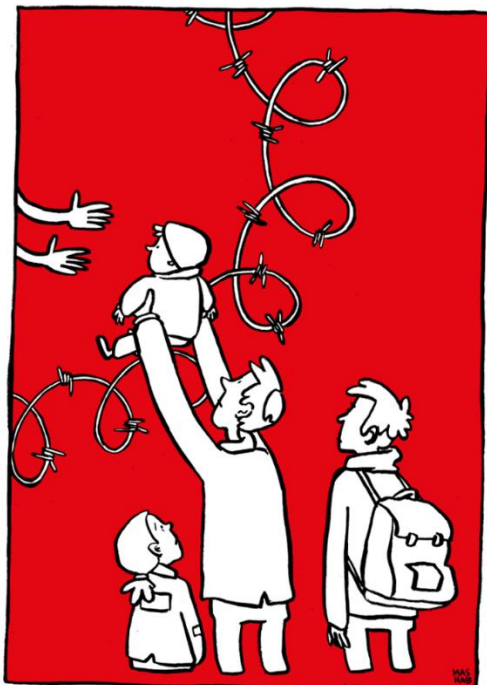


The Future of iNGOs in 2030

Report of a working session for humanitarian leaders

23/10/2018





KUNO is an initiative of ten NGOs and five knowledge institutes from the Dutch humanitarian sector. KUNO's goal is to strengthen the humanitarian sector in the Netherlands. KUNO is a platform for joint learning, reflection and debate. We organize expert meetings, working sessions for professionals, webinars, training and public debates. All of our events are cross-sectoral and organized in cooperation with our partners.

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Cover photo: Postcards made for KUNO by MasHab

Authors: Peter Heintze (KUNO) and Renée van Abswoude (KUNO)

Introduction

“We are not living in an era of change, but are witnessing a change of eras.” The speed at which the world is changing seems to accelerate every day. This has consequences, especially for organizations that operate on a global playing field and want to make a difference locally.

How can humanitarian organizations prepare for the future?

On Wednesday 27 September 2018, KUNO organized a working session for decision makers at The Hague Humanity Hub on the future of international NGOs (iNGOs) in 2030. Among the thirty participants were (deputy) directors of Dutch Humanitarian NGOs, humanitarian program coordinators, officers and heads, academics and senior management staff of NGOs and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim of this event was to open up discussions on future changes and inertia, which need to be pre-empted by humanitarian NGOs working in the Netherlands, and to inform participants on tools that can facilitate strategic planning. The inspiration for this working session was the report ‘The Future of iNGOs in 2030’, published by IARAN in 2017. Michel Maietta was the leading author of that report and was the main speaker and facilitator of this event.

During the morning session there was a series of presentations and discussions:

- = Jelte van Wieren, director SHA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- = Professor Thea Hilhorst, International Institute of Social Studies,
- = Michel Maietta, Strategy Director IRIS, IARAN,
- = Rezaul Chowdhury, Executive Director COAST Trust, Bangladesh (video message),
- = Hero Anwar Brzw, Program Director REACH, Iraq (video message).

In the afternoon, Michel Maietta (IARAN, IRIS) and Mariana Merelo Lobo (IARAN, Oxfam Novib) facilitated a working session to identify the main changes and inertias of the humanitarian ecosystem, towards 2030.

In this paper you will find reports on the introductions and the main findings of the afternoon working session. The first pages present a ‘bullet-point summary’, and the last page is a personal summary and reflection from the coordinator of KUNO.

‘Bullet-point’ summary

Jelte van Wieren, Director SHA, Ministry Foreign Affairs

Important trends related to the future of iNGOs:

- Technical developments that undermine the current business model of iNGOs.
- On-going mistrust within society that overshadows good results
- We need to get a much stronger focus on results. This could be supported by result-based financing by donors (a potential huge change for the humanitarian sector).
- New players and new thinking will have an impact on the way we work: the pre-dominance of humanitarian principles and not-for-profit organizations will not be self-evident.
- The world is changing fast; keep doing what you have been doing is not an option. You need to get back to the core of your being and ask: is there a future for my NGO?

Professor Thea Hilhorst, International Institute of Social Studies

Valuable lessons learned in the Netherlands:

- Localization: a tradition of working with local partners goes back to the 1950s.
- The ‘polder model’: multi-century experience with an effective multi-stakeholder approach.

We should map and share our lessons learned.

Besides future scenarios, we should be aware of context scenarios: high intensity conflict; social-natural disaster; refugee care; fragile settings; nuclear, biological and chemical disasters. Each scenario comes with a different world of parameters, premises, governance, mode of operations; and each offers a different perspective, also on 2030.

Michel Maietta, IRIS / IARAN

- Humanitarian professionals are culturally reactive and they struggle with pre-emptive strategy.
- Humanitarian actors are strategically more brand-driven than mission-driven.

- In the history of the humanitarian system, iNGOs have arisen as disruptive and innovative actors; now many have become conservative and system-enclaved .
- To enhance impact, iNGOs need to question their strategic programming and embrace strategic foresight to pre-empt change and contain inertias.
- The economic model of iNGOs is obsolete and a strong inertia towards transformation.
- The humanitarian incentive system needs a revolution to switch humanitarian power towards local humanitarian actors.
- iNGOs should recover their historical identity and dynamic with the international humanitarian system, their original mission, and look for structural change. That will take managerial courage and disruptive leadership in general.
- There will be no change and transformation in the humanitarian system without disruptive humanitarian leaders.

Reza Chowdhury, COAST Trust, Bangladesh

- Western iNGOs should take a back-seat in countries like Bangladesh and allow local NGOs to take the lead, and facilitate national NGOs in their development and advocacy role in these countries.
- Western iNGOs should focus more on developing global citizenship and global humanitarianism.

Hero Anwar Brzw, REACH, Iraq:

- We need an Iraqi NGO-network to represent us and the people in Iraq. This network should have the power to decline funds that do not meet predetermined criteria.
- We need to be treated as equals; we will not accept to be treated as sub-contractors.
- Western INGOs should sign the Charter for Change, which is more radical than the Grand Bargain, especially on localization. Dutch iNGOs could convince others to sign the Charter for Change and apply these commitments.

Setting the scene: Jelte van Wieren & Thea Hilhorst

Jelte van Wieren, Director Stability & Humanitarian Aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands

I see decisive trends in the sector, both in society and in international politics. The need for humanitarian organization is to look at the future and ask yourself: Am I still a relevant player in that future? Trends might be scary if you don't adjust yourselves.

I would like to mention a few – I won't repeat the paper. But localization will obviously have an impact on iNGOs.

Technology

A real game-changer will be the quick development of technology and the use of technology in the humanitarian sector. There are, for instance, already experiments with technological solutions for peer-to-peer support, which means that you don't need organizations to do that anymore. This means that intermediate organizations, the aid organizations that are the link between donors and the recipients of humanitarian aid, are going to become redundant to a large extent. If you don't think about these trends, and if you do not search for a different way to make yourselves relevant, your business model will disappear.

Mistrust

Very worrying is the mistrust in society about what we as humanitarians do and how we do it. That is true for governments, iNGOs and multilateral organizations. This mistrust will probably grow. It will not go away because it is very difficult to get good news across and it is very easy to get bad news across. The bad news will surpass the good news. During the Haiti crises, for instance, we presented well-documented reports with good results, but nobody was interested.

Result-based financing

One of the things that will have a big impact in the future is a rationalization of the sector, which should push back the fragmentation of activities. We are thinking about how to introduce result-based financing on a bigger scale. We already have experience with this, for instance with the DRA-organizations, but we are now lifting that up to bigger multi-lateral organizations (UN, ICRC). This trend will continue.

With a focus on results, institutional donors - like ourselves - will open up their financial models and find ways for the private sector to step in. The first result-based funding mechanisms are already there, and it will fly high. Personally, I am in a small group under the World Economic Forum, to stimulate this. There is a lot of technological and financial knowledge on this within the private and the financial sector. Opening up to their ideas would be a big chance for humanitarian aid, and could imply big changes. And we need to go into that direction: there is such a lack of funding and a lack of efficient programming.

New thinking and new players

The paradigm shifts we see and are thinking about in humanitarian aid are going to bite us in the tail. Thinking about humanitarian aid is developing fast. We move from the frame 'our obligation to find ways to help people', towards the frame 'finding ways for people to help themselves or to have more local or national ownership'. This has the potential to raise the efficiency and quality of aid significantly. Many more countries, many more players (state, non-state, private) are entering the sector. But they do not necessarily share the humanitarian principles that are central to us – so far. We have to think about what this means. Does this mean that we have to adjust our way of working with principles? Do we have to find new ways for other entities to come in, in a different way? Is it going to be about profit? All these discussions have yet to take place.

The core of our mission

There is a big shift coming. We therefore need to go back to the core of what we are doing and to think about it critically. If this will be our future, how should we adjust? Or should we perhaps change completely? I am on the Advisory Council of *Interpeace* in Geneva, and we went through this self-searching process. We did acknowledge the fact that the world is changing too fast for any organization to keep doing what we have been doing. That is not going to work. You will survive for another 5 or 10 years. We can't stay the way we are. So do we really need to go back to the core, to the essence of what are we all about? Do we need an organization with a building, staff, a director and a board? Do we need an organizational set-up, or do we not need it? These kinds of questions need to be asked.

Maybe this soul-searching process leads to adjustments. Maybe it leads to real existential questions like: is there even a future for my NGO?

Thea Hilhorst, Professor of Humanitarian Aid and Reconciliation,
International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University

Localization & polder model: valuable lessons learned in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands we have a rather unique tradition of co-financing. But I wonder whether the Dutch agencies are aware of this relatively unique history? We are experienced. It started in the 1950s, with co-financing models that were strongly subsidized: Dutch agencies worked with local partners for decades. Now we see localization coming up in ways that are often very naive, in a field where Dutch NGOs have so much experience. This experience is not only framed in a positive way, but also as lessons learned. Dutch agencies should realize how valuable this experience is. We could perhaps map the lessons learned, and bring that into the open.

Another long-standing Dutch tradition is our polder model, which is deeply ingrained in our society. It goes back to building our polders centuries ago, as a way of managing big areas of water, which required collaboration between different partners. It is also a tradition to make policies by ourselves: we do not wait for the government, but bring parties together, negotiate and work out policies. It is not unique, but nonetheless a history Dutch NGOs can share more assertively on international levels. Since everybody is now talking about multi-stakeholder platforms, we know that we have had them for quite some time, with positive and negative experiences. However, these new co-governance premises are surrounded with quite some optimism about these multi stakeholder approaches. It could be our job, from the Netherlands, to share our lessons learned.

Scenarios

In this introduction, I want to talk about scenarios. Many people, when they talk about scenarios, automatically think about future scenarios. However, there are other ways to conceptualize scenarios. I propose a method in which you can think about different typical cases, and how you can deal with them. I would like to present perhaps this set of different scenarios, which are also relevant when we talk about the future:

- High intensity conflict
- Social-natural disaster
- Refugee care
- Fragile settings
- Nuclear, biological and chemical disasters

These are different types of disasters NGOs are dealing with. But what we often forget is that each scenario comes with a different world of parameters, premises, governance, mode of operations; and each offers a different perspective, also in 2030.

For example, Jelte was talking about principles. What I would like to emphasize is that there is not *one* discussion about principles. There are several different discussions. The relevance of humanitarian principles could be different in each discussion. For example, humanitarian principles are extremely relevant in a high intensity conflict. But for refugee care, the Refugee Convention is much more important. Their importance is lesser in fragile settings, where we have to focus on what happened after Busan (Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, 2011) and how governments are engaging in development in a fragile context. Currently, we talk about humanitarian principles as if it is one discussion that applies everywhere in a similar way. It is not.

The same applies to issues of governance; they can differ substantially. Look, for example, at social-natural disasters, where localization is already happening. Since 2004 we have had the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, followed by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Social-natural disasters are now very firmly anchored in national legislation, national organizations, and national platforms; the international community increasingly has an external role. The days that the international community could just walk in and take over the scene, as was standard practice in the previous century, are over. The earthquake in India (1999/2000) was a real turning point in this. India said: "What are you all doing here; this is our country, we are not comfortable." That set things in motion. We had gone way too far in thinking that governments could not play a role in their disasters.

I would like to give special attention to the nuclear, biological and chemical disasters: I don't see any strategical thinking about this scenario. When should humanitarians come in; when not? It is – again – a very different setting. In the Ebola-crisis, for instance, it was very interesting to see that MSF, of all humanitarian actors in the world, asked the UN to step in with troops: military troops to help in the Ebola response.

What I try to show you is that there is a need to be specific on what kind of disaster you are talking about. I hope I inspired you to do this. You can see it as a gentle reminder for the rest of the day: take into consideration what scenario you are discussing when talking about 2030.

	2030 Trends and Challenges	Implications
High intensity conflict	Response relies largely on international actors. Local partners crucial in negotiating and maintaining access. Humanitarian principles of crucial importance.	Potential for innovations around remote management and aid delivery Capacities for humanitarian diplomacy (access; humanitarian corridors) of paramount importance
Socio-natural Disasters	More locally and government led responses Increasing attention to Disaster Risk Reduction integrated to development programming Increasing use of insurance instruments and shock responsive social protection	Only likely to be needed in large-scale disasters that overwhelm local capacities. Role will be supporting local actors, advocacy and addressing exclusion and discrimination of minorities and vulnerable groups
Refugee care	Increasingly refugees outside of camp settings Government-led responses and host governments set parameters for inclusion and exclusion of aid recipients Challenges for humanitarian space and upholding refugee conventions.	Potential for innovation around refugee care grounded in resilience approaches and out-of-camp service delivery Challenges for protection and roles of humanitarians shifting from lead in response to advocacy for inclusive response
Fragile Settings	Continued emphasis on institution and state-building approaches. Growing engagement of development actors and development and humanitarian links Continued high risks and vulnerabilities, often leading to wicked problems	Multi-mandate organisations have particular strengths in contributing to integrated and adaptive programming A need to safeguard the distinctive mandate of humanitarian action in responding to ongoing and upcoming humanitarian needs.
Nuclear, biological, chemical disasters	No strategic thinking Ebola: MSF asking for international troops engagement	

Figure 1: Different scenarios and related trends and challenges (by Thea Hilhorst)

The Future of INGOs: an introduction

Michel Maietta, Strategy Director Institut de Relation Internationales et Strategiques (IRIS) & initiator of the Inter-Agency Regional Analyst Network (IARAN)

Mission driven or brand driven?

Humanitarian professionals or humanitarian organizations are culturally reactive. They do not have a strong tradition in pre-emptive or transformative strategies. Humanitarians are used to responding to life-saving threats, which induces a strong culture of the present time span. This is quite different for most performing actors in the government and private sector, where strategic foresight capacities are well embedded and intelligence units are working on and dealing with pre-emptive strategies.

In a world changing faster than ever, with the degree of context complexity exacerbated by interconnectivity, the present time span is not sufficient enough to produce humanitarian impact and transformation: humanitarian actors need to embrace the future and think strategically about it.

But even if change is needed, the humanitarian system has become strongly existentialist and conservative: inertias across the humanitarian system are growing, and change and transformation requires strategic resources and leadership.

Risk-adverse leadership is also an inertia itself: not many leaders want to risk being disruptive and test new paths of performance and transformation. The economic model of most humanitarian iNGOs is fuelled by brand-driven strategies. A brand strategy is focussed on what *I am* and how *I want to grow*. This is actually paradoxical when looking at the mission of humanitarian iNGOs, at the fact that the ultimate goal of humanitarian iNGOs is to save other lives and not their own. With this existentialism comes power, a power that the formal humanitarian actors are struggling to give up, despite the localization agenda.

Historically, iNGOs were very disruptive and innovative actors. Now many iNGOs have lost their original agility. Some of you became as dogmatic as the church. Rigidity seems to have become a feature of the humanitarian sector.

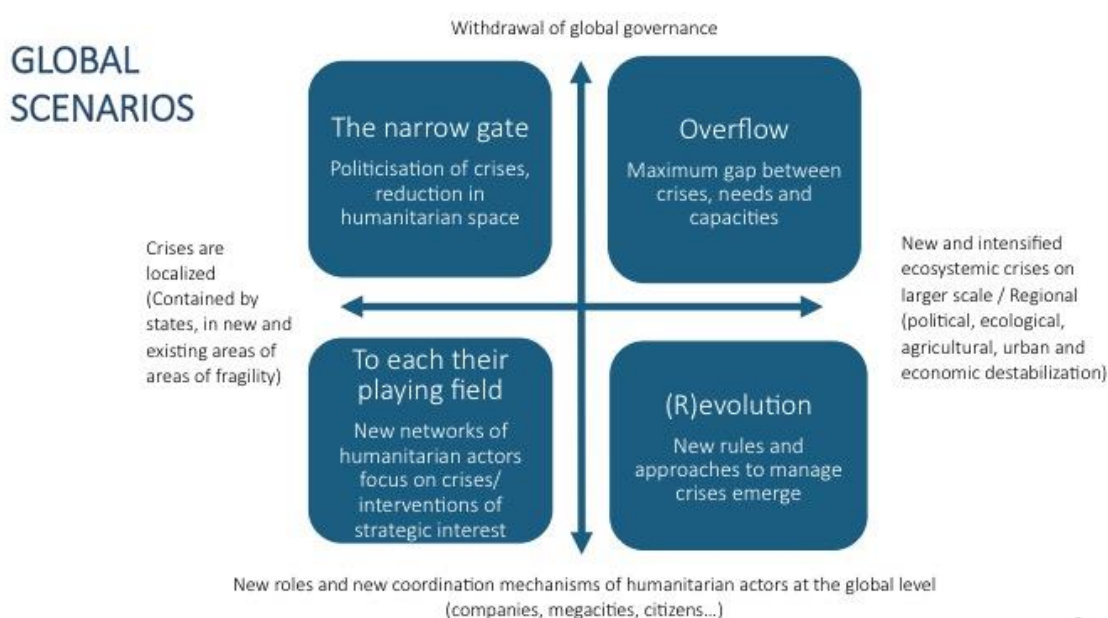
Future of iNGOs in 2030

For 'The Future of iNGOs in 2030' we explored how aid is evolving globally. From that we developed different paths, different scenarios. In the report we explore the

different possibilities and choices we have, now and in the coming years, to preempt the different paths or scenarios that might develop.

In order to develop and work out our scenarios, we identified two main patterns that are very powerful towards 2030, and we put them on the X and Y axes:

- a) Governance: growing or weakening global governance (Y axis);
- b) Typology of crises: more localized crises versus more regional, multi-connected crises (X axis).



From: M. Maietta et al, *The Future of iNGOs in 2030* (IARAN, 2017), pp. 15

The next step is to describe the four scenarios (the four quadrants) that follow from this scheme or diagram:

1. The narrow gate (less global governance & more localized crises): politicization of aid, localization of crises, withdrawal global governance, reduction of the humanitarian space. We see this now happening in Syria.
2. Overflow (less global governance & interlinked, large-scale crises): withdrawing global governance, but interconnected crises. This is a very worrying scenario; an example is the Ebola crisis.
3. To each their playing field (strengthening global governance & more localized crises): localized crises, new roles and new forms of coordination. This happened already in the 1980s, during the first years of the growing/exploding

Aids crisis in Southern Africa. Aid organizations did not show up in Southern Africa and people organized themselves.

4. (R)evolutions (strengthening global governance & interlinked, large-scale crises): new roles & actors and intensified connected crises. This trend could start from 2024/2025. Then new actors will replace the traditional NGOs.

All four scenarios are valuable and could become dominant. It is also likely that in reality crossover scenarios or crossover crises might occur. It is important not to focus now on a prediction contest: what scenario is most likely to occur? Instead, it is important to check how prepared your organization is for each of these scenarios and how preparedness can be enhanced.

The relevance of each scenario, and the way in which an organization could prepare itself for these scenarios, is different for different types of humanitarian organizations. The report describes five different roles/profiles:

- iNGO©: franchise organizations that keep working from the power of the brand
- iNGO Global Fund: iNGOs gather money and others do the job. An interesting perspective
- Fire fighters: will keep doing their job at the front (phasing out might become more and more a problem)
- iNGO & Co: a distribution of roles (e.g. resources, advocacy, grassroots organizations will deliver services)
- iNGO at your service: we give other organizations all the means to deliver (as service provider); we do not deliver anymore.

We tested scenarios to the profiles (you will find that in the report). As a decision-maker you need to decide: what is the direction you want to move in, and how do we get fit for the future?

Challenges for iNGOs

There is a fundamental problem with our incentive system and there is something broken in our economic model. If you won't target this issue, you can give up on possible change.

As a donor, you have to give up on some quality criteria around accountability. For example, if you want to give power to grass roots organizations, you should comply with the fact that they will not be able to give you a financial report every two months. This could mean that you might lose some money. But we all know that if you want to shift the power, some money will get lost. We all know it, and we should say it. This is the only way if you want to shift the power: accept the imperfection and the inevitable loss. Accept that rising grass roots organizations cannot uphold the same accountability as an iNGO.

Being a CEO of a humanitarian iNGO today is a big challenge and takes personal courage. You have to espouse change if you want to be fit for the future. You should ask yourself, what is most important: the rest of my career, or the mission of my iNGO? Your humanitarian missions are unique and fantastic: save the children, act against hunger, rescue refugees, etc. How you can reconcile the iNGO's economic model with its original humanitarian mission will be your biggest leadership challenge. It takes strategic vision, managerial courage and building high-performing teams, but it will go through structural change, disruptions, and abandoning your paternalistic approaches.

Video messages from the Global South on how they perceive the future

Rezaul Chowdhury, Executive Director COAST Trust, Bangladesh

A major problem in Europe is the high numbers of illegal migrants knocking on your door. This has two effects: it is both creating a right-wing agenda of protectionism and an anti-aid sentiment. This indicates that we have to change our roles.

Historical NGOs in Europe developed the notion of global citizenship, telling European people to give money to fund development and justice in Bangladesh, so that Bangladeshi people live peacefully and happily in their countries and stay there. What happened in the last two or three decades, however, is that iNGOs became the aid contractors of different European countries and have forgotten their original agenda: developing global citizenship and global humanitarianism.

For the last 30 years we, NGOs from developing countries, have kept on telling NGOs from European countries: "Give us the development and advocacy role in our countries, and you just facilitate us. You take the back seat; we take the front seat in our countries. On an international level we will assist you, we will walk together. We are part of one civil society. And you will promote humanitarianism and global citizenship in your countries, in your politics.

And I assure you, that on our national level we are very aware that the European taxpayer gave money to the poor people of Bangladesh. Not to me as director. I have to accept the challenge that I am accountable to the people. I am using the money given by European taxpayers in the best way to support poor people in Bangladesh.

So we have to change our roles. You have to take your role at an international level, and I take my role at a national level.

Hero Anwar Brzw, Program Director REACH, Iraq

In the future, I would like to see that the national and local Iraqi NGOs have an exclusive network that provides us with a united and unified voice. They can represent the Iraqi NGOs and their interests, plus focus on best way to serve the people in Iraq and believe that we are equal. We all know about localization and fight for it peacefully. We do not accept being treated as subcontractors or second-class citizens. We are equal, we know what we need, and we say no to donors: we

do not accept all the funds if it does not meet our criteria or if it is not the right and the best way.

Dutch NGOs can help Iraqi NGOs to achieve this by signing the Charter for Change and convincing other NGOs and donors to become a member of the Charter for Change and to apply the commitment. Charter for Change is a dream about equality. If iNGOs apply the commitment from the Charter for Change, it would be an ideal world for national and local NGOs. We do not need anything else; just apply that.

I think that the Charter for Change is more radical than the Grand Bargain, so we need your help in achieving its commitments and we are looking forward to making it happen.

Discussion on localization after the introductions and video messages

Localization – a delicate debate

All the introductions led to further debate and reflection. Especially the debate around localization was meaningful. In an open atmosphere, issues were addressed that often remain unspoken. The discussions focused on paternalism, donor incentives and capacities.

Below are some of the arguments we touched upon.

Paternalism

- It is really like the mother or father and a child. You do your best for the child – either a child of your own or adopted. But there comes a moment when you have to leave them: they are grown up. They don't want to be protected. We need to give them power.

Incentives

- Accountability standards are too high for smaller organizations. That is a fact. Donor accountability rules are not helping the power shift in favour of local NGOs. If you want to change, you will have to attend to this incentive system. But then, if you change this system, some money might get lost. You will have to accept that.
- When the incentive system changes and we let 'the child grow', what would iNGOs and donors get in return?
A lot. Look at migration. Give money directly to national and local actors and migration flows will reduce.

Capacity

- We can't be naïve about the capacity of local NGOs. There is an absence of capacity. Another issue is based on the structure of crises: sometimes local people and local organizations are confronted with the aggression of their own rulers. You don't want these rulers to have access to donor money.
- Start with the protracted crises. In these conflict areas, local civil society organizations are active. This is about the structure of aid. This structure is very polarized: North versus South. Look at the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazaar (Bangladesh). There are too many iNGOs active in Cox's Bazaar. They want to be present there, because it is bringing money to their Headquarters.
- Cox's Bazaar is the wrong example. There is evidently not enough local capacity in Cox's Bazaar. That is a major problem.

Afternoon working sessions: new insights

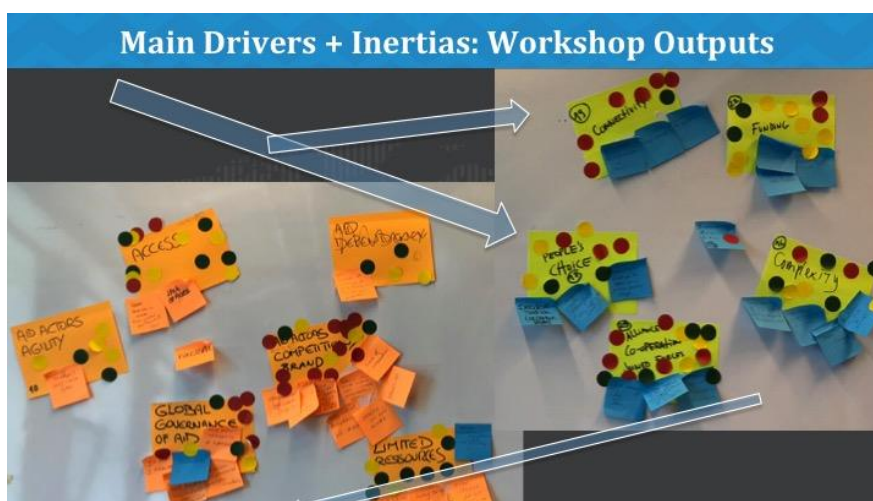
Facilitated by Michel Maietta and Mariana Merelo Lobo (IARAN, Oxfam Novib)

Main Drivers & Inertias

The afternoon session was a working session that provided participants with a tool to think strategically. This session commenced with participants writing down the most important drivers and inertias that will shape the future of the humanitarian sector. This resulted in a long list of approximately 45 different drivers and inertias.

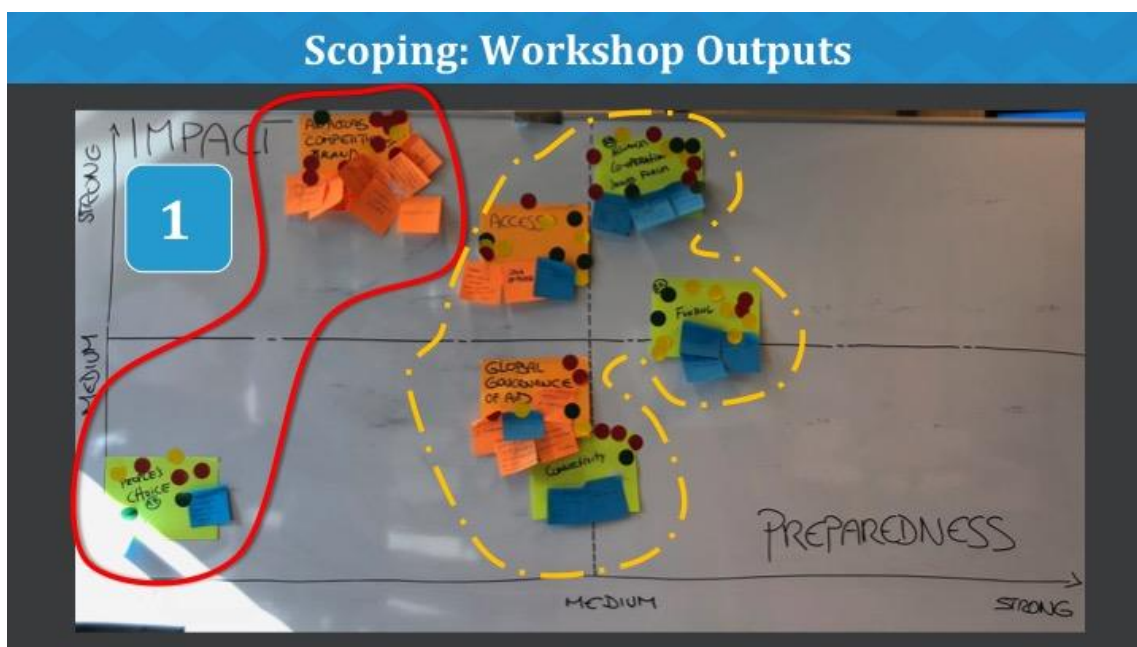
The drivers/inertias were then gathered and clustered by Michel Maietta and Mariana Merelo Lobo. After that, they were discussed with the entire group. In the end, eleven main themes were formulated. Subsequently, these themes were ranked by the group. Participants received three coloured stickers. Each colour had a value attached to it (red = 5 points, yellow = 3 points, green = 1 point). The ranking of the themes resulted in the following outcome (in order of assigned weight):

- Aid actors competition / brand (41)
- Alliance, co-operation, joint forces (29)
- Access (26)
- Funding (22)
- Global governance of aid (21)
- Connectivity (19)
- People's choice (17)
- Complexity (16)
- Limited resources (12)
- Aid actors agility (10)
- Expectation of constituency (to provide traditional forms of relief) (6)



Impact & Preparedness

The next step was to place (*en groupe*) the most urgent themes in a diagram that gave weight to both the impact of iNGOs and the level of preparedness of iNGOs for this theme.¹ It was interesting to see that the participants of all different NGOs completely agreed with a certain theme, while disagreeing on other themes. The workshop findings below show the general conclusions that were reached with all NGOs present. This means that a workshop within an NGO could have different results.



Very strong impact, below medium preparedness: *Aid actors competition / brand* [1].

Strong impact, medium preparedness: *Access*.

Very strong impact, above medium preparedness: *Alliance, co-operation, joint forces*.

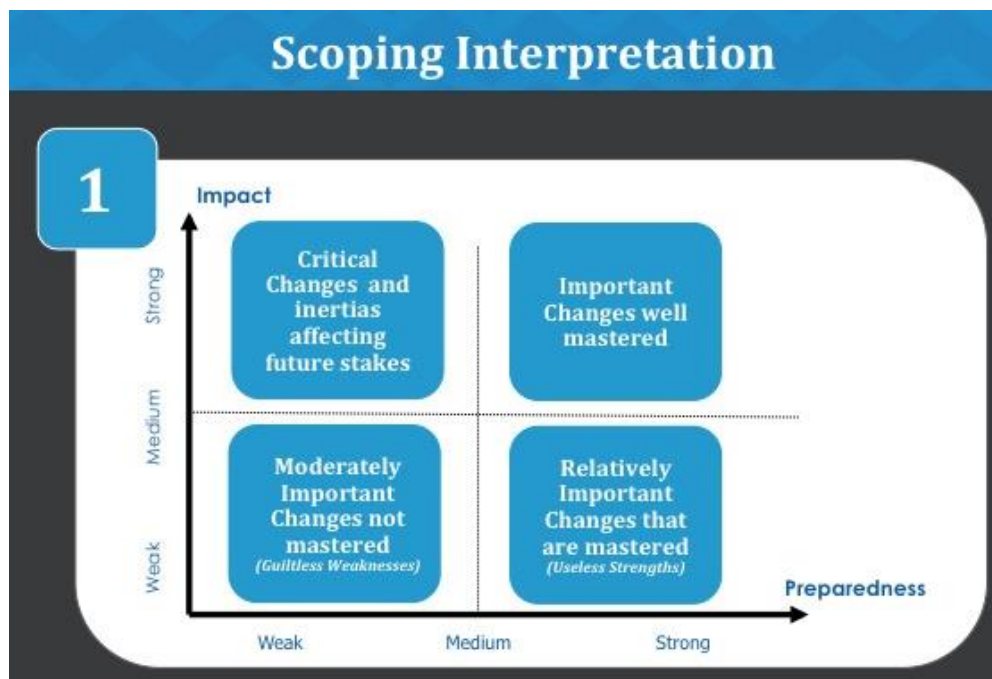
Medium impact, above medium preparedness: *Funding*.

Just below medium impact, medium preparedness: *Global governance of aid*.

Below medium impact, medium preparedness: *Connectivity*.

Very low impact, very low preparedness: *People's choice*.

¹ Attachment 1 is a schematic view of these themes, including the drivers and inertias.



Based on this session, most attention should be given to the issue of *Aid actors competition / brand*. It is characterized by a high impact, but low preparedness. This theme was, by the way, a theme that was composed of just inertias, and not even one driver:

- Institutional interest, or institutional branding
- Branding
- Keeping our own brand
- Self-interest, protectionism, self-defence
- Mistrust within society towards NGOs => increased accountability / reporting
- Lack of cooperation
- Competitive attitude in our alliance standing in the way of empowering national forums in the alliance
- Competition between iNGOs

Conclusions

Based on the results from the working session, the discussions between the different NGOs and his previous experience, Maietta concluded with the following remarks:

- The humanitarian sector should avoid a top-down approach and needs to focus more on a bottom-up approach;
- The future will offer more possibilities when humanitarian organizations simply start contributing to the design of innovation/development programmes as part of their strategy.
- For organizations in the humanitarian and development sector, it might be very challenging to choose between costs and risks; achieving personal goals or the mission of the organization. But local organizations will sooner or later question iNGOs on this.
- It is important to include representatives of local actors in the strategic planning of your organization; it might be confronting, but their questions need to be posed and answered;
- Humanitarian and development organizations urgently need to reflect on their role;
- There is an increased demand for such open sessions and workshops. When doing this, the focus should be on one or maximum two topics. Exploring more topics is too much;
- We need to learn from each other. Collectiveness is key in humanitarian and development work to provide the best interventions to vulnerable people.

Informal recap: some personal reflections

By Peter Heintze, KUNO coordinator

A message of life & death, a mirror, hidden treasures and a coup

The opening message from Jelte van Wieren to iNGOs could not be misunderstood. In short, (technological) developments force you to go back to the core of your mission and ask yourselves: *Is there a future for my NGO?*

Michel Maietta handed the audience a revealing mirror. Once upon a time, NGOs were disruptive forces, fighting for transformation, while holding on to their beautiful missions to make this world a better place. Nowadays they seem to be brand-driven organizations, more focused on their own future than that of the world. Maietta explained quite convincingly that this is economically a broken model for Western iNGOs.

Thea Hilhorst treated the audience to some hidden treasures we have in the Netherlands, but we are not sufficiently aware of them. And these are rather unique traditions that have added value. Hilhorst was not referring to practical aid delivery, but to issues of governance: effective multi-stakeholder decision-making in complex settings (based on centuries of governing experience with our 'polder model') and developing equal partnership with local actors (the Dutch have done this for decades; nowadays it is called 'localization' and many think this is something new). Both skills are very much needed in this changing world, with disasters that grow in complexity and intensity.

And then there were these 'voices from the south': Reza Chowdhury and Hero Anwar Brzw: 'Yes we need you, but *not* in an old school way. Give us the front seat. Practice what you preach: equal partnerships, trust, true localization.' This should be seen as a friendly coup: 'We, the local NGOs, need to take charge asap.' This should be a major game changer for humanitarian organizations. National and local actors do not want foreign players to decide on the rules of the game in their countries. They want to have the power.

Localization – a delicate debate

The debates around localization were meaningful. In an open atmosphere issues were addressed that are often left unspoken in constructive debates: paternalism, northern organizations need to leave behind incentives of the humanitarian system that keep local NGOs from catching power, and the limited capacities of local NGOs that might hinder effective interventions. Localization was discussed as a tough yet relevant theme.

Inertias

Maietta's focus on inertias was remarkable. He explained that many people focus on drivers for change and often neglect inertias. Inertias are, however, just as important, sometimes even more important. If you want to achieve change, both need to be addressed, but they need to be addressed in completely different ways. Drivers of change are push or pull factors that can be 'played around' with: they can be speeded up or slowed down. Inertias, however, are blockades that need to be broken, if you want change to happen. If you do not deal with blockades/inertias, change will be difficult.

Outcomes of the afternoon working session

The main theme that needed to be addressed, based on the findings of the afternoon session, appeared to be the issue of *Aid actors competition*. Maietta was pleased to see so much self-knowledge under the Dutch iNGOs: this was the first session he witnessed where this theme ended up so high on the list. And it is indeed an issue that needs to be addressed and can very well be addressed: the impact can be strong and, so far, too little effort has been made (the preparedness is low).

A sad observation of the outcomes of the afternoon session is the position where localization (*People's choices*) ended on our priority list. The theme did get some priority points (number 7 of 11, with 17 points, where #1 *Aid actors competition* got 41 points). *People's choices* was positioned in the diagram as an issue where the preparedness was very low - in fact, lowest of all priority themes. This would suggest there is a world to win. But *People's choices* was also positioned as 'very low impact'. This suggests that these representatives of Dutch iNGOs do not expect that the impact of changing the power balance in favour of local NGOs will be very high for their organizations.

Attachment 1: Schematic view of the seven most prominent themes, including the drivers and inertias.

Blue text = drivers
 Yellow/orange text = iner

