Transformation in the aid and development sector?

Ways of working

CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP

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Ways of working

Scholastic literature reminds us that "how we execute work is a choice rather than simply a given", sometimes referred to as a "default position".[1] In the aid and development sector, the UN's New Ways of Working is a vehicle to "call on humanitarian and development actors to work collaboratively together, based on their comparative advantages, towards 'collective outcomes' that reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years".[2] Similarly, the Agenda for Humanity calls on actors to "transcend humanitarian-development divides".[3]

This section collates literature and resources on adaptive approaches and different ways of working that can better support donor and implementing organisations in their planning, resourcing, and delivery, as well as encouraging the exploration of different approaches to determine if they are appropriate for what is trying to be achieved.

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[1] Gee I., Hanwell M. Ways of Working. *The Workplace Community. Palgrave Pocket Consultants.* **Palgrave Macmillan (2014)**

[2] See *United Nations New Ways of Working.* **Accessible at: https://www.un.org/jsc/content/new-way-working**

[3] See *Agenda for Humanity.* **Accessible at: https://agendaforhumanity.org/transformation/35.html**

Case study 1: Adapting Aid: Lessons from Six Case Studies

In 2016, the International Rescue Committee and Mercy Corps launched the Analysis Driven Agile Programming Technique (ADAPT) partnership, with the aim to create a "step change in the way implementing and donor agencies plan, resource, and implement programs". The report shares a set of lessons from six cases studies that seek to demonstrate "adaptive management in practice" that focus on a range of themes including partnerships, collaboration, data, and decision-making.

Building on the learning from the research, the partnership then piloted the adaptive programming techniques with several field programs within its agencies. Read the six individual case study countries here.

Case study 2: Learning to Make a Difference: Christian Aid Ireland's Adaptive Programme Management in Governance, Gender, Peace Building and Human Rights

Through a multi-year collaboration between ODI and Christian Aid Ireland, this paper seeks to evaluate the "relevance of adaptive or trial-and-error approaches" drawing upon research and lessons from Christian Aid Ireland's five-year programme, centred around human rights, peacebuilding and governance.

The paper explores ways to redesign programmes to make them more adaptive and the potential benefits of innovative approaches to achieving impact over "traditional reporting against pre-set targets". It also offers recommendations on tools, activities and processes developed through the programme that can be used to help strengthen a programme's relationships with partners.

Case study 3: [Dynamic gridlock: Adaptive Humanitarian Action in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

This country study in the DRC aims to offer practical examples of flexible humanitarian programming in protracted settings. The case study outlines the contextual background of humanitarian action in the DRC, and looks at what flexible, adaptive action can look like in this context. Findings from consultations highlight how "continuous context-specific analysis is needed to understanding shifting aspects of the risk environment" and to avoid "a one-size-fits-all approach".

The report presents recommendations for implementing agencies and donors as to how they "can improve the flexibility of humanitarian response capacity", including an emphasis on building the "operational and decision-making systems needed to support this flexibility".

Case study 4: [Human Resources Good Practice for Surge Response](#)

Launched in 2014, the CHS-led Transforming Surge Capacity Project aimed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian surge capacity across the sector. To help to transform surge capacity, a Human Resources (HR) component of the project undertook activities to develop guidelines in HR and people management. In addition, two conferences were held to bolster dialogue and sharing of knowledge on HR surge good practices. The reports, guidelines and tools can be downloaded from the website.

Useful resources

Research, reports & policy papers:

• *Localisation in Humanitarian Leadership: Profiling national NGO engagement in international humanitarian coordination structures in the MENA region*, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) (May 2021). This report seeks to map and document the "extent of effective and meaningful National NGOs (NNGOs) engagement in international humanitarian coordination structures". It considers NNGOs engagement in UN Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and other sector or cluster coordination platforms and looks at NNGO engagement and leadership across seven humanitarian responses in the MENA region.

• *Global Development Disrupted: Findings from a survey of 93 leaders*, Global Economy and Development, Brookings, Lord, Ingram, G & K M. (Mar. 2019). This report details the findings from interviews with leaders representing a diverse range of organisations: from governments, multilateral agencies and foundations, through to multinational corporations, and the private sector. The paper presents the key themes that emerged and documents respondents' views and concerns on how global development is changing.

• *Constructive Deconstruction: Imagining Alternative Humanitarian Action*, HPG Working Paper Series, ODI, Bennett C. (May 2018). This paper explores the premise that "when viewing the humanitarian system through the lens of its users' experience" that its "requirements, functions and configurations change". This research project used deconstruction theory and design thinking in its reimagining of what a "more effective humanitarian system would look if it was designed from the perspective of its users up and down the humanitarian value chain".

• *Time to Move On: National Perspectives on Transforming Surge Capacity*, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund & Islamic Relief Worldwide, Featherstone, A (Jan. 2017). This research study aims to capture the experience of national NGOs being recruited for humanitarian surge purposes by INGOs. The report looks at how staff movements affect locally-led humanitarian action, what factors affect national NGO recruitment and retention, and offers recommendations and models of surge that can strengthen national capacity and locally-led humanitarian response.

• *Agility, Quality and Accountability: Humanitarian Aid on the Move*, Groupe URD (Mar. 2019). This issue of the *Humanitarian Aid on the Move* series presents several articles from experts, academics and humanitarian actors illustrating some of the ideas that emerged from discussions around humanitarian aid and the concept of 'agility', and the "different facets of what is becoming an essential characteristic of teams, projects and organisations within the sector".

• *South–South Educational Migration, Humanitarianism and Development: Views from the Caribbean, North Africa and the Middle East*, Routledge, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2015). This book looks at South-South educational migration for Sahrawis and Palestinians refugees. Focusing on Cuba's and Libya's South-South educational scholarship programmes, the study centrally situates refugees' views and voices on their perspectives of "self-sufficiency, humanitarianism and hospitality", and assesses the impact of "diverse policies that can help to foster self-sufficiency, and both reduce brain drain and ongoing dependency on Northern aid providers".

Conceptual frameworks, guides, resources & practical tools:

• *Adaptive Management: What is means for CSOs*, Bond, O'Donnell, M. (Sept. 2016). This paper is intended for managers and leaders from CSOs, as well as funders and donor entities and provides insight into "what adaptive management is, when and why it may be appropriate; and what may be required for organisations to adopt adaptive approaches."

• *Implementing Adaptive Management: A Frontline Effort. Is There an Emerging Practice?* Abt Associates, Teskey, G. & Tyrrel, L. (April 2021). This paper offers a range of tools for donors and humanitarian organisations in how to apply adaptive management techniques across key stages of the project cycle process. The authors posit that, "the answer is not

to throw out the traditional discipline of the logical framework, results frameworks, or theories of change", but that "rather they need to be handled more reflectively and elastically".

• _Agile or Adaptive Management: Implementing aid projects in complex environments_, Groupe URD, Carrier, A. (2020). This guidance document brings together existing good practice on agility and answers the questions: "What is 'agile or adaptive management' and how can it be put into practice?" It complements the Toolkit developed by Groupe URD to offer an approach to managing an aid programme in a complex situation.

• _Bibliography on Adaptive Management in Aid Responses_, Groupe URD, Le Grix, C. (2019). As a part of Groupe URD's 'Humanitarian aid on the move' initiative, this bibliography provides a wide-ranging list of literature and cases studies on adaptive management in aid responses, from research, principles and guides to applying adaptive management in practice in the sector.

• _Disruptive Development_. A six-step approach that seeks to "facilitate the co-creating of products, projects and programmes that are locally-led, reach sustainable scale, maximise impact and achieve systems change". The initiative has also developed a toolbox that includes "disruptive & adaptive methodologies: human centred design, lean impact, agile development, behavioural science and strategic planning" resources.

• _Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness_ (June 2010). These eight principles for "CSO development effectiveness" formed the foundation for the:

 - _Siem Reap CSO Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness_ (2011), which was the outcome of a consultation process led for and by civil society from across the globe.
 - _Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation_ (2012), outlines key "principles, commitments and actions that offer a foundation for effective co-operation in international development".

Other interesting reads:

• _Lean Response – Applying the Principles of Lean Startup Methodology to Humanitarian Response_, Lean Startup Co. This post proposes how a number of principles from the Lean Start-up Methodology could help the humanitarian community make a shift "from a top-down model to a bottoms-up model", whereby "those affected by disasters become the centre of focus, rather than the system trying to provide the response".

• _Using the 'Lean Start up' Methodology to Optimize for Impact_, Devex, Cheney, D. (Oct. 2018). Ann Mei Chang, who formerly ran the USAID's Global Development Lab and author of the book _Lean Impact_ discusses the challenges of "optimising for impact in a sector that is not known for the kinds of experimentation the lean startup methodology calls for".

• _Flexibility_, ALNAP. This research project looks at adaptiveness approaches that can help agencies to "more effectively respond to the shifting waves of need". It examines the questions: "How can programmes adapt their response in the face of continual change and uncertainty?" and "How can donors enable flexible funding to ensure organisations can adapt quickly?"

Podcasts and conversations:

• Leading Localisation, Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, Pellowska, D. (April 2021). This researcher presents her study based on working with several organisations in South Sudan, where the author observed both traditional authoritarian leadership and a more participative leadership style, concluding that "localisation does not only mean to establish partnerships with LNGOS", but also a "change in project management culture inside and between (local, national, and international) organisations".

• How to lead and manage organisational change: interviewing Dorothy Nyambi, Five Oaks Consulting (Apr. 2021). In this interview, former medical professional and international development leader, Dorothy Nyambi, discusses politics and power within an organisation from a change leader's perspective, and shares useful frameworks, resources, tools and insights on how to lead and manage organisational change.

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Rights CoLAB

This project was developed in partnership with the **RINGO Project**, hosted by **Rights CoLab**. Many thanks to the IKEA Foundation for supporting the initiative.

The RINGO Project is a systems change initiative that seeks to transform global civil society to respond to today's challenges, aimed at reimagining the role of the international non-governmental organisation.

As a part of the project, this thematic series maps various initiatives under key areas that cover decolonisation, finance and funding models, technology, leadership, ways of working, partnerships, and business operating models.

The purpose of this resource is for the use of practitioners in keeping up to date with the evolving discussions in this area, and promoting greater awareness of actions, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration among humanitarian actors of the role of INGOs in spearheading, facilitating, or supporting change in the sector.

The Centre for Humanitarian Leadership is an innovative collaboration between Deakin University and Save the Children that combines good humanitarian practice with academic rigour. Our mission is to lead and influence change within the humanitarian system through critical analysis, transformational and disruptive education and research, and meaningful contributions to policy and practice.

Rights CoLab is an open platform for facilitating collaborative efforts to advance human rights, among experts with diverse perspectives in the fields of civil society, technology, business and finance.