

Analysis & Recommendations: Inclusion of Non-Governmental Organizations in Interagency Training, Education, and After Action Review Program

Overview:

In accordance with its designation as the executive agent for interagency training, education, and after action review, the National Defense University is developing an educational program for senior US Government executives, in the area of multi-Agency and Department planning, coordination, and implementation of overseas complex contingency operations (CCOs). Within this context, the “interagency community” is comprised of those departments and agencies within the Executive branch, that orchestrate the USG response to complex emergencies, which include natural disasters, ethnic and religious conflicts, and political instability. The Departments of Defense, State, Justice, and Commerce form the core of the interagency community that responds to such crises. An educational program that improves the understanding and coordination among these departments can also result in a more effective USG response to CCOs, without duplication of effort or lapses in foreign assistance.

However, humanitarian and peace operations require resources that often extend beyond the capabilities of the USG. There are many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that focus on disaster relief and humanitarian assistance as their primary mission. Furthermore, these NGOs are often operating in trouble areas prior to the USG and remain after the USG departs, to assist with recovery and sustainable development. In formulating its response, the interagency community must account for the certain presence of NGOs. Similarly, a program of interagency training and education for complex contingencies should not ignore the role of NGOs. In order to represent real

world conditions, a comprehensive system of interagency education needs to incorporate NGO needs and capabilities.

Justification:

A recent InterAction policy paper stated that 40 percent of the budget for the US Agency for International Development goes directly to US private voluntary organizations (PVOs) and local NGO partner agencies. The reasons given for such an extensive USAID-NGO partnership are based on the following NGO characteristics:

- Reflect core American values and interest in U.S. engagement beyond our borders, particularly in humanitarian relief and long-term assistance for those in need;
- Mobilize essential resources from America's communities, including cutting-edge approaches to community development, long experience in particular cultures and regions, volunteer time, and private financial contributions;
- Are by their nature flexible, responsive, and effective because of their people focused approaches, familiarity with local grassroots organizations, and operational on-the-ground experience;
- Are driven by moral values and a commitment to improving the lives of the poor and vulnerable.

Even if this characterization is idealistic, everyone agrees that in complex contingencies, NGOs will be present prior to government agencies and long after they have departed. In the face of limited resources, government agencies such as USAID, rely on NGOs to implement their own plans and objectives. While USG agencies often work in tandem with NGOs, there are also instances where due to heightened political sensitivity NGOs are better suited to complete a task. An example of such is humanitarian assistance to Cuba or other countries in which the USG does not maintain official economic or political ties. In the many instances that USG agencies and NGOs have common goals, it only makes sense that a greater pool of resources will allow for a

quicker and more effective solution. When working in isolation from other actors, the interagency community may lack valuable information or knowledge that is readily available to non-USG actors, making the USG look counterproductive.

On the ground, NGOs are able to engage local populations, have access to human intelligence, and are usually more able to commit to long-term involvement in areas that are prone to complex emergencies. At a strategic, policy level, NGOs are already involved in planning through monthly meetings with the Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and USAID, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). These meetings are co-chaired by InterAction's Disaster Response Committee and provide a forum for the informal discussion of prospective disasters. Although they do not result in official plans, these meetings, which increase in frequency during complex contingencies, lead to greater mutual understanding of each organizations' capabilities and constraints, build trust between USG agencies and NGOs, and are the first step to better coordination in the future.

Obstacles:

The lack of understanding found within the interagency community (due to differing organizational sub-cultures, mandates, and resources) further deteriorates when NGOs are involved. NGOs are particularly threatened by the competitive military culture, which they consider to be inflexible and insular. They also consider these characteristics to result in military-lead missions when this is unnecessary or an inefficient course of action. Even though the USG and NGOs share many of the same objectives, their approaches are often at odds. While the interagency community will

develop a course of action prior to implementation, NGOs tend to do both simultaneously.

NGOs are driven by a common theme, neutrality and impartiality--a hungry child knows no politics. Humanitarian assistance is supposed to be given without the expectation of return and without advancing political objectives. This ideology is often threatened by the arrival of the military, which represents the USG and its political agenda. Furthermore, the military wants to control organizations over which it has no authority. Security concerns also explain the reluctance of many NGOs to cooperate with the military, since being associated with such can endanger their workers. NGOs believe that the primary military mandate is (or at least should be) security, not humanitarian assistance. While the US armed forces are often involved in humanitarian and peace operations, they are called away from such duties in the face of national security concerns that take precedence. Unlike NGO workers, soldiers are not solely dedicated to humanitarian causes. Therefore, NGOs would like military involvement in CCOs to be limited to one of providing security for affected populations and American citizens, particularly relief workers.

On the other hand, NGOs prefer consultation to coordination and many within the USG find that building relationships with NGOs is extremely time-consuming and "high-maintenance." In short, you cannot coordinate organizations that do not want to be coordinated. Although they claim neutrality, NGOs (like the USG) have their own political agendas. Furthermore, the NGO community is fragmented and faces many of the same challenges as the interagency community. Not only is there a cultural divide between US-based and international NGOs, but also between NGOs and international

organizations such as the United Nations. US-based NGOs often compete for the same government funding, making them reluctant to share information amongst themselves. Each NGO has its own donor base to which it is responsible, as well as its own values, missions, and objectives. Lastly, many within the USG believe that NGOs are unaware of the rule of unintended consequences, which works exponentially during times of crisis. In countries where a large percentage of the population faces starvation, food equals power. Providing such to one group over another may actually work against the intended purpose by increasing conflict.

NGO Training and Current Cooperation:

Despite the clash of cultures that exists, NGOs are interested in greater cooperation with the USG, particularly the military. Training and education are not an integral part of the NGO culture, largely due to limited budgets and staff. While training is considered important, when given the choice between additional training/education or expanded relief/development initiatives, the latter is often chosen. It is also difficult to spare NGO staff for such events, a problem that also plagues the interagency community. There must be a clear incentive (value-added) for NGOs to attend any educational program. Sending an NGO representative to all military exercises is not the best way to leverage the influence of limited resources. This has led several NGOs to propose the production of an "introduction to NGOs" video that would be available to armed forces upon deployment. This video would define NGOs and explain their funding sources and role within the international community that responds to complex contingencies. At this time there is insufficient financial support for this project.

At the operational level, the demand for NGO participation in USG training and educational programs (particularly those of the military), is greater than the supply of NGOs that are willing and/or able to participate. Due to the overwhelming demand, NGOs must limit their involvement to those events that will provide them the greatest benefit, i.e., military units that are likely to be engaged, involvement with CINCs, and opportunities to change doctrine.

However, at the strategic or policy level, the opportunity for the NGO community to interact with those at the Deputies Committee or Policy Coordinating Committee levels is extremely limited. The only standing mechanism for coordination with the USG, are monthly meetings between InterAction, PRM, and OFDA. NGOs want to take an active role in policy level discussions, not simply have a representative present. However, it is unlikely that such participation would occur prior to interagency meetings that develop a coherent USG policy, which can then be presented to the NGO community for discussion.

NGO exposure to the interagency community is limited to the following:

1. Monthly meetings between InterAction, PRM & OFDA, which increase in frequency during times of conflict;
2. Regular meetings with government donors such as USAID and the Department of State;
3. Other informal, individually-initiated, conversations with USG personnel (often based on personal ties that are built as people move from the non-profit to the public sector and vice-versa);
4. Conferences that address the issues of complex contingencies and interagency coordination and include US Government agencies and NGOs in their audience;
5. and limited opportunities to represent the “NGO viewpoint” in crisis decision exercises coordinated by CINCs or organizations on their behalf (such as the Center of Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance in

Hawaii, the Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance in Tampa, and the Pearson Peacekeeping Center in Canada).

NGO staffs receive an initial orientation that addresses the organization's mission, vision, goals, funding authority, and general newcomer information on benefits, leave, etc. As is the case with many government employees, this is their only on-the-job training. NGOs do not have the equivalent of an Interagency Training, Education, and After Action Review (ITEA) program that brings them together to address problems in communication, coordination, and planning. At the tactical level, specialized training in the areas of medical care, nutrition, water sanitation, security and camp management is readily available for relief workers. These courses are available internally (usually in larger NGOs) or externally at organizations that are specialized in the subject matter.

Examples of such training include:

1. Health Emergencies in Large Populations: created by the International Committee of the Red Cross with the participation of the University of Geneva and the World Health Organization to meet the public health needs of health professionals working in emergency situations. (Estimated cost: \$1,500)
2. UN Certificate-of-Training in United Nations Peace Support Operations: a three part program including the H.E.L.P. course, 12 correspondence courses that cover topics such as history of peacekeeping & international humanitarian law, and an original thesis (Estimated cost: \$2,000)
3. NGO Security Training: RedR program provides field staff working in relief operations with an approach and set of tools that can help them operate effectively and safely in insecure environments.

The training opportunities for relief workers are endless and the United Nations (Relief Web) and InterAction maintain extensive databases of such opportunities. Despite their availability, these courses are costly and time-consuming. Many NGOs rely on relief workers that have had prior field experience to limit the need for such expensive courses.

Recommendations

Planners at the strategic level need extensive exposure to those at the operational level due to the intimate link between the two. NGOs are a key actor at the operational and tactical levels. A clear understanding of their capabilities, constraints, and own decision-making process, will help USG planners defeat duplication of effort and gaps in the provision of goods and services. When working towards a common goal in humanitarian and peace operations, cooperation between USG departments and NGOs is necessary for a more coherent and effective plan of action. A 2001 policy paper from InterAction states that the primary implementation goal of effective U.S. foreign assistance “should be to tap and coordinate all available resources and expertise in the PVO community, the private sector, the U.S. Government, and international agencies.” Just as the USG is working to develop a more coherent and effective response to complex contingency operations, the NGO community also realizes that “[they] must continue to reflect upon [their] own effectiveness—assessing impact, documenting and disseminating best practices, and recognizing and addressing weaknesses.”

The objective of this report is to make recommendations on how to meaningfully incorporate the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) into the National Defense University's revamped program of Interagency Training, Education, and After Action Review (ITEA). The targeted NGO community includes those organizations that focus on disaster relief and humanitarian assistance as their primary mission. While initial efforts should focus on US-based NGOs, the ITEA program may also seek to incorporate international NGOs in the future. Furthermore, the design of ITEA should be such that NGO “participation” entails 1) input into initial program and

curriculum development, 2) substantive interaction in exercises and simulations, rather than simply supporting roles, and 3) the opportunity to facilitate courses and roundtables.

This can be accomplished by the following:

1. Rely on those USG departments and agencies that participate in ITEA events and have frequent contact with NGOs, to solicit NGO participation

USG grants and contracts comprise a significant portion of NGO resources (please refer to attached table). In addition to PRM and OFDA, which already have an established relationship with many NGOs due to their monthly meetings, other departments within the USG work with NGOs to implement shared objectives. These include the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Justice, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), and the Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) in the Department of State. NGOs may be more likely to accept an invitation from USG personnel that they trust and deal with on a regular basis. Such an invitation would have greater significance than one coming from NDU itself, as it is difficult for NGOs that are not familiar with our organization to determine the value of attending such events.

2. Rather than approach each NGO individually, work through NGO coalition organizations

This approach is easier in terms of logistics, but its success relies on getting prior approval from such organizations. Having their buy-in will add credibility to our program, making it easier to attract NGO participation. The Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance adopted a similar approach when promoting their Integrated Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Natural Disaster Training (Interhands). Several months prior to the 5-day training program designed for

SOUTHCOM, CDMHA held a 2-day executive session to gain the support of senior leaders that would be determining if and who within their staff would attend. Similarly, we can market the ITEA program to the leaders of NGO coalition organizations and count on their support to gain NGO participation for events. ITEA should work through the following NGO coalition organizations:

For U.S. based-NGOs:

InterAction: a coalition of over 165 non-profit organizations working worldwide on sustainable development, refugees and disaster assistance, and humanitarian aid.

Specific target: Members of InterAction's Disaster Response Committee

Director: James Bishop; Co-chairs: Nancy Lindborg, Mercy Corps & Rick Augsburg, Church World Services

For Internationally-based NGOs:

International Council of Voluntary Agencies: global network of human rights, humanitarian, and development NGOs, which focuses its information exchange and advocacy efforts primarily on humanitarian affairs and refugee issues.

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response: top NGOs in terms of resources, includes Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Relief Services, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Save the Children Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation, Oxfam, and the World Council of Churches.

3. Focus efforts on large US-based NGOs

The target audience should include the following organizations:

World Vision – A Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to providing community-based relief and development programs that nurture children's dreams for the future and lead to self-reliance. [FY2000 Revenue: \$469 million]

Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) - one of the world's largest private international relief and development organizations; a leader in sustainable development and emergency aid, reaching tens of millions of people each year in more than 60 countries. [FY2000 Revenue: \$446 million]

Catholic Relief Services – Founded in 1943, CRS is the international humanitarian aid and development agency of the United States Catholic Conference. [FY2000 Revenue: \$363 million]

International Rescue Committee – a leading nonsectarian, voluntary organization, providing relief, protection and resettlement services for refugees and victims of oppression or violent conflict. [FY2000 Revenue: \$148 million]

Save the Children – Providing the world’s poorest families and communities with the tools they need to break the cycle of poverty, ill-health and illiteracy, and offering children the best chance not only to survive, but also to thrive.
[FY2000 Revenue: \$140 million]

Mercy Corps – An international family of humanitarian organizations that includes Mercy Corps, Mercy Corps Scotland, Pax World Service, Proyecto Aldea Global in Nicaragua and Honduras and MerciPhil Development Foundations.
[FY1999 Revenue: \$91 million]

International Medical Corp – global humanitarian nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives and relieving suffering through health care training and relief programs.

After establishing a relationship with U.S.-based NGOs, the ITEA program may want to include international NGOs, such as Oxfam, Save the Children – UK, Doctors without Frontiers (MSF), and Concern Worldwide.

4. Increase marketing efforts that target the NGO community specifically

NGOs cannot participate in ITEA events if they are unaware of their availability. In addition to personal invitations, the ITEA program should advertise on web-sites that focus on disaster management and humanitarian assistance. InterAction maintains an inventory on programs and courses for disaster response professionals. In addition to general information on availability and course content, the InterAction database also allows for former students to submit course evaluations that can then be accessed by others interested in the course. The InterAction database lists courses offered by the Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance in Hawaii, The Pearson Peacekeeping Center, Johns Hopkins University, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency [POC: James Bishop (202-667-8227)]. The Humanitarian Training Inventory (HATI) on the United Nation’s Relief Web is another extensive database of

training opportunities. This site allows you to search by agency/organization, keyword, course date, or country. HATI lists training opportunities offered by the UN, NGOs, and Academic Training Institutions/Programs.

5. Collaborate with other organizations that have a similar focus in terms of complex contingencies and are successful in attracting the NGO community.

The Center for International Emergency, Disaster & Refugee Studies at Johns Hopkins University has a large NGO clientele and has already expressed an interest in developing a partnership with the ITEA program. Both institutions stand to gain from such collaboration, which provides NDU an NGO audience and JHU with a USG interagency audience. Another possibility for collaboration may be the Center for Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance in Tampa, which already represents a partnership between Tulane University, University of South Florida, and SOUTHCOM. Although it has been less successful with NGOs, (largely due to the lack of a civilian funding mechanism) the Pearson Peacekeeping Center has also expressed interest in future collaboration with ITEA. PPC has an international reputation and is the only peacekeeping center to address the full spectrum of peacekeeping activities including prevention, mitigation, conflict resolution, peace enforcement, and peace building.

Other opportunities for collaboration are area universities that have graduate level programs in humanitarian and peace operations, such as George Mason University. Such local expertise may prove helpful when ITEA develops its own courses. The ITEA program can also offer a certificate program or courses that are accredited by other universities to provide an additional incentive for participants.

Conclusion:

According to the mandate and funding of the Interagency Training, Education, and After Action Review program, the needs of the Executive departments and agencies of the US government take precedence. However, this does not indicate that NGOs will not find the program equally useful nor that their contribution will not greatly benefit the USG participants. USG and NGO representatives should work together to develop the necessary content of future courses and structure of simulations. Furthermore, NGOs have already expressed an interest in becoming involved in course development. By infusing the NGO perspective into courses, they have the potential to increase understanding among the interagency community with every course. NGOs are additionally concerned that their interests and objectives could not be accurately represented by someone outside of their community. This concern is illustrated in the unrealistic or inapplicable recommendations that result from simulations that use USG personnel or contractors to role-play NGOs.

In the Executive branch of government, the ITEA program targets the Executive, Office Director, and Action/Desk officer levels. In the NGO community, this equates to senior level decision-makers that reside in national headquarters. While these headquarters are located throughout the U.S. (CARE – Atlanta, MercyCorps – Portland, IRC – New York), most organizations also have a national office or representative in the Washington, DC area. ITEA's location at NDU allows NGOs to minimize costs in terms of time and travel expenses, important considerations for organizations that may be reluctant to attend training events due to such expenses.

Non-governmental organizations play an important role in complex contingency operations. Only by including NGOs in its educational program can ITEA approximate real world conditions. In order to be useful to the interagency community, this educational program should reflect the actual planning process that occurs in preparation for complex contingencies. By educating the interagency community on NGO culture, capabilities, and constraints (and vice-versa), the ITEA program can help the US Government make better informed and more effective choices when dealing with complex contingency operations.