legal frameworks governing assistance. The literature stresses the importance of host governments and the benefits of involving them in refugee responses, e.g. in identifying needs and how best to address them (Harvey, 2009; Fratzke, 2016). It is particularly important to involve local governments (Boustani et al, 2016).

Challenges: lack of capacity

However, host countries face several challenges in fulfilling their role of taking primary responsibility for refugee responses, notably: a) the majority of refugee populations are in developing countries, meaning that the burden of managing them falls disproportionately on the poor countries of the world, many already fragile states; b) host governments can themselves be parties to a conflict, or there could be concerns that aid might be used – or not used – to further political ends; c) host governments often lack capacity to coordinate a refugee response. 'Coordinating multiple actors can be extremely resource-intensive; often these resources do not exist or are needed elsewhere. Lack of capacity is particularly noticeable at a local, operational level' (Savedra & Knox-Clarke, 2015: 27).

¹ <https://www.icvanetwork.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf>

Bypassing the state in humanitarian responses

As a result, despite the central role of host governments in law, the actual provision of assistance to refugees is mostly in the hands of UNHCR and other international agencies. The international model of humanitarian assistance is largely based on the implicit assumption that host governments are either too weak or too corrupt to manage large volumes of aid; hence aid agencies distribute it directly. Indeed, in some respects UNHCR has 'essentially assumed some features of the state': e.g. registering refugees, administering and managing camps (Harvey, 2009: 10-11).

The role of the state is also missing in humanitarian coordination. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the way national governments structure and manage their responses to disaster, and their relations with international relief actors (Harvey, 2009: 5). A 2007 evaluation of the cluster system highlighted the lack of attention given to how systems for coordination of international aid actors relate to national governments (Harvey, 2010: 1).

Signs of change: developing countries taking lead in response coordination

There has been some change, though. 'Wealthier developing countries are starting to claim greater control over responses to emergencies on their soil' (Harvey, 2010: 1). Harvey (2010) attributes this to a number of factors: the increasing wealth of some developing countries, their growing willingness and ability to respond to disasters without external assistance and, in some cases, their emergence as providers of aid themselves. There are examples of countries taking the lead in coordinating assistance in a number of recent emergencies, notably the Ethiopian and Kenyan responses to the 2010-11 drought, Pakistan's to the 2010 and 2011 floods, and the Philippines' to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 (Savendra & Knox-Clarke, 2015: 27). Indonesia's experience in the wake of the 2004 Tsunami led it to 'become increasingly assertive in its attempts to control relief activity, and the government has the capacity to play an effective coordinating and operational role, both at national and local level' (Harvey, 2009: 34). However, this capacity has not always been consistent or reliable.

Case study: Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon

In the initial years of the Syrian refugee crisis, the Lebanese government was not in a position to manage the refugee response (Boustani et al, 2016; Kelley, 2017). This was therefore led by UN and other international agencies. Nonetheless, they needed government authority and approval to expand the refugee response, and this required helping to capacitate government leadership early on. Despite the early engagement, 'coordination with the authorities remained a challenge given the many different government actors involved and the absence of detailed policy guidance being issued at the central level' (Kelley, 2017: 91).

UN and other agencies had to lead the refugee response in the absence of a national coordination strategy, and with poor knowledge of local conditions, a lack of mechanisms for regulating or coordinating responses, and dire urgent human needs which had to be addressed urgently (Boustani et al, 2016). Local authorities, in particular, at the frontline of dealing with the influx of refugees, lacked the capacity to mount a systematic response. International humanitarian agencies, facing funding and time constraints, found it difficult to develop and maintain long-term relationships with local authorities; they also often bypassed local authorities in order to avoid local bureaucracy and reduce the risk of aid being politicised (Boustani et al,

2016). The result was an initially ad hoc humanitarian response, marked by low efficiency and the inequitable and uneven distribution of aid (Boustani et al, 2016).

Mansour (2017: 13-14) notes that in the MENA regional consultation meetings that took place ahead of the UN's World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, civil society organizations advocated a 'shift in focus from the international humanitarian system's inward-looking coordination to an emphasis on shared ownership of humanitarian response between international, regional and domestic institutions'. He adds: 'Regrettably there has been no such shift in the case of the Syria response in Lebanon. Syrian organizations and individuals in Lebanon are not represented at UN coordination meetings'.

The Lebanese government did gradually take on a more active role in the refugee response. In 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) was officially designated by the Council of Ministers to be actively involved in the crisis response. MoSA stepped up its role by committing to co-leading sectoral meetings, and strengthening partnerships with international organisations in the response. In 2015, the government put forward the first Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). Covering the period 2015-17, this was both a plan emphasising stabilisation and investment for host communities as well as refugees, and funding appeal setting out estimated costs for the plan. Despite the intervention of MoSA and numerous coordination efforts undertaken since the beginning of the crisis, Boustani et al (2016: 8) claim the mechanisms put in place have remained flaky.

Lessons

Humanitarian agencies need to ensure involvement of host states from the onset of a refugee crisis response. This includes both central government and local authorities. Where host government/actors lack capacity, aid agencies need to make efforts to build that capacity.

Strengthening aid coordination

Boustani et al (2017: 1) make a number of recommendations to strengthen aid collaboration in Lebanon, but many of these have wider application:

- The central government should lead coordination of emergency responses at the national level and support the involvement of municipalities in local and regional coordination frameworks;
- Humanitarian actors should make a far greater effort to coordinate with local authorities at the onset of crises and as emergencies unfold over the longer-term;
- The central government and humanitarian agencies should promote medium- and long-term programmes through government-led response plans to ensure greater coordination;
- Humanitarian and aid organizations can better facilitate coordination across affected sectors within a defined geography by adopting area-based, spatial approaches, especially when addressing protracted crises in urban contexts.

Building capacity

Harvey (2009: 30) identifies multiple ways in which humanitarian agencies can strengthen national capacity: training, on-the-job learning, action research, coaching and mentoring, peer knowledge exchanges, participatory learning methods, knowledge networks and fairs, knowledge

sharing through collaborative projects, south-south knowledge exchange, community of practice approaches, and long-term supervision. [See examples below.]

As noted above, 'increasingly strong states with their own significant resources are moving towards a different model of collaboration with national and international humanitarian actors' (Harvey, 2009: 34). However, persistent issues with capacity (not always consistent or reliable) suggest the need for 'smart alignment' where agencies 'make a careful assessment of government capacity in advance of crises and develop strategies to build government capacity to coordinate and respond; work in line with government priorities and approaches; and substitute or complement government capacity where there are gaps or weaknesses' (Harvey, 2009: 34).

Examples of capacity building measures

Listed below are some examples of humanitarian agencies supporting national capacity building, albeit to respond effectively to disasters rather than specifically to manage a refugee crisis (Harvey, 2009: 30-33). These could provide models for building host state capacity for refugee response coordination:

- In southern Sudan, Save the Children gave particular attention to collaboration with the local government, building relationships of personal trust with local officials and keeping them informed and involved in planning activities. This process was not easy and the agency had to invest additional staff time and resources to work with local government partners;
- During the response to Tropical Storm Stan in Guatemala in 2005, national officials worked closely with staff from the Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPRENAC) and drew heavily on a regional manual developed by CEPREDENAC for practical guidance on handling international aid and personnel;
- As part of efforts to protect and assist conflict-affected civilians in Sri Lanka, UNHCR addressed capacity constraints at central and district levels by placing key personnel within ministries and providing direct institutional support to the National Human Rights Commission;
- In Afghanistan, UNDP has provided experts to work with the government's Aid Coordination Unit;
- In Southeast Asia, cooperation in disaster management is institutionalised through the ASEAN Experts Group, and ASEAN played an important coordination role in the response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar.

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Suggested citation

Idris, I. (2017). *Lessons from the coordination of refugee responses*. K4D Helpdesk Report 225. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

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Centre for International Health and Development, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), University of Birmingham International Development Department (IDD) and the University of Manchester Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI).

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