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Information Sharing In Insecure Environments

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Information Sharing in Insecure Environments

Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies

May 21 – 25, 2006

Naval Postgraduate School

Cosponsors:

International Organization for Migration

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations

The Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies

The Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies (CSRS) is a teaching institute which develops and hosts educational programs for stabilization and reconstruction practitioners operating around the globe. Established by the Naval Postgraduate School in 2004 through the vision and congressional support of Congressman Sam Farr, CSRS creates a wide array of programs to foster dialogue among practitioners, as well as help them develop new strategies and refine best practices to improve the effectiveness of their important global work.

Located at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, CSRS also contributes to the university's research and graduate degree programs. For more information about CSRS, its philosophy, and programs, please visit www.nps.edu/csrs.

About this Event

Information Sharing in Insecure Environments was held May 21-25, 2006, in Monterey, California. Representatives from nongovernmental organizations; intergovernmental organizations; government civilian agencies; and the armed forces of the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany gathered to discuss organizational and industry imperatives, learn about current and past initiatives, and create new models for improving information sharing and enhancing cooperation in insecure environments.

This event was hosted by CSRS and was cosponsored by the International Organization for Migration and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations.

About the Cosponsors

The International Organization for Migration works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems, and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people. For more information, please visit IOM online at www.iom.int.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations oversees the development of Department of Defense, interagency, and international capabilities for U.S. stability operations missions worldwide. This includes updating and securing authorities to build partnership capacity to meet the needs of the war on terror and stabilization and reconstruction missions. The office manages a $300 million train and equip authority for the Department; coordinates DoD humanitarian assistance missions and responses to natural disasters; and supports DoD participation in international peacekeeping.

Information Sharing in Insecure Environments

May 21-25, 2006
A workshop conducted by the:
Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies

and cosponsored by the:
International Organization for Migration

and the:
**Deputy Assistant Secretary of
Defense for Stability Operations**

Executive Summary

With their constantly changing conditions and security risks, insecure environments are a natural focal point for information sharing initiatives. Participants gathered to discuss current initiatives and brainstorm how they could optimize processes while honoring organizational differences.

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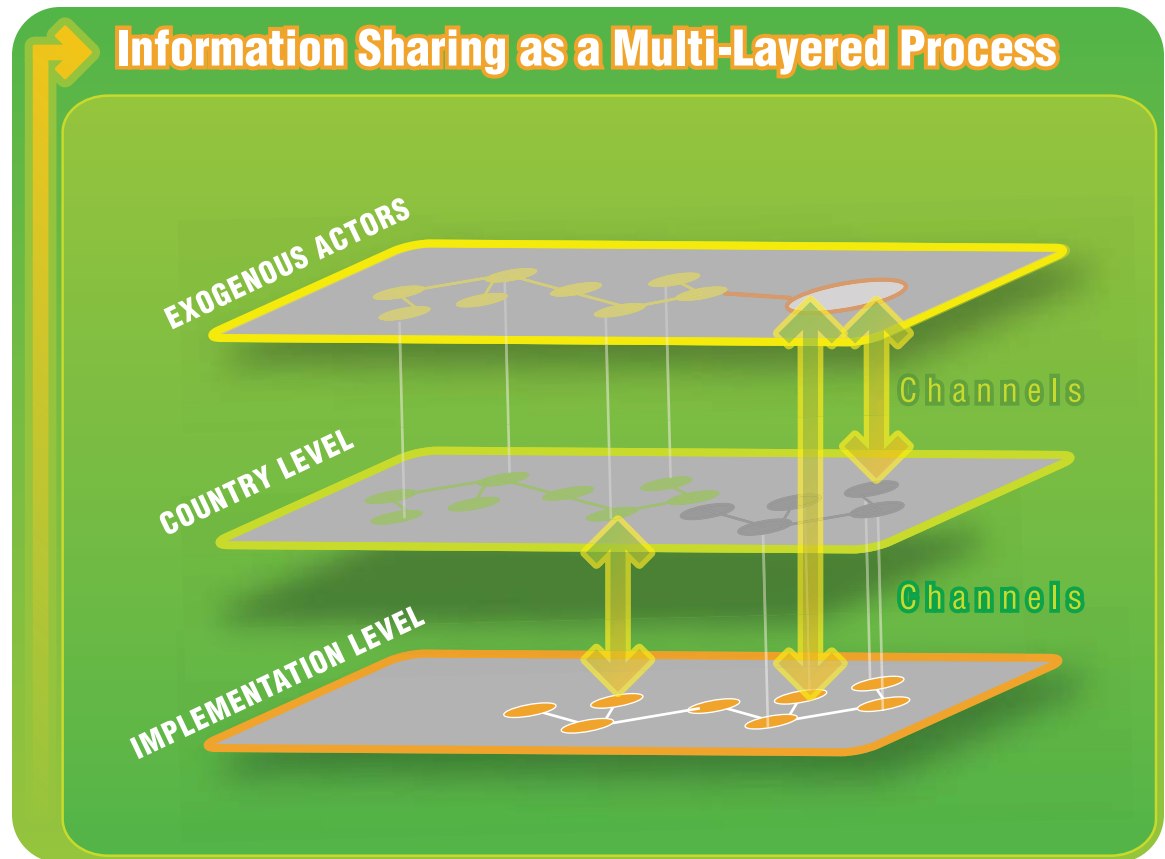Information Sciences
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Escalating conflict in Darfur. A devastating earthquake in Kashmir. And the deadliest tsunami in history. Across the globe, humanitarian emergencies are increasing. Needs are vast and operations ever more complex. Time-pressed and resource-constrained, relief actors find themselves on the front lines, working to rebuild communities and ameliorate human suffering. These groups, which include intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, US and foreign governments, and the armed forces, often find themselves occupying the same space and pursuing similar objectives. Ideally, this would lead to increased cooperation and collaboration. Often, however, the reverse is true.

Organizations bring a wide array of perspectives and processes to their field work. Competing or overlapping mandates, operational guidelines, and biases can make it difficult to share information or even work with other organizations. As a general rule, nongovernmental organizations have historically been reluctant to share information with armed forces, fearing that doing so may compromise their neutrality and jeopardize staff safety. In turn, the armed forces have often withheld or delayed release of critical data to improve their ability to protect the force or deal effectively with belligerents.

Despite these and other challenges, information sharing among the various communities does occur. Unfortunately, it tends to be on an ad hoc, unplanned basis and often emerges from personal relationships that are developed on the ground. As individuals begin to make contacts, build trust, and identify ways they can share information, new networks emerge. However, these networks are often temporary and situational, with frequent rotation of personnel. Not surprisingly, most ultimately disappear when the crisis is over and organizations leave the field. As a result, the larger relief community misses out on an opportunity to learn about new strategies and use best practices in future initiatives.

Institutional mechanisms which foster cooperation among organizations do exist. Chief among them are the United Nations' Humanitarian Information Centers and the US Army's Civil-Military Operations Centers. However, there is much we can do to improve these models. In this workshop, we looked at the wide array of organizations and tools we currently use to share data, analyzed real-life examples of information sharing in the field, and created new strategies and action plans to break down barriers to cooperation and improve our preparedness and responsiveness for humanitarian crises. Since information sharing is a massive enterprise, our recommendations focus on a larger time continuum than the emergency itself. Pre-crisis planning work and post-crisis assessments are invaluable to optimizing information sharing in the field and helping institutionalize processes all groups can use.

Information Sharing as a Multi-Layered Process

EXOGENOUS ACTORS

COUNTRY LEVEL

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

Channels

Channels

A workshop group's perspective on how information is shared in the field. Participants stressed that information flows both horizontally and vertically, between global and field actors. The result? A model that resembles a 3-D chessboard.

Participants developed the following findings and recommendations:

- After years of mistrust and avoidance, some relief actors are increasingly willing to bridge cultural differences and create new ways of sharing information and cooperating in the field while not violating organizational redlines.

- Organizations are realizing that better information sharing can improve their effectiveness in times of crisis by aligning groups around common goals, focusing resources on the areas of greatest need, and reducing duplicative or counterproductive programs. However, information sharing initiatives need to respect the independence and autonomy of participant organizations.

- Insecure environments are a natural venue for cross-agency information sharing. With their continually changing operational conditions, insecure environments often pose a threat to the safety and security of humanitarian actors as well as the victims

of crisis they serve. Sharing accurate, timely information can improve security conditions for all participants, as well as enhance their responsiveness.

- While information sharing mechanisms do exist, they are often local, personalized, and ad hoc. As a consequence, it can be difficult or impossible to apply them globally or in other theaters of action. Additionally, practitioners in the field often fail to create transition plans or effective handoffs to local peers, meaning that programs may not function effectively, or may cease altogether when there is turnover in personnel or when organizations depart.

- To succeed, information sharing tools and models must be simple, flexible, and scalable, as well as used by a majority of participants. Organizations should develop common data definitions, standards, and assessment forms to improve information sharing and usability. Additionally, they should create mechanisms to capture lessons

Major Basil Catanzaro, United States Civil Affairs Command, talks with Susan MacGregor of AirServ.

learned from global and field initiatives and share them with all participants.

• The most pressing needs include data standards, pre-crisis planning, practitioner training, and best practices. Humanitarian actors focus their activities on responsiveness, as this is the area of greatest visibility to donors and most pressing need during times of crisis. However, they also need to improve preparedness. By the time groups reach the field, it's often too late to implement new tools. Consequently, practitioners either revert to old processes or use new tools incorrectly or ineffectively.

• Additionally, we need to enhance our understanding of relief actors' organizational cultures and processes. This important work can occur during joint

workshops and through service to advisory boards and standards-setting organizations. We recommend creating joint military-humanitarian training in established military education contexts to increase mutual awareness of each other's mandates and work processes. We also advocate the participation of NGOs in the relief advance planning sessions typically conducted by the armed forces.

• Participants were divided on whether to create new organizations, such as pre-crisis working groups, strategic planning advisory boards, and crisis planning centers of excellence, or to continue working through existing structures. However, participants concurred that current information sharing groups need to evolve if they are to meet information sharing needs. Current structures aren't used to their potential due to unclear mandates, a lack of perceived value, or cultural differences. These organizations will need to make systemic changes to gain wider acceptance and usage of their tools.

• To move from ad hoc information sharing to institutionalized processes, we need better funding and strong commitment: from global and national policymakers, to donors, to inter-agency alliances, to the relief actors who implement new tools in the field.

• Finally, we need to educate our community on the importance of new information sharing initiatives, using inter-agency workshops and training sessions and marketing initiatives to build support at all levels, ensure effective deployment, and capture lessons learned and best practices that can be used by the global relief community.

Workshop Overview

Information Sharing in Insecure Environments helped participants learn more about current initiatives, design new models for information sharing, and understand what it would take to operationalize their plans.

How does information get shared in humanitarian emergencies, from a crisis's initial warning signs to its escalation and aftermath? How should it get shared? And how do security conditions complicate information sharing and decision making in the field? These pressing questions brought together representatives from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); intergovernmental organizations (IGOs); government civilian agencies; and the armed forces of the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany to discuss current practices, collaborate on problem solving exercises, and begin to construct new models. During the workshop's three phases, participants were challenged to critique existing information sharing models, including their own, and think creatively about new constructs that would solve information sharing challenges, while optimizing use of current tools and structures. The three-day workshop was constructed in three phases:

Phase One: In the first phase, several speakers presented the global organizational perspectives of key actors – including the US State Department; United Nations; US Army; and InterAction, the leading alliance of nongovernmental organizations – while others showcased field initiatives in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Presenters discussed how initiatives were planned and structured and analyzed their successes and shortcomings. Next, they facilitated a group discussion of the achievements and limitations of their model, and any regrets they had about its use to date. Finally, they offered strategies for how others could improve the model in subsequent implementations. These presentations are highlighted in *Phase One: Current Initiatives*, pages 6 to 24. As short summaries, these case studies may not capture all the nuances of presenters' talks. Interested readers should also consult speaker presentations, which are available on the event DVD.

Phase Two: During the second phase of the workshop, participants were given a scenario to work with: a humanitarian crisis in the fictional African country of Aliya. The challenge was to create an ideal model for sharing and managing information among all the relief organizations working in the area. Breakout groups featured a mix of organizations, mirroring conditions participants would experience in the field.

The groups created four models for information sharing that considered the needs of multiple organizations, a continually changing operational environment, and best practices from the earlier presentations. Summaries are presented in *Phase Two: Designing Ideal Information Sharing Models* on pages 25 to 29.

Phase Three: To move from theory to reality, workshop participants were directed to propose ten initiatives that would build towards their ideal models. After discussing the ten programs and their potential impact, participants selected five for further work and considered how they could be operationalized. Action plans are summarized in *Phase Three: Action Planning* on pages 30 to 36.

Current Initiatives

Overview of Current Initiatives:
Information Sharing in Insecure Environments

Presenters:

Jean Arkedis
Humanitarian
Affairs Analyst
Humanitarian
Information Unit
Office of the Geographer
and Global Issues
Bureau of Intelligence
and Research
US State Department

Kathleen Miner
Senior Program Officer
Humanitarian
Information Unit
Office of the Geographer
and Global Issues
Bureau of Intelligence
and Research
US State Department

The stabilization and reconstruction community is not currently where it could be – and where it needs to be – with sharing and managing information in complex emergencies. Three factors, all of which are beyond practitioner control, affect and shape the information sharing environment:

- *Security Situation:* Security on the ground can range from an insecure but permissive environment such as Sumatra, to a high intensity conflict environment such as Iraq. The level of security may be the most important factor affecting each community's willingness and ability to share meaningful information.

- *Actors present:* Key players represent diverse organizations with wide-ranging expectations around how information will be collected and shared. They include organizations with thousands of players as well as those representing just a few.

- *Information sharing structure:* Mechanisms range from ad hoc meetings that lack formalized support to established, supported centers such as United Nations (UN) cluster meetings, UN Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs), and the UN Joint Logistics Center. Nongovernmental organizational centers include Internet cafés, the Joint NGO Emergency Preparedness Initiative, Humanitarian Operation Centers, and Humanitarian Assistance Centers. In addition, the armed forces operate Civil-Military Operation Centers.

Our information mechanisms have evolved in the past several years, as global crises have increased in both number and severity. In Bosnia, representatives from many different communities were involved in stabilization and reconstruction efforts, but lacked procedures or doctrine that enabled them to share information. In Kosovo, the accidental and fortuitous location of the armed forces, NGOs, and IGOs – all of whom were located on the same street – enabled closer communication and cooperation.

Perhaps the most significant recent innovation has been the fielding of UN-led HICs. Lynette Larsen of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) established the first HIC which then developed the Rapid Village Assessment process. Relief practitioners have urged that the HIC be used as a model operation for other post-conflict and emergency response situations. Deployed globally since 2000, with both successes and failures, the HIC has recently served as a mechanism to organize groups responding to the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami.

As groups establish working relationships in the field, they often face difficulties defining their information sharing responsibilities vis a vis other organizations' responsibilities. To move beyond ad hoc processes, organizations should consider their decision making needs in the light of such critical variables as decision frequency, analysis requirements, staff involvement, collection processes, and the level of effort required to capture

Defining Roles and Responsibilities

AS ORGANIZATIONS STRIVE TO OPTIMIZE INFORMATION SHARING WITH OTHER GROUPS, THEY SHOULD WORK THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:

- What decisions do I need to make?
- How often do I need to make these decisions: Is this a one-off decision or an iterative process?
- What analysis is needed to inform and support my decisions?
- What percent of the data available is crucial to collect?
- Who will manage and analyze the data? Does my staff have the necessary training and skills?
- How will the data be collected? Who will collect it?
- What questions do we ask on the information assessment form?

Relief actors should consider their decision making needs against an array of critical variables, understanding that field needs and conditions change on an ongoing basis.

data. By thoroughly exploring these needs, organizations will be better able to define their roles and responsibilities, make cost-effective decisions about information collection, and work with other groups to improve inter-agency information sharing.

As we assess our information sharing practices, it's important to look at what different groups have achieved. These organizations include:

- *The Mine Action Community*: As the Mine Action Community has widened its focus from local work to global initiatives, it has done a good job of including all the relevant players including the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, Mine Action Group, the United Nations Mine Action Service, and the Information Management System for Mine Action. Additionally, the Mine Action Committee was extremely intentional in designing information sharing products and processes, creating an initiative that

is effective and global in scope. This program has become a standard for what can be achieved.

- *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Field Information Coordination Support Section* has created a robust framework for information sharing with standards, tools, guidelines, training, and analytics to support and build capacity in both field operations and headquarters. It also provides data consolidation, verification, and statistical analysis and has a commitment to publishing and sharing work with partners, donors, and the greater public. Additionally, this group is committed to active outreach and cooperation with a wide body of stakeholders.

- *United Nations Common Services*: HICs and the United Nations Joint Logistics Center provide robust information sharing programs.

- *The US Department of Defense* practices information management techniques through routine training, games, and exercises to ensure that organizations will use best practices during emergencies. As an example, General Blackman's directive to keep information unclassified during the tsunami response enabled officers on the USS Abraham Lincoln to share overhead imagery of western Sumatran road conditions with the HIC and other organizations 24 hours after images were taken. The importance of civil information management is underscored by US Army Civil Affairs doctrine, which states it as one of its five core tasks.

- *The US State Department's Humanitarian Information Unit* is a US Government interagency unit working on systematizing key processes including identifying, collecting, analyzing, and sharing data for decision support in humanitarian response and reconstruction.

• *Best Practices in Humanitarian Information Exchange Symposia*: Field practitioners gather regularly to discuss their experiences, share successes, and learn from past mistakes to build better practices.

If we are to institutionalize information management, we will need to make changes internally and within and across communities.

• *The Emergency Capacity Building Initiative: Information and Technology Issues in Emergency Response* is a consortium of seven NGOs, including Oxfam, Mercy Corps, the International Rescue Committee, World Vision, Care, Save the Children, and Catholic Relief Services, which have received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Microsoft to improve information sharing processes and technologies.

• *George Washington University's Institute for Disaster, Crisis and Risk Management* is developing a concept of humanitarian geographic information systems (GIS) data model to standardize data collection and its display. This concept supports UNOCHA's core geospatial requirements and dovetails with data models developed by other UN agencies and NGOs.

• *The Inter-Agency Standing Committee* is addressing the issues of common definitions, standards and assessment. This committee includes UN and non-UN organizations, such as UNOCHA, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, InterAction, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

While multiple organizations are making important headway on developing and

testing models in the field, these models have not yet become established procedure for the relief community. As a consequence, we need to identify the obstacles that are preventing us from moving forward, whether they are constraints due to a lack of leadership, insufficient investment, a lack of practitioner skill sets, or the need for better strategies. There are pockets of successes across all our organizations; however, many of these achievements have been due to successful personal relationships. If we are to institutionalize information management, we will need to make changes internally and within and across communities.

The Group's Perspective

After hearing from Ms. Arkedis and Ms. Miner, the group discussed how organizations had moved beyond debating the importance of information sharing to collaborating on creating effective solutions. Accidental successes in the field have given way to new structures, and the Internet is enabling greater discussion and openness. In addition, a growing number of initiatives are seeking to define and share key processes through common assessments and structures such as the HIC. Information sharing between the armed forces and civilian communities – long a thorny issue – has been improving as the armed forces revise doctrine to allow greater openness in relief situations.

Despite recent strides, organizations are still not sharing information as openly, effectively, and systematically as they should. Organizations often collect excessive or duplicative information without fully assessing the costs and benefits of collection. This problem is especially acute during crises, when groups revert to past processes. In addition, data collection and sharing processes are still highly individualized, and attempts to standardize and coordinate these processes have proved inadequate to date.

The path forward is through focus and standardization. Organizations need to

Dr. Nancy Roberts of the Naval Postgraduate School (left) and Gerry Schwaller, Monterey Institute of International Studies (right), listen to presenters describe current information sharing initiatives.

The path forward with information sharing lies through focus and standardization. To replicate success on a large scale, we will need to create shared data categories, a common data model, and standardized processes.

So how do we get there? Inter-agency cooperation can help pave the way by enabling access to HICs, improving online access in austere environments, and hosting workshops to address and break down cultural parallels. At the next level, we need to identify organizational responsibilities and institutionalize policies for standardization and information sharing among relief organizations in the field. To increase the armed forces' participation in information sharing initiatives, we should begin with non-combat response scenarios. This will remove a significant obstacle from the discussion. Then, once basic agreements have been reached, we can determine information sharing and management changes that are needed when the security situation deteriorates and the military becomes involved in conflict.

After obtaining community buy-in on common data needs and roles, inter-agency alliances should standardize and institutionalize information sharing practices and tools. Key requirements include standards for software, grid zone designators, metrics, data definitions, collection guidelines, and common formats. A lead organization should oversee information sharing and knowledge management at each disaster site and disseminate best practices, so that responders know where to obtain data and what has worked well elsewhere.

Within organizations, leaders should spearhead vertical information sharing to improve policy and decision making. By communicating the importance of information as a decision support tool and a capacity builder, we will increase commitment to building next generation tools and evolving our practices.

determine which data points they truly require and how they will use them. Additionally, we should identify and mitigate information sharing constraints, such as cultural differences, duplicative initiatives, staff issues, and a lack of documentation and dissemination of best practices. To replicate success on a large scale, we must agree on common data categories to share, create a common data model, and standardize key processes.

Building the Health Information Sharing Framework in Iraq, May 2003: *Practical Successes with Assessment, Information Sharing, and Coordination*

Presenter:

Shawn Messick
Technical Coordinator
Vietnam Veterans of
America Foundation

As we analyze the information sharing environment in Iraq, it's important to realize that there are some critical differences between the armed forces and the humanitarian community's levels of action. These two groups use different terminology and categorize field initiatives differently. This can complicate information sharing at its most basic level.

Information sharing is not about centralizing control, but about identifying shared needs and using standardized tools to meet the needs of the larger group. Participants have legitimate and necessary needs for autonomy; however, there are benefits to identifying common information requirements and using common assessments.

To create shared goals, organizations should design desired outputs first, as they will drive data requirements. Next, they must consider how data outputs will contribute to creating and maintaining the common operational picture. And finally, organizations should evaluate resource requirements and feasibility;

The Health Information Sharing Framework
The Health Assessment Coordination Team created a set of minimum information requirements that leveraged existing data, ensured common classification, and enabled equal access to data.

The Health Information Sharing Framework

CLASSIFICATIONS

Basic Data:	Physical	Medical	Furniture

• Facility ID
 • Governorate, Health Facility, and District
 • Coordinates (longitude/ latitude and/or MGRS)
 • Type of facility
 • Population served
 • Number of:
  - consultation rooms?
  - consultations per day?
  - beds?
 • Vaccine storage?
 • Laboratory?
 • Access to lab tests?
	• Class 1: Adequate
	  - Windows, locks, roof
	  - Utilities functional
	  - No significant repairs
		• Class 1: Functional
		  - Most medical equipment is available in sufficient quantity
			• Class 1: Functional
			  - Most furniture is available

	• Class 2: Broken
	  - Windows, locks, roof
	  - Utilities not functional
	  - Can be fixed in a few days
		• Class 2: Partly Functional
		  - Shortages of operational medical equipment. Facility cannot be used to full capacity.
			• Class 2: Partly Functional
			  - Shortages of furniture. Facility cannot be used to full capacity.

	• Class 3: Damaged
	  - Significant damage
	  - Doors and windows
	  - Utilities missing
	  - Intensive repairs
		• Class 3: Not Functional
		  - Severe shortage of operational medical equipment
			• Class 3: Not Functional
			  - Not functional due to severe lack of furniture

	• Class 4: Destroyed
	  - Needs reconstruction
	  - Cannot be repaired		

if data gathering and sharing processes are too intensive, they may not be sustainable for either the organization or the group. Common assessments haven't yet hit the mark: Too general, and they go unused; too broad-ranging, and they become rapidly obsolete. Adding to the complexity is the fact that no sector has yet defined its mission-critical data requirements.

Before the Health Information Sharing Network was implemented in Iraq, organizations duplicated each other's efforts. One hospital in Um Qasr was assessed 13 times without ever receiving assistance.

Recent work in Basra focused on assessing health information requirements for Southern Iraq in May 2003. The complex operational environment, with its multiple requirements, distractions, and players, forced the team to focus on immediate information needs. Relief actors needed information that would enhance delivery of health services, assess the current state of health infrastructure, assist with surveillance, and improve drug and consumable supplies management.

The relief community included a wide array of stakeholder organizations, each with its own data requirements and forms. As these groups struggled to respond to the crisis, they duplicated each other's efforts and created unmanageable data requirements, while failing to contribute to a larger-scale operational picture. For example, one hospital in Um Qasr was assessed 13 different times without ever receiving assistance, while no organization could definitively state how many primary health care facilities were in place. In addition, plans to standardize assessment lacked practicality. The World Health Organization designed and tried to implement a twenty-page survey form, but there was no plan, budget, or staff to leverage the data it

generated. With so many duplicative efforts and wasted resources, the health community became angry and disenchanted.

What we needed was a rapid solution to gather critical data to improve decision making, build towards a common operational picture, systematize coordination and collaboration, and improve the occupying authorities' ability to regulate large contractors.

The Health Assessment Coordination Team, a group which included key stakeholders, quickly worked to clarify unique organizational requirements versus shared group needs and create a set of minimum information requirements. The group sought to leverage existing data and develop effective structures and owners that would ensure common classification and enable equal access to the data. Data collection and management was simplified to minimize ambiguity, avoid confusion, and reduce effort.

The team created a simple system to classify and describe each health facility, including infrastructure, medical equipment, number of beds, rate of daily consultations, and degree of facility destruction. Within one month of implementation, the team had compiled all necessary data from multiple organizations using a simple one-page spreadsheet that could be e-mailed to any requester, maintained by a secretary, and hand-delivered to the HIC for use in creating maps. The tool's simplicity, and the timeliness of data delivery, won inter-agency buy-in. Presented and accepted in Baghdad as a national model in August 2003, the product is now being implemented by USAID contractors.

Successes

What made this tool successful where others have failed?

The team used realistic requirements to drive tool design and focused on common information requirements. Since operating environments and their structural, spatial,

and temporal imperatives will change over time, information systems and structures should be designed for easy revision and maintenance. While project data can be abstracted from operational assessments, the converse is not true. Consequently, information organizers must focus on the highest-level, shared purpose.

Involving stakeholders upfront increased their buy-in and usage of the new tool. The team matched information sharing obligations to input requirements and guaranteed that all stakeholders would have access to resulting data.

The Health Information Sharing Network in Iraq was a simple, one-page spreadsheet that could be accessed via e-mail, completed by a secretary, and distributed via "sneaker net."

The tool's simplicity ensured that it could be easily used, adapted, and scaled. It could be easily accessed via e-mail or distributed via "sneaker net." It employed a user-friendly health assessment classification system with standardized names, data sets, and forms.

Shortcomings

Although the tool was successfully deployed in Basra, its impact to date has been purely local and time-limited. The template was not institutionalized and has not been replicated elsewhere. When the security situation worsened, the humanitarian organizations left the area. Since the team hadn't included Iraqis and legal beneficiaries as stakeholders or designed a transition plan, the tool wasn't handed off to the local health community. As a consequence, the tool is no longer in use, and the institutional memory for this initiative has been lost.

Additionally, this tool was an ad hoc solution, overlaying a new template on existing data. The team had no way to vet data, determine its reliability, or create an informational hierarchy. They had no policies to guide the development process; nor was there a means to capture innovative ideas that arose during the design and implementation phase.

Moving Forward

Even with its limitations, the tool provides an excellent framework for information gathering and sharing. We recommend that the model be published so that it can be replicated, and so that new users can evolve processes and develop lessons learned.

To ensure that the tool is successful and adopted by the host nation, the relief response community should involve local leaders in advance planning, design a transition plan, and make sure the tool is handed off effectively. Users should collect and maintain data to address a single, complex problem. This will enable users to demonstrate results rapidly and prevent assessment fatigue. Additionally, users should protect their sources to prevent reprisals for sharing potentially controversial information.

Implementers should involve stakeholders at multiple levels of leadership in designing the tool to obtain their buy-in. They should also decide whether to take a single-sector or multi-sector approach to designing assessment, and appoint a lead organization to head up standards development and implementation. Lastly, information should be freely available to all, to improve cross-organization decision making and increase community commitment to the initiative.

The International Rescue Committee and the ANSO (Afghanistan NGO Security Office) Model

Presenter:

Eric le Guen
Global Safety and
Security Advisor
International Rescue
Committee

The Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO) was created to enhance the safety and security of NGO workers in Afghanistan. Sponsored by the International Rescue Committee since 2003, ANSO is open to all NGOs operating in the country. From its five offices located throughout Afghanistan, ANSO provides information, analysis, and advice on security issues; acts as a bridge between NGOs and armed forces; and builds capacity through training and workshops.

ANSO works with three distinct communities – NGOs, the armed forces, and the UN – providing different services to assist these organizations with carrying out their missions. In its work with NGOs, ANSO shares information that might have an impact on NGO operations, conducts threat and risk analyses, and provides other safety and security information. This content, which is gathered from a wide array of sources, takes the form of mapping data as well as trends and pattern analysis. It favors speed over precision, to ensure the safety and well-being of NGO workers.

ANSO also shares data with the armed forces, serving as a conduit between the military and NGOs to help maintain their independence. ANSO provides information on NGO roles, missions, and guiding principles. Information sharing varies both in quantity and in type. For example, when ANSO worked with coalition forces on Operation Enduring Freedom, data exchange was extremely limited, personalized, and more "take" than "give" to reinforce that ANSO was perceived by locals as independent of coalition forces.

ANSO's Role
Created to enhance NGO safety and security in Afghanistan, ANSO provides security updates, serves as an intermediary between NGOs and the armed forces, and builds capacity through training and workshops.

ANSO's Relationships with Other Organizations
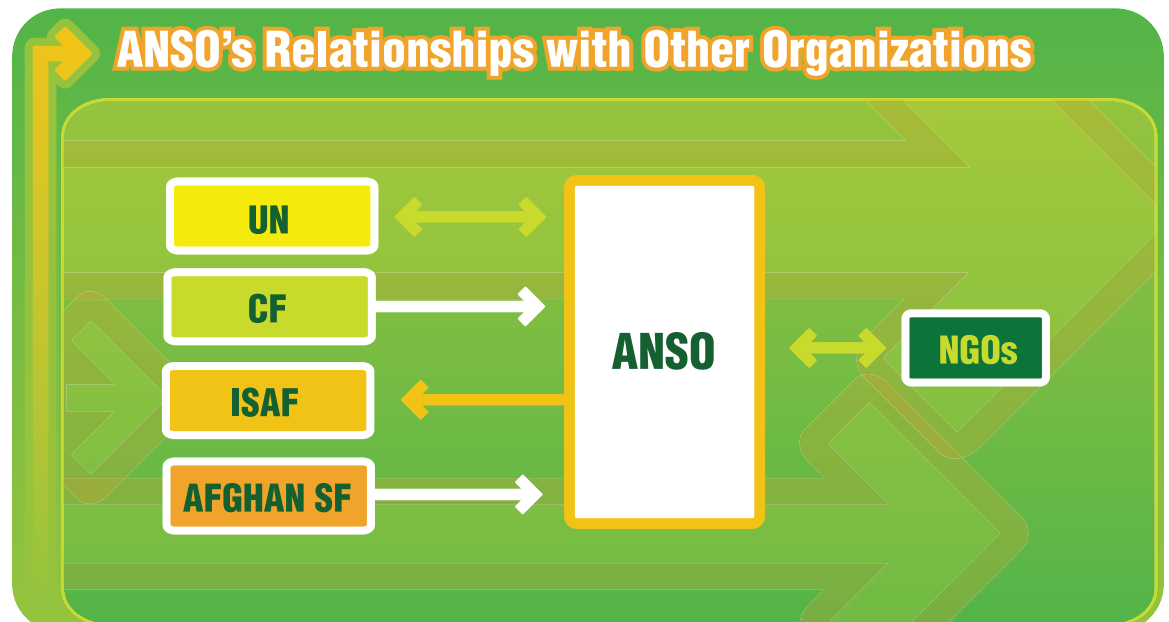
Brian Kelly, International Organization for Migration (left) talks with Lawrence Busha, Naval Postgraduate School (center), and Bailey Hand, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations (right).

ANSO's cooperation with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which was more of a peacekeeping entity under the control of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was more "give" with little "take." However, information exchange was complicated by the need to include multiple players.

ANSO's attempts to share information with the UN Department of Safety and Security got off to a rocky start due to perceived competition. Once this issue was addressed, relations between the two organizations improved significantly.

Since 2004, ANSO has published the *ANSO Weekly Security Bulletin,* which has over 600 subscribers; successfully liaised with security actors including NGOs, ISAF, coalition forces, police, and other security actors; held eight security trainings; and established a nationwide communications network of HF and VHF radios which link all five ANSO offices.

ANSO's Future

So what does the future hold for ANSO and organizations of its kind? In Afghanistan, ANSO's lead agency, the International Rescue Committee, is transferring responsibility for ANSO to Germany's InterAction to ensure that it continues to operate successfully. And across the world, ANSO-like systems are operating in Iraq, Liberia, Bande Aceh, Sudan, and Chad.

Successes

A first-of-its-kind initiative for NGOs, ANSO delivered results. Recognizing that information sharing is security, ANSO helped create a more stable security environment for NGOs working on the ground. NGOs in Afghanistan rated it as their primary source of security information and used it as their first reporting mechanism for incidents. As a consequence, it was the first to report incidents and threats.

ANSO also filled a vital role, sharing security information among all relevant communities, including the armed forces and the UN. Well-recognized and trusted, ANSO helped bridge the gap between these communities and became an effective liaison between them.

ANSO's success was due to its clearly defined responsibilities, its open information sharing procedures, and its targeted information products. It provided specific information – situational awareness, incident reports, weekly briefs, and emergency communications – that NGOs could use, which led to follow-up efforts in places that the audits identified as dangerous. It also defined information requirements such as transportation in high risk areas.

ANSO provided vital liaison services, hosting workshop and training sessions for all key players, developing written memos of understanding or verbal agreements between NGO security offices and armed forces, and working with local governments and security

forces to ensure their proper understanding of the purpose of data sharing initiatives.

Shortcomings

While ANSO succeeded in improving the security environment for NGOs, it experienced difficulties sharing information with the coalition forces, who tended to take more than they gave. This was exacerbated by the fact that there was no formal plan for interaction with the international armed forces. Additionally, the UN was resistant to sharing information with the NGOs, and some of the NGOs refused to cooperate with ANSO.

Other issues included insufficient funding, which limited ANSO's geographic reach; a reliance on unofficial contacts as information sources; and a focus on speed over accuracy for information dissemination. Additionally, misunderstandings between involved groups meant that information was not used as effectively as it could have been. ANSO would be viable as a model for the future only if it were a well-funded, large-scale operation whose design considered and overcame the shortcomings addressed in this presentation.

Moving Forward

To improve on the ANSO model, organizations should increase information accuracy and introduce better mapping, risk analysis, and trend analysis techniques. Of equal importance, organizations need funding to conduct training for groups in the field and implement technology and other tools. Finally, organizations should replicate ANSO-like structures in different theatres of concern to determine its applicability to other aid issues and security situations.

Participants received the United States Institute of Peace's fact-finding report on ANSO prior to the workshop. This report is available at: http://www.itcm.org/pdf/Field_Report.pdf.

Participants listen to presenter highlights of current information sharing initiatives.

The Humanitarian Reform Agenda and its Implications for Inter-Agency Information Management: *A Focus on the Cluster Model*

Presenter:

Lynette Larsen
Senior Information
Management Advisor
Office for the
Coordination
of Humanitarian Affairs
United Nations

Current efforts in UN humanitarian emergency response systems are based on UN General Assembly Resolution 46/18 passed on December 19, 1991. The resolution requested that five key functions and structures be established: an Emergency Relief Coordinator, a Central Emergency Revolving Fund, an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), consolidated appeals processes, and a register of standby capacities. Additionally, the resolution created guiding principles for humanitarian assistance and called for coordinated support for prevention and preparedness measures.

The three pillars of the UN's humanitarian reform agenda are: ensuring predictable funding, strengthening the humanitarian coordinator system, and improving humanitarian preparedness and response capacity.

The United Nations introduced the Cluster Coordination Framework to improve humanitarian preparedness and readiness.

To help cash-strapped humanitarian organizations, the Central Emergency Response Fund provides rapidly accessible grant monies. Two-thirds of grant monies are designed for newly emerging or rapidly deteriorating crises and one-third for core lifesaving activities in chronically underfunded crises. The fund is not intended to replace existing appeal mechanisms, but does provide cash flow for lifesaving and time-critical needs within 72 hours. The fund has pledges of $250 million USD and has a goal of creating $500 million USD in grant monies.

To improve coordination between organizations, the UN has implemented a strategy to select, appoint, and train humanitarian coordinators, as well as to provide them with the tools to do their jobs.

The Cluster Coordination Framework is critical to UN work to improve humanitarian preparedness and readiness. Introduced at an ad hoc meeting of the IASC Working Group in July 2005, the framework includes nine separate clusters: nutrition, water and sanitation, health, camp coordination and management, emergency shelter, protection, logistics, emergency telecommunications, and early recovery. The framework identifies a lead organization for each cluster, such as the United Nations Children's Fund which heads the nutrition and water and sanitation clusters.

At the global level, the cluster lead's role is to assess needs against current capacity, coordinate with other clusters across multiple indices, build required capacity, and conduct training and system development.

At the country level, the cluster lead works to conduct needs assessments and analyses, identify available capacities, create response plans, and delegate commitments. Additionally, the cluster lead monitors and

assesses progress on an ongoing basis. While the cluster lead serves as an overseer rather than an implementer, it can also serve as a provider of last resort.

As a brand-new model, the cluster approach was first used to coordinate humanitarian response to the South Asian earthquake of October 2005. Humanitarian coordinators and country teams have also agreed to apply it to existing emergencies in Uganda, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Why is this model important? It provides a vehicle for the relief community to define information management roles and responsibilities, improve their understanding of information needs in the fields, and to develop common assessment formats and data standards.

At the March meeting of the IASC Working Group, UNOCHA made several recommendations that would achieve these critical objectives: developing common standards within and across clusters; creating common systems for each sector as well as system-wide; identifying critical and strategic information needed for planning, priority-setting, gap identification, impact analysis, and reporting; and establishing an information management task force. Participants at an interagency information management workshop held in Geneva in June recommended that the model also incorporate mechanisms for continuous learning and improvement.

Successes

The cluster model has sought to improve humanitarian response by grouping functional concerns together. Although it is a work in progress, it is moving the relief community forward towards better collaboration, centralization of authority, funding, coordination, logistics, and

The Cluster Coordination Framework

The Cluster Coordination Framework is an important tool for organizing humanitarian response. A lead organization heads each cluster.

The Cluster Coordination Framework

Cluster	Lead Organization
• Nutrition	• United Nations Children's Fund
• Water and sanitation	• United Nations Children's Fund
• Health	• World Health Organization
• Camp coordination and management	• United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for conflict-generated internally displaced persons; International Organization for Migration for natural disasters
• Emergency shelter	• United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for conflict-generated internally displaced persons; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as convener for natural disasters
• Protection	• United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for conflict-generated internally displaced persons; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights jointly determine leadership of head coordinator/regional coordinator for natural disasters
• Logistics	• World Food Programme
• Emergency telecommunications	• United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for overall process ownership; United Nations Children's Fund for common data services; World Food Programme for common security and telecommunications service
• Early recovery	• United Nations Development Programme

emergency response. By assigning a lead organization to each of the nine clusters and defining key needs and responsibilities, the cluster model creates clarity and enhances accountability. Of equal importance, stakeholders can rapidly identify resource gaps and allocate funds where they are most needed. Grants from the Centralized Emergency Response Fund can help organizations meet the demands of certain crises, where time is of the essence.

Shortcomings

As we learned in Pakistan, it's not just responsiveness that needs to be improved, but also preparedness. Clusters must address the full range of humanitarian needs, such as transportation and infrastructure repair. We must provide better oversight for spending and prioritize cluster activities, so that we can operate effectively in resource-constrained environments. Finally, we should delineate a chain of command in each cluster, so that organizations understand

their responsibilities and can work together to meet key needs.

Moving Forward

To improve the cluster model, we must make some important top-level decisions. Who is in charge of the overall effort, from planning through implementation and enforcement? How can we collaborate with other frameworks that are evolving in country capitals across the world? And how do we implement the cluster approach in countries with weak governments or poor disaster management skills?

Key tasks include prioritizing needs, measuring improvements, and implementing lessons learned. We must enhance support to HICs globally, to make sure we're meeting disaster relief standards. And we should finalize our approach to information management, deciding whether it merits a cluster of its own or should be addressed across all of our clusters.

Colonel Alex Alderson of the UK Army (left), networks with Shawn Messick, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (center), and Eric le Guen, International Rescue Committee (right).

Experience as Cluster Lead for Emergency Shelter in Post-Earthquake Pakistan

Brian Kelly
Head of Earthquake
Response
International Organization
for Migration

In the aftermath of the Pakistan earthquake, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) set up an emergency shelter cluster to provide 3.25 million people with safe and dignified shelter to survive the harsh winter. Seventy-two member organizations, including NGOs, IGOs, NATO, the Pakistani military, and the Pakistani Government, were involved in the project.

With winter coming, the project was extremely time-constrained. With IOM's leadership, the group established a logistical network, created a technical working group, and involved the Pakistani Government's Federal Relief Commission by week six of the initiative. At week ten, the group had established shelters and was conducting security surveys. By week twelve, IOM was providing umbrella-grant management services, and by week thirteen, the cluster was winterizing shelters and targeting resource distribution.

Seventy-two organizations partnered on the emergency shelter cluster created in the aftermath of the Pakistan earthquake. The goal? To provide 3.25 million people with safe and dignified shelter to survive the harsh winter.

The group's ability to work together effectively and rapidly helped prevent mass migration and excess secondary mortality and minimized displacement of the internal population. Additionally, the cluster concept worked for both funding and technical requirements, with group members respecting the guidelines IOM provided.

Successes

The Pakistan earthquake provided a testing ground for the cluster model. By creating a framework to coordinate agencies' efforts, we were able to improve information sharing and integrate logistics. Key success criteria included our work with the HIC and access to the right experts, as well as our ability to improve collaboration in the field and use common technical standards. Equally importantly, the cluster model provided common access to funding and increased accountability.

Shortcomings

As a new model, the cluster approach needs some refinement. We weren't prepared to implement it in Pakistan, and had to adapt to new modes of working on the fly. Additionally, there was some role confusion in the field, as cluster leads were performing dual roles as coordinator and implementer. Other issues that arose included insufficient information sharing, poor quality control, and the lack of a post-emergency transition plan.

Moving Forward

So how can we improve the cluster model? Many of the issues we experienced in the field could be solved with stronger planning. We should develop future leaders, improve preparedness, and standardize information management plans and tools. Additionally, we should reach out to cluster members

Dr. Susan Page Hocevar outlines the ground rules for designing ideal information sharing models.

to counteract negative perceptions about centralizing coordination.

Funding is critical. With better funding, we would be able to enhance preparedness, meeting before and after emergencies to assess and fine-tune our responsiveness. Additionally, we could budget for key requirements such as technical units, quality control, guidelines, and information management. We need to communicate with our donors and involve them in the planning process to gain their support for preparedness initiatives.

To improve effectiveness in the field, we should focus cluster leads solely on the coordinative role: Having the lead organization also serve as an implementer hinders its effectiveness and could lead to competition with other organizations over funding and operational duties. Finally, we should assess the cluster model's impact on all participants and capture lessons learned.

Information Sharing in Insecure Environments:
An Armed Forces Perspective

Presenter:

Major Jim Orbock
S3 Operations
445 Civil Affairs Battalion
US Army

The US Army Civil Affairs community provides two mechanisms for sharing information in the field: a staff officer, who works with commanders on civilian matters; and a Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC), which provides a venue for military, local nationals, IGOs, and NGOs to meet and discuss information needs.

CMOCs are defined by their environment. In permissive environments, the centers are typically located outside the base, are open to members of the public with minimum credentials, and provide a full range of services. In semi-permissive environments, CMOC locations are determined by the threat level, are accessible to credentialed members of the public via appointment, and provide limited services. In nonpermissive environments, CMOCs are located inside a military base's security perimeter, are accessible to credentialed members of the public via appointment, and implement high-level security measures.

CMOCs have been useful in permissive and semi-permissive environments and help improve NGO and IGO perceptions of the armed forces as cooperative and collaborative.

CMOCs help users understand military culture. Army Civil-Military Operations have primary functions to establish and reinforce rule of law, establish and reinforce host nation legitimacy, restore essential services, and assist in economic development. To that end, CMOCs provide NGOs with current data on known minefields and threat levels, non-combatant evacuation operation information, and a venue to enhance information sharing and collaboration.

The US Army Civil Affairs office helps improve fieldwork by funding projects, assisting in humanitarian aid distribution, establishing communications networks, and providing occasional military over-watch services for events such as elections or investigations. Additionally, it shares information such as assessments, unclassified maps, and metric analyses with other organizations and sends assessment teams to monitor key infrastructures.

Successes
CMOCs provide a means for armed forces, IGOs, and NGOs to discuss and share data on mine awareness, non-combatant evacuation operations, and information assessments, as well as increase their cultural understanding of each other. CMOCs have been useful in permissive and semi-permissive environments and help improve NGO and IGO perceptions of the armed forces as cooperative and collaborative. The US Department of Defense has made progress in the area of legitimizing the military's role in stability and reconstruction operations (DoD Directive 3000.05).

Shortcomings
There is still much that needs to be done to improve working relationships between

A breakout group discusses potential obstacles to cross-community information sharing.

the armed forces and the humanitarian community. Relief actors are slow to recognize each other's accomplishments and often don't use each other's resources. The physical location of CMOCs – which are often on military compounds – reduces their access and increases NGO and IGO reluctance to use them.

While the US Department of Defense has made progress in the area of openness, large policy issues and cultural differences between the US armed forces, NGOs, and IGOs require continued attention. Additionally, we don't invest adequate resources in conducting pre-deployment training to provide civil-military staff with skill sets needed for

fieldwork such as assessment, project management, and information management.

Moving Forward

So how can we improve cooperation? A first step is to focus on how we can change policy and how it should then be implemented. Next, we should identify the full range of areas where we can share information and resources. Finally, the US armed forces need to strengthen their civil affairs capabilities. We're doing that by providing US Army Civil Affairs teams with doctrine and training in civil information management before they deploy to crises, as well as strengthening civil affairs capabilities within the US Marine Corps.

Civil-Military Information Sharing in Insecure Environments:
An NGO Perspective

Presenter:

Linda Poteat
Senior Program Manager
for Disaster Response
Humanitarian Policy
and Practice Unit
InterAction

Civil and military organizations meet and work in the field under a wide array of conditions including natural disasters, complex emergencies, non-permissive environments, and counterinsurgency operations. Our relationships often depend on one key factor: whether we are perceived as belligerent or non-belligerent.

The security of NGO operations is dependent on community acceptance. Our expatriate staff work side-by-side along nationals, while our international NGOs work through local partners. We all develop local networks and local capacity.

NGOs are subject to multiple standards, including the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct, SPHERE guidelines, and organizational guidelines. We espouse the following principles:

- *Neutrality:* Our aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.

- *Impartiality:* Aid is given regardless of race, creed, or nationality and is based on need alone.

- *Independence:* Aid agencies shall not act as instruments of government or foreign policy.

These principles impact our willingness to work with the military, as NGOs avoid any situation that would cause them to violate these principles, or even create the appearance of a conflict of interest.

As we work in the field, we are balancing our humanitarian mission to provide assistance to victims with very real personal security concerns. In addition, we strive to "do no harm," realizing that aid can sometimes worsen situations rather than improve them.

It's important to remember that most humanitarian emergencies do not involve the armed forces. NGOs enter a country at the host government's invitation, after an emergency has crippled the country's disaster response systems. Our work typically happens both before the military arrives and after it departs.

There are many different actors in disaster relief, including UN agencies; the US, host, and other governments; NGOs; and donors. We use multiple structures to coordinate relief, both globally and in the field. Ideally, our efforts are coordinated with the host government.

NGOs have some very real concerns about working with the armed forces. If the local population perceives that we are violating our principles, we could be denied access to the community or even become a target. In addition, we face difficulties sharing information: There is often an inadequate distinction between appropriate information exchange and military intelligence gathering. As a result, NGOs would like to see the military refer humanitarian assistance issues to a civilian coordinating body.

Representative Actors in Disaster Relief Situations

NGO
UNHCR
NGO

UN Agencies: UNICEF WFP UNDP
ICRC

USG
NGO

Donor
NGO
Donor
NGO

NGO
NGO

Red Cross

Other Governments
Host Country Government

NGO
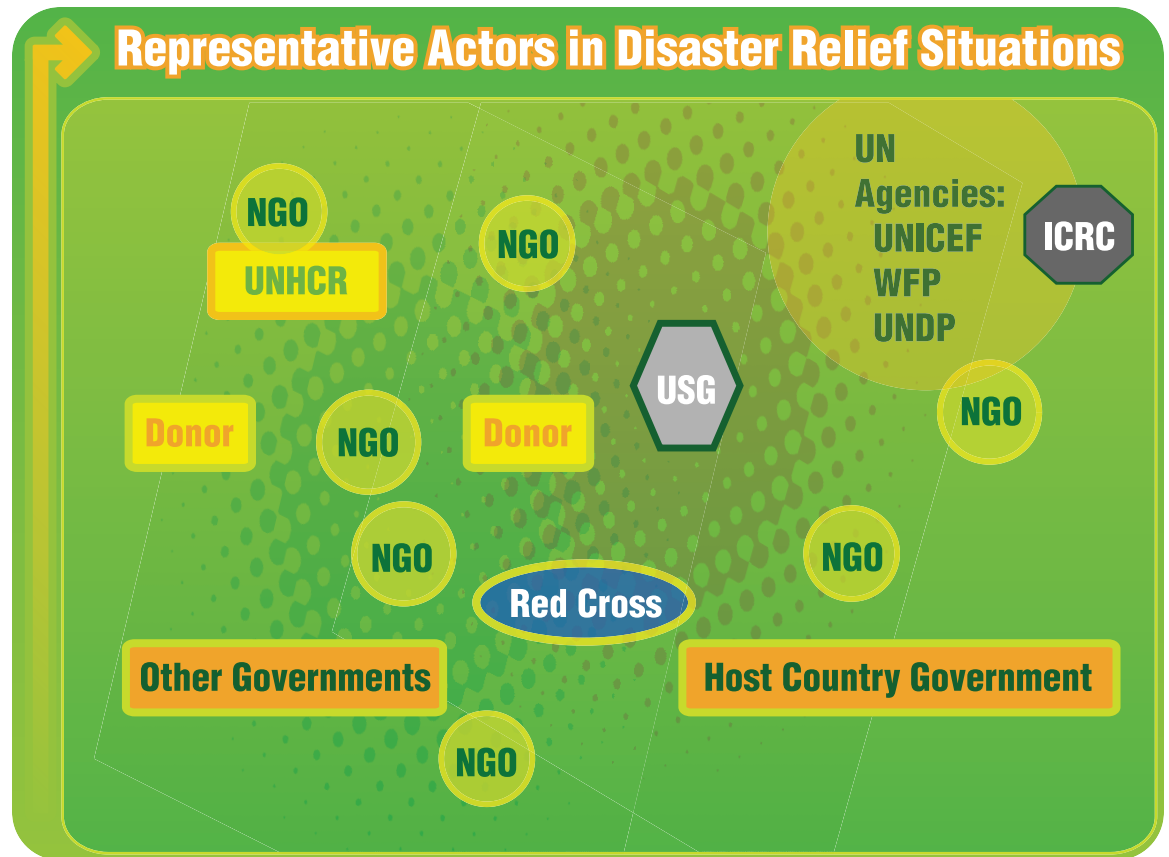
Potential Actors in Disaster Relief
InterAction's view of the potential actors involved in a disaster relief effort.

We do, however, seek certain support services from the military, including security services and briefings, convoy support, technical assistance, and access to remote areas, ports, and airfields.

InterAction's work with the military includes ongoing dialogue on civil-military relations in nonpermissive environments, which has resulted in recommended guidelines and Joint Pub 3-08 published on March 17, 2006. We have seconded experienced NGO staff to the US Central Command and the Humanitarian Operations Center-Kuwait City, produced civil-military DVDs for NGO and military personnel, and participated in workshops and simulations.

Successes
After much mutual mistrust, NGOs are now talking to the armed forces. InterAction is at the forefront of that effort, helping to develop

and institutionalize NGO standards, a code of conduct, and guidelines that will protect our founding principles.

Shortcomings
NGOs are wary of working with the armed forces, based on past experiences and perceptions. The armed forces' militarization of humanitarian affairs is strengthening local perceptions that NGOs are displaying partiality in their work with the military. And this has sometimes been the case.

Moving Forward
Our current dialogue has not resolved the issue of how to integrate military and civilian efforts in relief operations. We need to work harder to understand each others' organizational cultures. And we need to resolve process issues. NGOs prefer to work with a civilian body rather than collaborate directly with the armed forces.

Phase Two: Designing Ideal Information Sharing Models

The scenario: The fictional country of Aliya, where an upsurge of violence is threatening residents and relief workers alike. How can groups optimize information sharing in this dangerous environment as they wait for UN peacekeepers to arrive?

Building on the current initiatives shared by presenters, participants were challenged to create ideal designs for information sharing in insecure environments. Designs were defined as alternative approaches, models, frameworks, or images that could guide participant planning and behavior. Participants were encouraged to think creatively as many designs were possible and were contingent on context.

To anchor discussions, participants were given a specific scenario: an insecure environment in which multiple communities, including NGOs, IGOs, governments, and the armed forces would be involved. Participants were asked to develop an ideal design that addressed scenario needs and constraints. They were encouraged to incorporate new initiatives, either ones introduced by the presenters or other ideas, as appropriate. Organizers assigned participants to four mixed community groups to balance representation from NGOs, IGOs, government civilians, and the armed forces in each group.

Participants created four distinct models to respond to the challenges presented by the Aliya scenario. Summaries follow the scenario description below.

The Scenario: An Escalating Humanitarian Crisis in Aliya

There is a humanitarian crisis in the Dassem region of the fictional African country of Aliya. The crisis is caused by an upsurge in the level of violence from a long-running inter-ethnic conflict. A significant percentage of the indigenous population is displaced from their homes and communities. The violence is sporadic but significant, making it unsafe for indigenous civilians and international actors to live and work throughout the region of Dassem. The population, as well as the crisis, have spilled over into the border region of the neighboring country, Tango.

A small UN peacekeeping mission has been overseeing the cease-fire, now defunct, as observers. The UN Security Council has just passed a resolution under Chapter VII of the UN charter authorizing a major increase in the peacekeeping force and mandating the use of force to protect at-risk civilians living in the region. Under the auspices of this resolution, 14,000 UN peacekeepers will be sent to the region. However, their arrival and increased operational capability will likely materialize slowly over the next four to six months. In the interim, the original UN peacekeeping force will remain onsite, but will focus almost exclusively on observing and reporting on the situation and maintaining a military headquarters capability.

The US has decided not to participate in the UN mission. However, the US has deployed a military Joint Task Force (JTF) to neighboring Tango to assist in the broader relief effort and to locate and destroy small bands of international terrorists that operate in the border region. The JTF was specially organized to assist relief efforts while accomplishing the combat mission. It has significant capabilities in helicopter lift, surface transportation, medical care, logistics

planning, and deployment of rapid reaction teams for security and intelligence.

Humanitarian relief and development organizations have been active in the region for many years, but have operated at a low level. Because of recent insecurity, they have had to cease most of their activities in Dassem, withdrawing operations to Tango. In anticipation of the influx of UN peacekeepers, relief organizations are dramatically and speedily increasing their capacity throughout the area: The number of groups present has tripled in the last three weeks.

Participants were instructed to brainstorm ideal models for information sharing that would work with scenario constraints, involve all key relief actors, and adapt to changing conditions. Group reports follow.

Design 1: A Temporal Model for Multi-Phase Operations

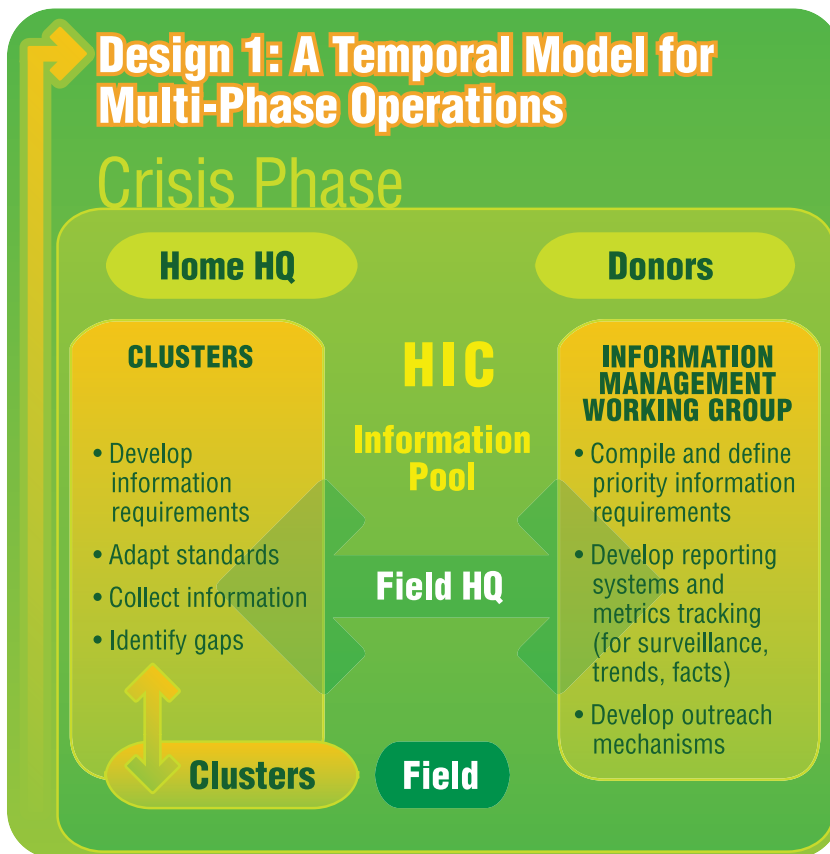The group designed a consensual, transparent, and adaptive framework that will accommodate variable states of information sharing during different operational phases. The framework, which would be developed pre-crisis, would ensure the safe and effective supply of humanitarian assistance, while addressing key conflict drivers.

The group assumed that not all organizations would participate, but those that did would help design collaborative processes and architectures, while continuing to refine their own internal tools. The group also assumed that information would be shared bilaterally and multilaterally and that resources for this initiative were unrestricted.

An ideal system would be developed pre-crisis to allow for refinement and community buy-in. It would recognize and accommodate for divergent organization priorities, build on current information sharing mechanisms, and create agreed-upon information requirements and standards. It would provide adequate staff, resources, and locations to enable easy access; incorporate multiple data sources; facilitate outreach; and capture lessons learned.

Information to be shared would include geospatial and demographic data; intelligence on inaccessible areas; information on transportation, communications, and essential services infrastructure; security updates; key contacts and their roles, responsibilities, and locations; economic and political background data; information on what organizations are doing and where, including their capabilities and capacities; and data on the affected population.

So how would the model work in Aliya? Pre-crisis, responding agencies would take the lead creating information management structures at the headquarters level. They would establish a standing working group to develop training, planning, and standardized tools such as common assessment forms, information collection plans, and information management mechanisms and capacity. Critical stakeholders, such as corporate

Design 1: A Temporal Model for Multi-Phase Operations

Crisis Phase

Home HQ   **Donors**

CLUSTERS

• Develop information requirements
• Adapt standards
• Collect information
• Identify gaps

HIC

Information Pool

Field HQ

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

• Compile and define priority information requirements
• Develop reporting systems and metrics tracking (for surveillance, trends, facts)
• Develop outreach mechanisms

Clusters   **Field**

headquarters and donors, would collaborate on system design.

As conflict develops in Aliya, an information management working group, comprised of a representative from each stakeholder organization, will create and manage a central clearinghouse to facilitate information flow. Using participants' requirements as a guide, this working group will improve the information pool established pre-crisis, and facilitate information flow across and within organizations. After the crisis ends, the group will share lessons learned with the larger relief community so that all organizations can refine their processes.

The model would address all of the different information types organizations need, and use the HIC to link relevant parties. The HIC would contribute to the effort by establishing key contacts and existing resources and information on potential intervention areas. The model would also use the cluster system at the field headquarters level to adapt

standards, collect information, and identify gaps. At the field level, the cluster would coordinate operations.
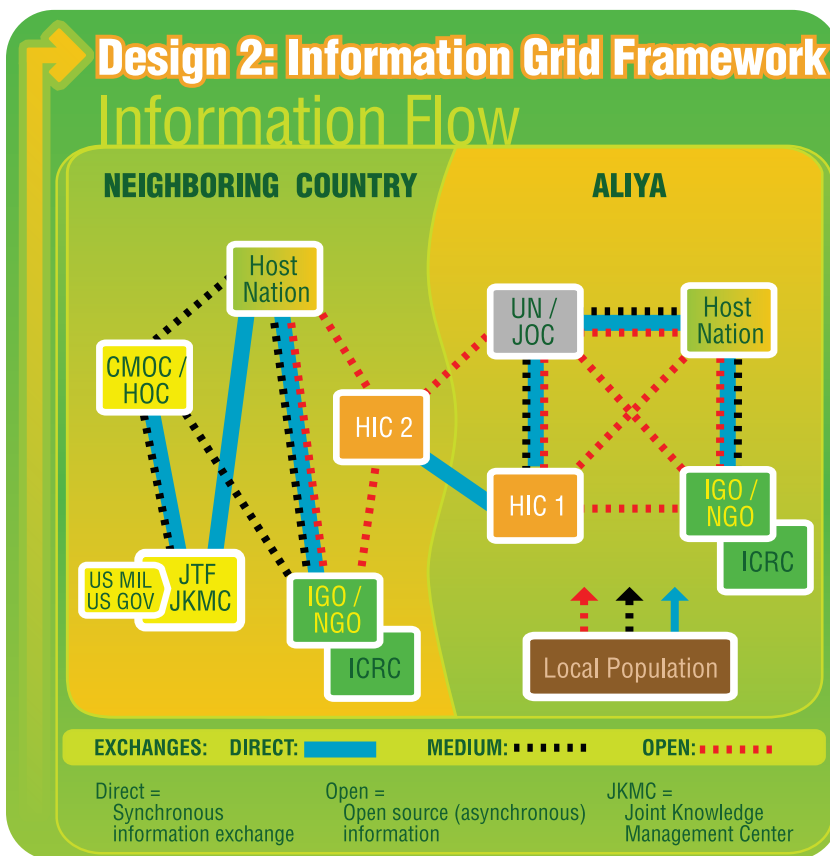
Design 2: Information Grid Framework

The purpose of this framework is to support national and international policy, provide material aid and protection for vulnerable populations, pursue development objectives, increase national and regional stability, and ensure personnel security.

The group understands and assumes that information will not always be perfect, and that data types and formats may differ across organizations. Additionally, actors may withhold information at times, but will expect access to shared data.

The framework would provide security and protection data, such as information on threats, incidents, and troop location; crisis and response updates; host nation demographics and environmental conditions; infrastructure data points (e.g., communication, transportation, power and water, and health services); political climate assessments; and general information on all external actors (e.g., mission, mandate, organization chart, and ROE).

Information would be shared asynchronously, via web postings, e-mail, mailers, broadcast media, and the enterprise information system; and synchronously, via in-person meetings, video teleconferences, online collaboration and messaging, phone, or two-way radio. The group expects that asynchronous messaging would predominate.

The group recommends that information sharing policies, procedures, and capabilities be established and managed within key actor centers. These centers would include the HIC or its equivalent; the armed forces (e.g., UN peacekeepers); and the military's CMOC, or equivalent. A skilled information manager at each center will facilitate information

Design 2: Information Grid Framework
Information Flow

NEIGHBORING COUNTRY   ALIYA

Host Nation

CMOC / HOC

HIC 2

US MIL US GOV   JTF JKMC

IGO / NGO

ICRC

UN / JOC

Host Nation

HIC 1

IGO / NGO

ICRC

Local Population

EXCHANGES: DIRECT: MEDIUM: OPEN:

Direct = Synchronous information exchange

Open = Open source (asynchronous) information

JKMC = Joint Knowledge Management Center

collection and distribution. Information will be shared with the host nation.

An information standards committee, developed pre-crisis, would create common database formats and assessment coding categories. The group also proposed the establishment of centralized facilities, management personnel and tools, a communications infrastructure, and access rights.

Design 3: Information Sharing Window and Flow Model

Key stakeholders for this model include the UN and Red Cross, the Joint Task Force, and NGOs. Ideally, they will have bought into the shared mission: to facilitate information sharing to alleviate and prevent suffering without compromising individual organizations' mandates.

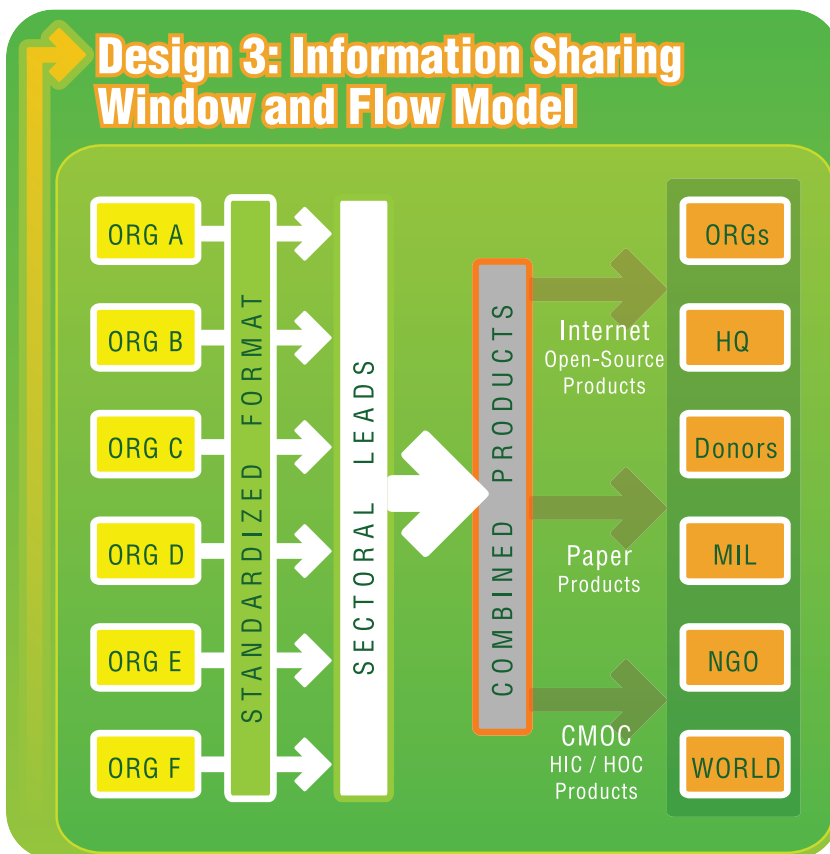Stakeholders will work together on developing and maintaining standards,

providing training, obtaining donor support and funding for standards and data collection, and sensitizing all parties to the importance of the model and its mission.
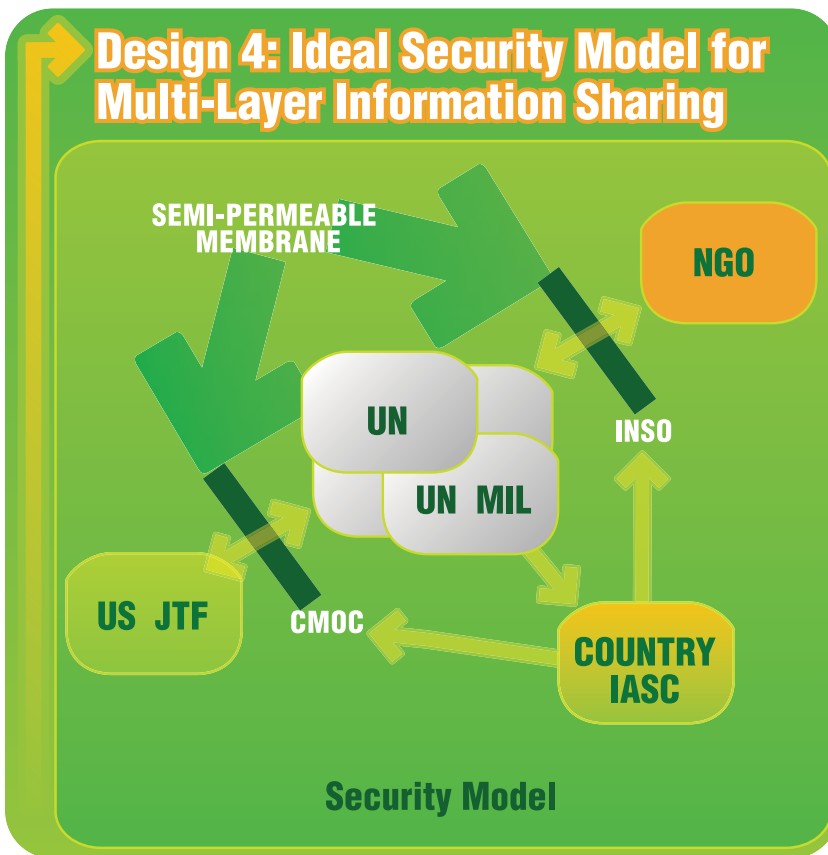
The model recognizes that stakeholders will jointly determine what information is of common interest and how it is shared. The JTF and relief community will have overlapping information interests, but will also have requirements that are unique to individual organizations. For example, JTF information interests include: the number of displaced persons in Tango, locations of relief organizations' operational areas, security information, and the status of transportation routes. The relief organizations' information interests include: locations of populations at risk, security information, critical resource requirements, the location of JTF personnel (e.g., CMOC), maps, logistics (e.g., roads and their accessibility), and the location of all relief organizations' operations.

Design 4: Ideal Security Model for Multi-Layer Information Sharing

The group compared the information management challenge to herding cats, noting that the information to be shared and exchanged will change over time, in terms of type, quality, frequency and amount. Key stakeholders would be involved at a regional level, and information sharing and management expectations would be explicitly addressed.

The group identified a wide array of information needs, including topographical, weather, demographic, and cultural data; and intelligence on local populations including their habitat, locations, movements, needs, protection concerns, and perceptions of humanitarian actors. The group wanted to know about local infrastructures, emergency services, and the location of mines and unexploded ordnance. The group wanted to receive safety and security updates and incident reports for both Aliya and Tango, as

Design 3: Information Sharing Window and Flow Model

ORG A — ORG B — ORG C — ORG D — ORG E — ORG F — STANDARDIZED FORMAT — SECTORAL LEADS — COMBINED PRODUCTS — Internet Open-Source Products — Paper Products — CMOC HIC / HOC Products — ORGs — HQ — Donors — MIL — NGO — WORLD

Design 4: Ideal Security Model for Multi-Layer Information Sharing

SEMI-PERMEABLE MEMBRANE

NGO

UN

INSO

UN MIL

US JTF

CMOC

COUNTRY IASC

Security Model

well as obtain information on the movement and operations of troops.

The group's model incorporates dynamics that are horizontal at the field level and vertical across field operations; country or theatre-level managers; and corporate headquarters, donors, and other agencies. It assumes that the UN is serving as the primary coordinator at the field operational level, and that coordination at the country level is occurring through the IASC. The model also incorporates mediating bodies at the local level following the ANSO and CMOC concepts.

The Group's Perspective

After presenting their ideal designs, participants talked more generally about information sharing challenges organizations face in the field. Several took issue with the term "ideal state," since organizations can have widely divergent goals. Said one: "The presentations of ideal designs suggest that humanitarian organizations and the armed forces have a common goal. However that may be overstating the NGO perspective." Another participant took this line of logic a step further, stating: "It may not always be true that NGOs want to help the armed forces achieve some of their goals more effectively."

The group decided to use the cluster framework as the best means to collect information, create a common assessment, and identify gaps. They also recommended the establishment of a civilian equipment of CIMIC to function as a coordination body.

However it plays out in the field, increased cooperation allows all relief actors to work more effectively. It's important to recognize that overlapping mandates and work processes mean that there will always be some redundancy in field work, even if information sharing processes are optimized. Said one participant: "The information management challenge is like herding cats. But that implies that we are trying to get cats to become cattle, and I don't agree that it would be appropriate or accepted."

Phase Three: Action Planning

From improving organizational cultural understanding, to creating pre-crisis working groups, to optimizing Humanitarian Information Centers, participants rose to the challenge of creating action plans that would improve information sharing for all stakeholders.

After presenting their ideal models for information sharing, participants were asked to identify initiatives that could help operationalize these designs, then narrow their focus to a single initiative for group consideration. Participants proposed 10 initiatives. Highlights follow:

Initiative A: Establish interagency consultative planning to improve conflict prevention. Begin planning at the early warning signs, rather than waiting for the actual crisis to occur. Identify what planning structures and assessment tools can be used to improve collaboration in crisis planning, without impeding NGO independent action. Engage multi-agency participants in advising the US Joint Forces Command on the development of a conflict-prevention exercise scenario.

Initiative B: Improve practitioners' understanding of organizational cultures so that groups can enhance cooperation during complex humanitarian emergencies. Increase awareness of organizational goals, mandates, rules of engagement, principles, and values. Address biases and attitudes that inhibit effective interaction. Embrace differences rather than attempting to change each another, either individually or organizationally.

Initiative C: Establish an independent data standards working group to create practical standards for both analysis and operational support. Address implementation issues such as data maintenance, training requirements, and support for field implementation. Convene sectoral or specialist area sub-groups

as needed. Consider deploying a knowledge officer to create the necessary architecture needed to implement new standards early in the crisis.

Initiative D: Protect children in conflict environments. Engage the armed forces on how best to provide protection to children and women. Develop education, training, exercises, and other tools. Address the issue of child soldiers.

Initiative E: Create a collaboration website for humanitarian assistance. Capture lessons learned and offer blog and online chat on topics of interest. Increase accessibility by having an NGO host the site. Ensure security, so that users can freely exchange information. Work towards the creation of a common operational picture in any given crisis situation.

Initiative F: Increase low-cost Internet access in isolated areas to promote information sharing. Involve local government stakeholders in setup, deployment, and ongoing support.

Initiative G: Develop rapid, simple information sharing mechanisms. Create information sharing systems that can be deployed in the first days of a crisis response. Systems should be simple and not technology-dependent.

Initiative H: Establish a pre-crisis working group for information sharing planning and procedures. Create a forum for multi-

organization stakeholders. Establish goals, procedures, and mechanisms for information sharing. Involve high-level participants to address policy issues as appropriate. Convene a pre-deployment group when the crisis is emerging or as emergency response teams deploy, if the crisis is unanticipated.

Initiative I: Engage NGOs and IGOs in Department of Defense operational planning. Create a process to involve NGO and IGO communities in military planning for complex humanitarian emergencies. Identify appropriate contacts and motivate participation. *This initiative was merged with Initiative A.*

Initiative J: Improve the HIC. Acknowledge and address past problems, identify improvements, and compile lessons learned. Engage donor support. Develop and conduct training. *This initiative was merged with Initiative G.*

After discussing all 10 initiatives, participants were asked to commit individually to a single action plan. Plans that received multi-sector interest from at least four participants were chosen for action planning. Five planning groups emerged from this self-organizing process, selecting the following initiatives for further development:

- *Action Plan 1:* Improving Organizational Cultural Understanding *(formerly Initiative B)*

- *Action Plan 2:* Creating a Pre-Crisis Working Group on Information Sharing *(formerly Initiative H)*

- *Action Plan 3:* Developing a Center of Excellence for Crisis Information Management *(formerly portions of Initiatives A and I)*

- *Action Plan 4:* Improving the Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs) Initiative *(formerly Initiatives J and G)*

- *Action Plan 5:* Implementing Integrated Planning for the US Joint Forces Command's Unified Action Exercise *(formerly a subcomponent of Initiative A and I)*

Participants were given worksheets and a presentation format to guide action planning. Workshop facilitators recommended that groups use Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis technique to help focus discussion and development of their strategies. An overview of the five action plans follows:

Action Plan 1: Improving Organizational Cultural Understanding

In order to enable information sharing, we must first better understand each other, including our goals, intents, and biases. The intent is not to change the cultures, but to embrace the differences. We should ask each other: Is the issue trust or familiarity? We believe that familiarity leads to trust, or can clarify boundaries of trust.

The need for better cultural understanding is urgent. Changing operational environments, the emergence of new belligerents, and limited resources make information sharing imperative.

While there are multiple initiatives under way, they are not well-coordinated. Since many information sharing initiatives are local, they may not be scalable or sustainable in other theatres of action. Additional constraints include limited training, resources, and outdated documentation.

Enablers

Using the Field Force Analysis, the group discussed how real-world experiences reinforce the need for better cultural understanding. Other existing enablers identified by the group included: senior leadership buy-in, a shared commitment to transparency, and access to technology. Military policy and doctrinal changes, such as DoD Directive 3000.05 are important, as

Action Plan 1: Improving Organizational Cultural Understanding

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?	WHO BUILDS?	WHO PARTICIPATES?	RESOURCES AND RESULTS
Gap Analysis - *Starting Point*	ALL	ALL	
Training / Education Standards & Objectives	ALL	ALL	Sharing Standards & Objectives
Neutral Training Center	NGO & IO	ALL	Multi-national Instructions
Formal Education	DoD & DoS	ALL	Formal Integration as Learning Objectives
Exercise Participation - Including Training Centers	DoD	ALL	Multi-national
Unit & Internal Organization Training	ALL	ALL	Advance Planning & Prioritization
Lecture & Seminars	ALL	ALL	Contemporary & Thought-provoking
Pre-deployment Training	DoD	ALL	Familiarization
Distance Learning	ALL	ALL	Scalable & Transportable
Manuals / Performance Support Tools	DoD	ALL	Standardized/Transportable/Promotes Familiarization
Web-based Repository of Training Materials & Events	NDU & JFCOM	ALL	All Stakeholders Input and Use

Action Plan 1:
The group outlined critical tools that would help the relief community improve cultural understanding across organizations.

they motivate practitioners to deepen their understanding of other organizations.

Barriers
There are real resource constraints, including funding, staffing, and technology limitations. Moreover, the range of players is vast. Many of the players are skeptical about each other's motivations or fearful that their independence or impartiality could be compromised.

Recommendations
To implement our action plan, we should undertake a gap analysis to examine current efforts and determine what is needed. Another priority is to build an online repository of training materials and events that can be accessed by all interested parties. We should also identify a lead agency for this program.

NGO and IGO personnel should be invited to participate in the National Defense University's senior leader seminar program, joint and multi-national military exercises and key training center exercises, (e.g., the US Army Joint Readiness Training Center; the US Army National Training Center); 29

Palms (the training facility for the US Marine Corps); and the Joint National Training Capability, Joint Forces Command).

Action Plan 2: Creating a Pre-Crisis Working Group on Information Sharing
To improve our operational effectiveness in crisis response, we developed two approaches to planning. The first approach is used in a benign, pre-crisis situation. This would involve regular (e.g., annual or semi-annual) meetings of organizations that know they will find themselves in some common environment facing a complex humanitarian emergency. The second approach is used when a crisis emerges to deal specifically with that particular incident. This latter approach builds and refines, as needed, on the work of the first approach.

The graphic on the following page illustrates operational phases from a military planning perspective. As the workshop scenario demonstrates, there is a particular need to improve planning between the armed forces and relief

Action Plan 2: Operational Phases from a Military Planning Perspective

LEVEL OF MILITARY EFFORT

OPLAN ACTIVATION

OPLAN APPROVAL

Enabling Civil Aurthority

Stabilizing Activities

Dominating Activities

Seizing the Initiative

Deterring Activities

SHAPING

THEATER SHAPING

GLOBAL SHAPING

Shape	Deter	Seize The Initiative	Dominate	Stabilize	Enable Civil Authority	Shape
PHASE 0	PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III	PHASE IV	PHASE V	PHASE 0

PHASES

OPLAN TERMINATION

Action Plan 2:
The group used a military planning approach to outline operational phases during crises.

organizations to address the transition between operational Phase III (Dominating) and Phases IV and V (Stabilizing and Enabling Civil Authority). The working group should use a consultative planning approach which acknowledges that operations are not strictly sequential. Such a process would address the challenging situations that occur when security deteriorates and the military returns to its Phase III (Dominating) mode while humanitarian organizations remain focused on reconstruction activities.
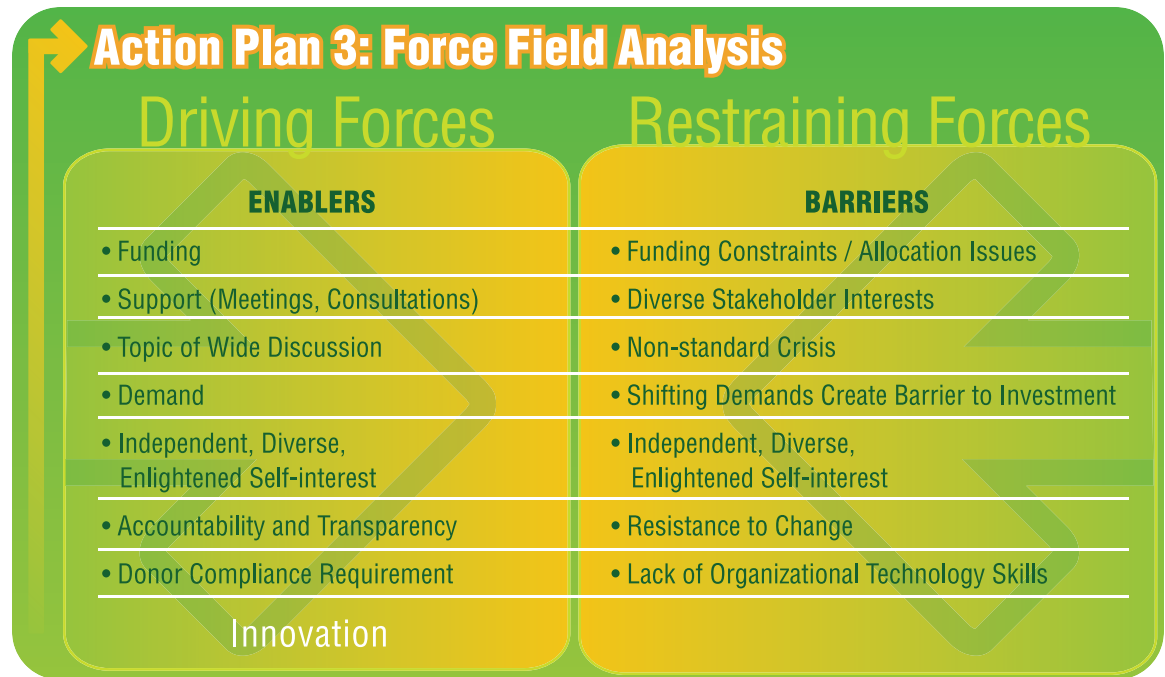
Recommendations
To implement our action plan, we would identify critical actors and obtain their buy-in, designate a facilitator for planning meetings, and establish information sharing needs and mechanisms. As a next step, we would create an inter-agency planning group to develop common formats, standards, and metrics. This group would also identify scenarios where the model should be applied and where it shouldn't, develop lessons learned and best practices, and create interoperability requirements and communications mechanisms.

Action Plan 3: **Developing a Center of Excellence for Crisis Information Management**
Better crisis management meets a global need, saving lives and improving aid coverage. It contributes to the creation of a common operational picture, enabling groups to coordinate service delivery, identify gaps, focus resources, and cultivate responsibilities for participation.

We propose to create a working group of organizations involved in crisis response to examine information issues before, during, and after crises. This group will develop clear, cross-sector expectations regarding information sharing. Members will educate senior policy makers on the benefits of improving information management to obtain their buy-in. The working group will define minimum requirements and data outputs and develop flexible systems and products that can easily be institutionalized. By involving stakeholders in the development process, we will ensure that tools meet their needs and build

Action Plan 3: Force Field Analysis

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
ENABLERS	**BARRIERS**
• Funding	• Funding Constraints / Allocation Issues
• Support (Meetings, Consultations)	• Diverse Stakeholder Interests
• Topic of Wide Discussion	• Non-standard Crisis
• Demand	• Shifting Demands Create Barrier to Investment
• Independent, Diverse, Enlightened Self-interest	• Independent, Diverse, Enlightened Self-interest
• Accountability and Transparency	• Resistance to Change
• Donor Compliance Requirement	• Lack of Organizational Technology Skills

Innovation

Action Plan 3:
The group created a field force analysis for their initiative, Developing a Center of Excellence for Crisis Information Management.

monitoring and assessment processes into system design. Enablers and barriers to this initiative are depicted in the graphic above.

Recommendations

Creating practical data standards is critical to the success of this initiative. We need to identify subject matter experts who will champion our concept to the humanitarian community. We will use white papers and professional meeting participation to educate our peers on the need for data standards and win their support.

Next, we will develop a cost/benefit analysis for our donors, mobilizing their support for our effort. We will build outreach campaigns around timely issues, such as avian flu, to raise public awareness for our cause.

Our group was divided on the need to create a new "center of excellence" to accomplish these critical tasks; however, members generally supported the initiative's goals and action plan.

Action Plan 4: Improving the Humanitarian Information Centers (HIC) Initiative

While the HIC is the most appropriate organization to address the humanitarian community's information sharing needs, it is not currently meeting these needs. Among the reasons why: The humanitarian community lacks clear definitions for the inputs the HIC requires, the policies regarding the operational relationship between armed forces and the HIC are unclear, and organizations don't see the value of their participation in the HIC. Each of these factors are detailed below and include specific recommendations.

The HIC needs to clarify its relationship with three key communities: humanitarian organizations, the armed forces, and donors. The HIC needs to specify what it needs from the humanitarian community, identifying users' information requirements, responsibilities, and expectations. Next, the HIC should develop data standards and information management processes.

The HIC needs to develop norms for participation, with specific protocols that

clarify the nature of the HIC as a two-way system. The HIC depends on the contributions of participating organizations, and these organizations have a responsibility to provide the HIC with what it needs. Once the HIC has defined input expectations and created information products, it should market its offerings and provide training to prospective participants. Clarification of the interface and mutual responsibilities of the HIC and the Cluster model is also needed.

The HIC's policy and operational relationship to the armed forces can vary considerably, depending upon the nature of the crisis. The relationship can either be a primary one, with a liaison officer assigned to work directly with the HIC, or a secondary one, mediated by DART or the emergency management center. To overcome confusion, the HIC needs to provide clear guidance on how it interacts with the armed forces, what principles and guidelines govern its conduct, and what information is shared. The HIC can help improve the humanitarian community's relationship with the armed forces by providing training on standards of engagement and leveraging IASC's Civil Military Coordination Section for civil-military information sharing.

Donors can support the HICs and promote community cooperation by revising grants and contracts to include HIC reporting requirements, addressing the HIC's role in training, and developing a unified approach to reporting to facilitate information management among all NGOs.

The HIC should implement a marketing strategy that provides an overview of its role, needs, and information products. The humanitarian community doesn't see the value in working with the HIC, and the HIC needs to overcome this bias. One way to accomplish this objective is by specifying which information products the HIC can provide immediately and then set timetables for future product deliveries. To ensure that

user data meets HIC needs, the HIC should provide examples of final information products and provide user training. Additionally, the HIC should evaluate resource utilization, obtaining feedback from current and potential users. Of critical importance: tracking information requests and questions that weren't met, as these needs may represent critical gaps and areas for further development.

The HIC should also strengthen collaboration and coordination with ReliefWeb and highlight this relationship by putting ReliefWeb's link, www.humanitarianinfo.org, on the front page of the HIC web site.

Action Plan 5: Implementing Integrated Planning for the US Joint Forces Command's Unified Action Exercise

The US Government seeks to create a standing advisory body with broad organizational representation that would provide input into its strategic planning process. The group would have input into conflict assessment, policy planning, and operational and tactical planning. Its membership would include US and other national governments, the UN, IGOs, NGOs, the private sector, and the host nation.

Currently, the US Government does not have an integrated planning process that systematically includes the perspectives of the international community and organizations such as NGOs and IGOs. As a result, organizations operating in the field often duplicate each other's efforts or work at cross-purposes. Involving stakeholders in integrated planning will likely improve organizational performance for all participants.

To make the planning processes as effective as possible, the US Government should involve all of the right stakeholders. US Government officials should be able to speak on behalf of their agencies, national government representatives should represent

Action Plan 5: Force Field Analysis

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
ENABLERS	**BARRIERS**

• Desire
  - Window of opportunity for collaboration
 	
• Shared Vision
  - Peace, liberal democracy, human rights
  - Avoid replication and reduce redundancy
 	
• Centrality of UN (and Components) to most players: good potential interlocutor with many pre-existing mechanisms (e.g., integrated planning and assessment tools)
 	
• USG drive to reform processes post 9-11 and Iraq
 	
• Inter-agency and international support for conflict prevention strategies
	• Lack of capacity to staff standing bodies/planning structures
	
	• Strategies based on varying imperatives seen as conflicting instead of complementary
	
	• Organizational biases
	  - Various perceptions of US foreign policy
	
	• Parochialism
	  - Organizational inertia
	
	• Lack of constituent support with difficulty "proving a negative"
	  - Skepticism of US DoD motives

Goal

Action Plan 5:
The group assessed enablers and barriers to implementing integrated planning.

a consolidated position, and NGOs should participate either directly or via their cluster lead. Information should be exchanged at a high level, to keep planning simple and relevant for all parties. Policy experts should expect to lead the conflict assessment process, obtaining input from all participants.

To create an environment conducive to sharing, the forum should be hosted at a neutral location and run by a third party or multiple sponsors. All comments should be off-the-record. Participants need to be able to share their perspectives freely and openly.

Recommendations

The action plan uses the US Joint Forces Command's Unified Action 07 exercise as a means to implement this integrated planning initiative. We will gain wide participation, using memos of understanding or verbal agreements, help organizations determine

how they will participate, and identify organizations' expectations for information sharing. Our goal is to create a systemic, sustained network to enable more effective performance in the field.

We will experiment with different structures for the advisory board (e.g., direct involvement of NGOs and IGOs or use of representative organizations like Cluster Lead or InterAction), as well as ways to increase the effectiveness of its planning processes. We will research models from the United Nations (e.g., the Common Country Assessment, the political and military Integrated Mission Planning Process), the Center for Collaborative Policy, and the European Union's approach to crisis early warning and consensus decision making, using best practices to design an organizational structure that will enhance the participation of all key stakeholder groups.

Facilitator and Participant Reflections

In workshop presentations, speakers ably described various information sharing structures, as well as the diverse strategies they implemented to meet the needs of key players and the changing conditions endemic to insecure environments. In our academic work, we have found that inter-agency cooperation falls along a continuum, from ad hoc organizing, to community-based organizing, to command organizing. Ad hoc systems depend on personal, face-to-face relations and evolve locally as relief actors seek to respond to crises. Until recently, much multiagency relief work has been ad hoc.

Community-based organizing uses temporary mechanisms, such as task forces or centers, to facilitate information exchange at the field level. Over time, the temporary strategies can become standard practice and may even be adopted by organizations as regular mechanisms to be activated whenever a crisis occurs. Examples include the United Nations Joint Logistics Center, HICs, and CMOCs.

With command organizing, one group has the authority to coordinate all other entities in the crisis situation. This group lead serves as the chief decision maker, integrates all in-country activity at the field level, and manages the information system and data repository. Examples include cluster leads in the UN's Cluster Framework.

As presenters and participants discussed, there are strengths and weaknesses to

Patricia Bittner,
Pan American
Health Organization;
Colonel Elvis Acosta,
US Central Command; and
Lieutenant Jason Darby,
US European Command
consider how to formulate
an effective action plan.

Brian Kelly, International Organization for Migration; Major John Mitchell, US Army Civil Affairs Command; Colonel Alex Alderson, UK Army; and Nan Buzard, American Red Cross, brainstorm key attributes of their action plan.

different information sharing models. Although they did not use the organizing continuum to describe current initiatives, ideal designs, and action plans, most participants used language that indicated a desire to move away from ad hoc organizing to a community-based approach. However, some participants wished to maintain certain characteristics of ad hoc networks, such as organizational autonomy and flexibility. One of the advantages of community-based organizing is the temporary nature of the mechanisms used, which can accommodate variations in participant commitment and engagement.

Participants also signaled an interest in developing standard operating procedures, which define roles to ease personnel transitions, make relationships more visible and explicit, and establish routines and procedures to facilitate operations. "Too often we start at ground zero when we enter a new conflict or crisis," said one. "Some of the issues we discussed at the workshop can help us avoid this." From developing common assessment forms and data collection processes, to creating structures for pre-crisis planning for information sharing,

to conducting inter-agency training and exercises, participants sought to formalize mechanisms and tools that would streamline information sharing processes and add value to the humanitarian mission. Participants urged the relief community to commit to continuous learning. Said one:

We need to look at a given crisis response situation and assess conditions before, actions during, and work after the crisis to fully understand our information requirements and how to create effective information management systems that respond to changing dynamics. This kind of in-depth analysis could inform both our planning and training.

A potential impediment to moving towards a community-based approach is identifying who all the key stakeholders are. Participants did not agree on this issue: Some saw value in coordinating among groups like their own, while others saw value in creating centers that would serve the larger relief community. "We continue to face the challenge that the armed forces and humanitarian organizations are not often 'on the same side,'" said one.

Susan MacGregor, AirServ; Bailey Hand, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations; and Lynnette Larsen, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs discuss the need to standardize critical information sharing processes.

But another participant said that these disagreements need not be insurmountable:

It's important that the armed forces and humanitarian communities have a mutual understanding of each other's objectives, even if they disagree with one another. Collaboration may be the wrong model, but coordination is workable. How we accomplish this while maintaining adequate 'separation' is key.

How can the armed forces and humanitarian communities better understand each other? Several participants cited joint training and education opportunities. But one said that wasn't sufficient: "We need to have a long conversation between the humanitarian community and the military, from the grassroots level to the strategic policy level to identify the critical issues." Only with high-level leadership will the relief community be able to effect lasting change, said another.

The desire for greater formalization expressed in participants' presentations, initiatives, and action plans should not be construed as an effort to establish a command mode of organizing. It is possible to have decentralized decision making *and* formalized work routines. Participants want to retain their autonomous decision making authority and at the same time provide just enough formalization to routinize their work, gain efficiencies, and facilitate information sharing and management within and among their communities. Judging by the time and attention they devoted to them, centers appeared to be the coordination mechanism of choice, suggesting that community-based organizing was much more compatible with their interests. However, current centers of coordination are not seen to be operating as efficiently and effectively as they could be. In order to use them to their best advantage, participants sought to establish some rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures to systematize their use. In the final analysis, then, this workshop can be best understood as a search for ways *to coordinate effectively and efficiently without hierarchy.* We thank participants for their work and insights which prompt important questions for all organizations seeking to improve information sharing in current and future humanitarian initiatives.

Conclusion

As humanitarian emergencies grow in number and complexity, practitioners are increasing efforts to improve information sharing. Realizing that organizational biases and localized processes hamper responsiveness, organizations are creating tools and structures to enhance cooperation and data exchange. Global structures like HICs and the Cluster Framework and field initiatives like ANSO and the Health Information Sharing Network of Iraq are significant cases in point.

The information challenge is a vast one. While crises receive the most attention and greatest donor response, pre-crisis planning is also important and can determine organizational effectiveness in the field.

Organizations need to take a holistic approach to information sharing and management, creating the structures, tools, and processes that will help them plan for complex emergencies, perform work effectively on the ground, and learn from both their successes and shortcomings. Standardization is critical. Taking a cue from other industries, organizations are calling for the development of shared tools and processes that will help them improve information tools and usability.

Additionally, we need to create new ways of working alongside each other and in some cases, together. Practitioners will always have different mandates and objectives, but should nevertheless work cooperatively to create processes that focus on common objectives and respect cultural differences. As we work to achieve this goal, we need to improve current structures, such as HICs and CMOCs, which are underutilized and suffer from image problems. Additionally, relief organizations need to increase openness, involving all key practitioners in strategy-setting and multi-agency exercises.

"Selling" the concept of information sharing is critical to winning support and funds for broader initiatives. We need to involve policy makers and donors and educate the entire humanitarian community about the importance of current initiatives, as well as what new models will accomplish. We need leadership at the highest level to champion these initiatives if we are to create systemic change.

Workshops such as this one help to clarify priorities. However, they are often narrow in focus and scope. We recommend broadening international participation in these events and bringing more NGOs to the table. In addition, we recommend focusing a future event on exploring information sharing in another context, such as civil society building or conflict prevention.

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(1996) and editor of two books—*The
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Resources Available from CSRS

Presentations

Jean Arkedis and Kathleen Miner: *Overview of Current Initiatives: Information Sharing in Insecure Environments*

Shawn Messick: *Building the Health Information Sharing Framework in Iraq, May 2003: Practical Successes with Assessment, Information Sharing and Coordination*

Eric le Guen: *The International Rescue Committee and the ANSO (Afghanistan NGO Security Office) Model*

Lynette Larsen: *The Humanitarian Reform Agenda and Its Implications for Inter-Agency Information Management. Focus on the Cluster Model*

Brian Kelly: *Experience as Cluster Lead for Emergency Shelter in Post-Earthquake Pakistan*

Major Jim Orbock: *Information Sharing in Insecure Environments — An Armed Forces Perspective*

Linda Poteat: *Civil-Military Information Sharing in Insecure Environments: An NGO Perspective*

Workshop Outputs

Design 1: Temporal Model for Three-Phase Operation

Design 2: Information Grid Framework

Design 3: Information Sharing Window and Flow Model

Design 4: Ideal Security Model for Multi-Layer Information Sharing

Action Plan 1: Improving Organizational Cultural Understanding

Action Plan 2: Creating a Pre-Crisis Working Group on Information Sharing

Action Plan 3: Developing a Center of Excellence for Crisis Information Management

Action Plan 4: Improving the Humanitarian Information Centers (HIC) Initiative

Action Plan 5: Implementing Integrated Planning for the US Joint Forces Command's Unified Action Initiative