5: HOW COORDINATION GETS DONE

A recurring theme of this study is that effective coordination adds value by performing a number of key tasks, as well as offering a range of services and skills for the benefit of the response of host governments, UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross system and donors. This section presents this study's findings on the tasks, services and tools of coordination that have added value to the work of those involved in humanitarian response. It distils some of the ingredients that make such services most helpful, and discusses the associated challenges of providing them. It also considers some of the less successful aspects of humanitarian coordination that require reform.

The section begins by focusing on those tasks that this study argues are critical to coordination as an integrating activity, facilitating humanitarian responses that are more than the sum of their individual parts. These include analysis, strategy setting, the goals and standards for the response, orchestrating a division of labour, advocacy – including negotiating access and sustaining a framework of consent – and monitoring and evaluating impact.[70] The section then turns to some of the tasks and services that facilitate collaboration among agencies and thereby contribute to coordinated outcomes: the provision of common services such as security, communications, and common logistics, information systems, and resource mobilisation. The section concludes by looking at the tools and structures available to coordinators and their teams.

5.1 Coordinating Integrated Responses: Tasks and Techniques

5.1.1 Analysis

In the action-oriented culture of humanitarian response, understanding the causes and dynamics of the conflicts in which humanitarian agencies work can seem an optional extra. The IASC list of functions for strategic coordination does not mention analysis.[71] Donors too show little interest in the quality of agencies' analysis of their environment.[72] Yet analysis is not an optional extra. In the words of one interviewee: *'Offering a compelling vision of what can be achieved based on sound analysis of context is perhaps the greatest value added ever offered to coordination, provided that it is offered in a way that people can add to, [and] feel included in.'*

Such 'sound analysis of context' is increasingly acknowledged as vital to humanitarian response. Over the last decade, humanitarians have recognised that in contexts where civilian targeting may be a key strategic aim rather than a consequence of conflict, and where relief goods and infrastructure have been appropriated by belligerents, humanitarian aid can do more harm than good. Ensuring that this is not the case requires carefully considered strategies based on sound political, economic, and social analysis. Protection strategies also depend on sound analysis. The fact that humanitarians have to preserve the independence of humanitarian action and thus position themselves carefully in relation to political and military strategies – whether of UN peacekeepers, Member States, or warring parties – again emphasises the imperative of sound analysis of the context and conduct of humanitarian action (see Section 6 for more on this).

In addition to more macro analysis, effective micro-assessment of need requires understanding of the coping strategies that people themselves use to survive, and how such strategies are undermined or supported by the tactics of warring parties or humanitarian agencies. A positive example of this was found in Kosovo, where OCHA's Humanitarian Vulnerability Assessment initiatives, which draw on the expertise of the appropriate UN and other agencies, have been seen as very useful in guiding the overall response.

[70] Such tasks correlate closely with the IASC's description of strategic coordination. See IASC (1998a) op. cit.
[71] A point noted by Duffield, Jones & Lautze (1998) op. cit.
[72] For example, donor funding 'technologies', such as logframes and project cycles, do not require agencies to offer a very sophisticated analysis of the causes of humanitarian need to which they propose to respond.

Good contextual knowledge, situational analysis and regular monitoring of the environment are critical elements of effective security management.[73] Analysis is also a vital part of lesson learning. Across the humanitarian community analysing and capturing lessons from past experiences appears to be weak, contributing to the fact that all too many individuals and organisations are left to repeat the mistakes of the past and without the benefit of prior knowledge. In the DRC, several NGOs expressed the need for agencies to do more to share their analysis with one another, particularly sharing lessons from past experiences. For example, in Kosovo, although many agencies deemed the 1999/2000 winterisation programme a success, there was little that had been distilled into an analysis about why things had gone well to inform the 2000/2001 winterisation programme.

Humanitarian Coordinators and their teams have a pivotal role to play in providing and facilitating political, economic and social analysis at the macro and micro levels – a task that this study suggests is rarely done well.[74] As noted above, both Coordinators and members of their staff require strong analytical skills. Yet effective analysis also depends on techniques and systems to gather, share and manage information in order to build up a picture of the context and impact of humanitarian response. In Nairobi, for example, the Humanitarian Analysis Group of the SACB chaired by the UN Coordination Unit for Somalia (UNCU) provides a forum for monthly inter-agency discussion of the evolving situation among key information collectors.[75] Effective coordination requires this mix of skilled personnel and more systematic use of analysis-building techniques.

Value-added analysis:

- Is 'ahead of the curve' and considers issues that other agencies are not looking at. A good example is OCHA's work on energy in the FRY.
- Draws on analysis and knowledge of local staff and security officers. All case studies suggested this was a rich but neglected source of information and analysis.
- Requires access to the field. Many interviewees emphasised that this was essential in order to produce the level of information that adds value.
- Considers factors at global, regional, national and local levels in terms of how they impinge on the causes of conflict and context of humanitarian response.
- Considers political, economic, social and cultural factors.[76]
- Knows what is going on, and therefore sheds light on why and how to respond.
- Offers understanding of the dynamics and motives of those that fight.[77]
- Draws on locally available researchers, for example, the research of the War Torn Societies project in Somalia involving Somali researchers was found useful.
- Includes analysis on the processes by which some people win and others lose. For example, a number of interviewees found the UNCU's political economy analysis enriched their understanding and their strategies.
- Identifies the obstacles to building peace.
- Is built and modified from a process of listening to others.

Challenges

Effective analysis of a changing context is time-consuming and can represent an investment of resources in terms of personnel that seems beyond the means of individual agencies. This highlights the value added where coordination teams can offer such analysis to others.

Conversely, there is a risk that if analysis is seen as the sole preserve of one individual or agency, others can both fail to take responsibility for contributing information and analysis that they acquire in their daily work, and to use such analysis to guide their action.

Not all players will have the same analysis. This poses a huge facilitation challenge for coordination teams. As discussed below, CAP formulation could offer one opportunity for building system-wide analysis. Joint assessments have also proved a useful tool to forge shared perceptions of problems.

[73] For extensive detail on this, see Van Brabant, K. (2000) *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (HPN at ODI : London) Good Practice Review 8.

[74] This is also borne out by ALNAP's review of evaluations of humanitarian response, see ALNAP (2001) *Humanitarian Action: Learning from Evaluation* (ODI: London)

[75] The UNCU is a joint UNDP/OCHA coordination office for Somalia (see Annexe 3).

[76] For comment on ignoring political analysis and focusing on socioeconomic issues which leads to inadequate attention to protection issues, see DANIDA (1999) *Evaluation of Danish Humanitarian Assistance Volume 6: Great Lakes* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida: Copenhagen).

[77] For more information see Le Billon (2000) *The Political Economy of War: What Relief Workers Need to Know* (HPN at ODI: London), Network Paper 33.

5.1.2 Formulating a Strategy and Plan

Having a clear strategy and plan to guide the humanitarian response is pivotal to ensuring that the most critical humanitarian needs are met. Yet all too often humanitarian actors in general, and the UN in particular, are unable to articulate what they are trying to achieve, or how their particular actions relate to precise goals. This recurrent conclusion was common to past studies, interviews, and case studies. It derives partly from the paucity of humanitarian agencies' analysis of their environment, partly from a lack of a shared vision, and partly from poor management. It signals both a major failing of coordination and raises questions about the overall quality and impact of the humanitarian response. One interviewee summed it up succinctly: *'For a sustained and principled response, coordination should facilitate a joint vision and strategy, [and] not just share information.'*

For example, in the DRC many interviewees, including UN officials at the highest level, lamented the lack of an overarching strategy and implementation plan for humanitarian action. One coordinator described the fact that UN had not defined what it wanted to achieve as *'the first and major weakness'*. Another reason to plan was the negative impact on the overall response if planning didn't take place: *'If you want performance, tasks need to be clearly defined.'* The need to focus on a plan and not rely on the inspiration of single individuals was also acknowledged: *'You shouldn't bring people together around a person but around a plan.'*

Collected evidence from past studies and interviews suggests that formulating effective strategies for action and plans to achieve them requires leadership and vision, and can in return add to the credibility of those facilitating or leading the process.

Effective strategies:

- Are based on sound analysis of the political, economic, cultural, and social setting.
- Focus on tackling problems in an integrated way rather than in mandate sized pieces. The strategic framework in Afghanistan is perhaps one of the most ambitious attempts at this, with its aim to provide a common framework for planning and monitoring.
- Offer people a sense of direction.
- Turn activities into more than the sum of their individual parts.
- Should focus on specific, measurable targets not goals.[78]
- Have benchmarks against which progress can be monitored.
- Focus on providing both humanitarian protection and assistance.
- Consider how to achieve and sustain access.
- Include the principles and standards that will inform that approach.
- Will define how to work with state structures and assess the impact of the humanitarian effort on state structures.
- Include all players from the outset, even if implementation will include a sequential approach.[79]
- Emerge from processes that allow participants opportunities for joint analysis and reflection.
- Address the plight of IDPs.
- Address relief, rehabilitation and longer term development issues in an appropriate way.
- Include preparedness and prevention measures.[80]
- Take into account the security implications of what is proposed.
- Identify the role for effective political action in pursuit of humanitarian goals.
- Should ideally be approved and adopted by the humanitarian community as a whole.

[78] Having specific, timebound and measurable targets instead of goals is important to monitoring and accountability. This emulates the trend in the development sphere. See Leader, N. (2000a) Negotiating the 'Governance Gap'. The UN and Capacity-Building in Afghanistan - a Report for the UN Capacity-Building Task Force.

[79] See the Praxis Group Ltd (2000) Background Paper Drafted As Preparation for the ECHA DDR Working Group Paper: 'Harnessing Institutional Capacities in Support of DDR of Former Combatants'.

[80] This could draw on the work of the UN Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination team – consisting originally of DPA, DPKO, OCHA and later UNDP and UNHCR, and now also UNICEF, WFP, WHO and FAO – to support preventive action and to develop improved mechanisms for early warning, contingency planning and preparedness. Several fact-finding missions have been taken on behalf of this team to increase the state of preparedness.

Challenges

It is crucial to articulate strategies that respond to actual needs rather than lists of agency activities. UN agencies in particular and humanitarians in general often see problems through the prism of their own mandates and therefore fail to link effectively with the actions of others. For instance, despite the elaborate efforts of sectoral committees in Somalia to articulate sectoral strategies, the response risks being shaped more by supply agency than by the demand of the situation.

The proliferation of tools across the system – such as UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) and the Common Country Assessment (CCA), strategic frameworks as well as consolidated appeals at country and regional appeals constitute an array of tools for UN Country Teams to adopt.[81] Although examining the interrelationship of these tools was beyond the scope of this study, it is clearly a challenge for the UN to be clear about the effectiveness, comparative advantages and links between these tools.

Harmonising the planning cycles of different agencies is another challenge. For example, a number of interviewees argued that as the timing of the CAP did not coincide with their agency planning it was unhelpful (although other interviewees valued the planning process attached to the CAP).

The inclusion – or exclusion – of NGOs and humanitarian actors outside the UN continues to be a point of contention. Non-UN actors are not systematically involved in UN strategy and planning processes, which certainly weakens coordination and potentially weakens the desired impact of the response. The Brahimi report's proposals to form Integrated Mission Task Forces to plan for and support peace operations composed exclusively of UN agency staff could compound this.[82]

Finally, it is a challenge to devise plans that can respond to, and anticipate, fast-moving events. The Somalia case study offered a good example of this where, having had a mid-term review of the CAP for 2000, the UN had to respond to the emergence of the Transitional National Government (TNG). The result of the UN's efforts was the 'First Steps' document, a strategy for UN aid in response to the TNG's emergence, which was later expanded into a year-long programme that became the kernel of the CAP for 2001.

5.1.3 Adhering to Standards

A key element of an integrated and principled response is that all actors agree on the nature and scale of the required response, that they work towards shared goals, and that they strive to achieve the same standard of response. As the ICRC's 'recipe' of how to work emphasises, along with a clear moral framework and the use of legal instruments, conducting humanitarian activity in a stable, predictable manner is central to fostering respect for humanitarian principles and practice.[83] Striving for shared standards of response is vital to ensure impartiality.

Both the Somalia and the DRC cases highlighted the practical significance of striving for consistent standards in humanitarian response in terms of minimising accusations of political favouritism that could have dire implications for the security of aid workers and access to beneficiaries. Yet in both Somalia and the DRC, and despite efforts at Nairobi level for Somalia, the team found little evidence at the field level of attempts to standardise the response among agencies beyond their expressed commitment to the Sphere standards. (However, in the DRC, NGOs in North Kivu had agreed salary scales for local staff, and OCHA proposed to organise a workshop with every provincial inspector to discuss the technical issues of a national health plan.)

In Kosovo, despite a well-funded relief response by a huge range of agencies, almost no attention or training was given on standards for humanitarian response – even by the HCIC that was well placed to encourage initiatives in this area.

[81] The UNDAF is described as the planning framework for the development operations of the UN at the country level, while the CCA is described as a collaborative, country-based process for reviewing and analysing the national development situation as the basis of the UNDAF.

[82] See SCHR (2000) 'Briefing on the Brahimi Report', (SCHR, Geneva).

[83] See Pasquier, A. (2001) Constructing Legitimacy. (Seminar 'Politics and Humanitarian Aid: Debates, Dilemmas and Dissension' on 1 February 2001).

A number of cases demonstrate the possibility of establishing and using standards. For instance, Liberia provides a fascinating attempt to establish a local compliance mechanism – the Programme Compliance and Violations Committee (PCVO), set up to monitor the agreed code of conduct among agencies. If found in breach of the code, the agency had to stand before the PCVO chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator, donors, two international NGOs and two local NGOs. If violated three times, the organisation was kicked out of the coordination mechanism.

Adhering to standards requires:
- Agreement on the standards.
- The ability to monitor adherence to the standards.
- Compliance mechanisms.

Challenges
Clearly, the primary challenge is the lack of system-wide agreement on what standards should be used. Given the absence or weakness of any government structure in terms of setting standards, humanitarians are left to set their own guidelines for action that may vary radically from one situation to another. Although the IASC has given support to the Sphere standards by calling on its members to promote their use, there is no evidence of universal agreement to standards for all aspects of humanitarian response.

Lack of agreement on standards also affects assessment. In Somalia, dealing with the plethora of standards used by different agencies has been a challenge for both the Food Security Assessment Unit and the Health Information System for Somalia.

The situation in the DRC offered a compelling example of the complexity of ensuring standards are set and adhered to. Indeed, one major humanitarian actor in the DRC argued that that coordination was impossible because humanitarian agencies were so dispersed. The fact that governance across the country was divided – precluding any involvement of the authorities – added an additional dimension to the challenge.

Any discussion of compliance mechanisms begs questions about who has sufficient power or legitimacy to assess compliance. The role of the Tanzanian government and UNHCR in limiting the number of implementation partners in the Ngara camps in Tanzania offers one example of a coordinating structure with such potential power. The Liberia example above offers another. The future efforts of the Humanitarian Accountability Project may offer others. At a minimum, the debate about standards raises the hurdle yet higher for humanitarians to present, at the very least, a consistently clear – if not united – view of their work.

5.1.4 Agreeing/Assigning Division of Labour and Allocating Resources

The IASC guidelines require Coordinators to allocate tasks and responsibilities ensuring that they are reflected in a strategic plan in accordance with agency mandates. Yet a repeated refrain of studies on coordination is a concern that responses shaped solely by mandates will inevitably result in gaps and duplication, and that UN agencies should demonstrate greater commitment towards adopting integrated approaches to complex problems. Coordinators thus have a critical role to orchestrate divisions of labour to produce more integrated approaches that meet all the most urgent needs, not solely those that conform to UN agencies' mandates.

The division of labour is done well where:
- Coordinators have sufficient legitimacy such that agencies will accept greater direction rather than suggestion. In East Timor, some interviewees argued that rather than making suggestions, the Coordinator adopted a fairly directive approach in getting people to agree on what to do. However, it was recognised that the Coordinator was concerned to help agencies fulfil their mandate.
- Agencies pool resources and allow the Coordinator to suggest matching of resources and needs. This was also cited as the case in East Timor.
- There is follow up to ensure implementation. Interviewees pointed to the importance of follow up on agreed task allocations. For example, in Somalia the limited capacity of the SACB secretariat to follow up impeded the effectiveness of the agreements, whereas in the health sector the full-time Health Coordinator was able to establish whether agencies had implemented plans – or why not.

Challenges
Besides the obstacle of UN agencies' expressed resistance to coordination that resembles direction or management, the other critical challenge for Coordinators is addressing the gaps and duplications that exist among UN mandates, and the skills of NGOs. As discussed above, without responsibilities being allocated formally – whether through MoUs or a fundamental restructuring of the system, the onus is on individual Coordinators to see that all needs are met. Putting funds in the hands of Coordinators, whether small funds to cover gaps, or more radically, establishing a common fund at country-level to receive all responses to the CAP from which the Coordinator allocates funds to respective agencies, are two options to address this challenge.

5.1.5 Advocacy

Advocacy is frequently described as a vital part of humanitarian action. Certainly, many interviewees were clear that advocacy needed to be done. Yet few gave the impression that they felt responsible for advocacy. Although the IASC tasks the Humanitarian Coordinator with advocating for respect for humanitarian principles, many interviewees implied that advocacy is OCHA's responsibility.

Such discussions frequently gave the impression of advocacy as an end in itself, rather than the means to an end; that is, a set of influencing tactics or instruments, as critical to operational response as a water tank or food parcel. In practice, Humanitarian Coordinators may adopt some advocacy methods – such as negotiating with warring parties or lobbying host governments – while public education campaigns on health, or briefing donors or the media are often part of the daily tasks of many humanitarian agencies. Advocacy is not – and should not be – confined to OCHA or to Humanitarian Coordinators.

The study found many examples of how advocacy had proved critical to effective humanitarian action, and how Coordinators and their teams had played critical roles in coordinating advocacy actions, facilitating others, or acting as a spokesperson with warring parties, governments, donors and the media.

Advocacy is useful to:
- Press for policy and practice change, for example, in North Kivu, NGOs adopted a common position on taxation demanded by the local authorities.
- To push belligerents, governments, the UNSC and its members and donors to uphold their responsibilities to respect humanitarian principles. Briefings of the UNSC by the ERC, NGOs and OCHA officials were all offered as important examples of advocacy.[84]
- To sustain and enlarge the constituency concerned about humanitarian action.[85]
- To highlight forgotten or neglected emergencies, for example, OCHA's advocacy on the plight of the Banyamulenge in the DRC.
- To negotiate access. The efforts of Regional Coordinators in the Great Lakes and the Senior Humanitarian Advisor in the DRC were offered as important examples.
- To press for funds, for example, the global launch of the CAPs, or OCHA's efforts to convene a donors' meeting on the DRC.

Effective advocacy requires:
- **Sound analysis of the problem**: The OCHA DRC paper for the Geneva donors' conference in November 2000 was praised.
- **Clear messages and proposals for action**: Recent efforts of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response on the DRC and the Brahimi report were described as good examples of position papers.
- **Seizing all available opportunities**: Interviewees and evidence on the Afghan Support Group and the SACB suggests that NGOs are also not making the most of the opportunities of those groupings for advocacy.
- **Readiness to press the difficult issues:** This was one of the praised achievements of a former Humanitarian Coordinator in Burundi who, through *'good, friendly, firm but fair relations with the government'* was able to tackle the 'tough issues' that neither NGOs nor donors were willing or able to address.

[84] For a compelling case of the advocacy changing state interest, see MacFarlane, N. (2000) *Politics and Humanitarian Action* (Thomas J Watson Institute for International Studies, Providence: Rhode Island) Occasional Paper No. 41.
[85] For emphasis that it is donors not the public who are suffering fatigue, see Randel & German (2000).

Challenges
While welcoming the role that Coordinators can play in advocacy, interviewees warned that fielding media inquiries was helpful as a service to agencies in general, but not if it is a bid for profile on behalf of one agency.

The study team was struck by the muteness of UN agencies towards donors, that is, an apparent unwillingness by the UN to criticise donor government policies. Humanitarian agencies, particularly the UN, must better manage the tension between relying on donors for funds, complying with their executive boards, and undertaking an advocacy agenda towards donors and governments to push them to uphold rights to humanitarian assistance and protection. As one UN interviewee remarked: *'We shouldn't sell our souls just because someone will give us $1m.'* Efforts to build and strengthen the constituency for humanitarian action, including among citizens and UN Member States, is critical to the future of humanitarian action, and UN agencies have a central role to play in this. The Secretary-General has been clear on this point: *'Our humanitarian action will only be seen as legitimate if it is universal.'*[86]

5.1.6 Negotiating Access/Securing and Sustaining a Framework of Consent

Protecting humanitarian space – respecting the rights of civilians caught in conflict to assistance and protection – is the task and fundamental goal of all humanitarians. Nonetheless, the IASC tasks the Humanitarian Coordinator in particular with responsibility for negotiating for greater access for beneficiaries to relief and assistance.

However, many interviewees suggested that access negotiation was the prerogative of OCHA, although UN interviewees stated they also wanted to be included and that their responsibility for access should be recognised. In practice, where OCHA or the Coordinator has been absent, or unwilling or unable to negotiate access, others have been forced to fill the vacuum. Examples offered included cases in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and northern Uganda. The Joint Policy of Operations in Liberia in 1996 also serves as an important reminder that arrangements spring up where the UN is seen as ineffective.

In the DRC, OCHA has played a key role in access negotiations and securing agreement to principles (see below), although much of the access negotiation was/is done locally by NGOs. NGOs were particularly grateful to OCHA for using the 'UN umbrella' to renegotiate access after NGOs left operations in Bunia due to security incidents in 2000. Several interviewees stressed the value of OCHA's approach of establishing Humanitarian Liaison Committees. These committees, formed by members of the community, were the key interlocutors with whom the UN could engage to negotiate safe access to beneficiaries. As one interviewee termed it: *'The message [to the committees] is "you give us the heads up on what is happening. We do not want to be surprised and we shall deliver".'* Thus the committees become a local accountability structure, held responsible by local community members for whether humanitarian assistance was provided or not. This has mitigated some of the access and security problems encountered by NGOs.

Negotiation is done well where:
- It is performed by skilled and experienced people who have strong back-up to provide them with background analysis and to monitor developments.
- It is performed for both the benefit of the UN and NGOs, for example, OCHA in Angola, Regional Coordinators in the Great Lakes, OCHA in the DRC.
- There is clarity on principles and there are agreed minima or bottom lines among all those negotiating access to prevent belligerents playing agencies off against one another.
- Ground rules/principles/minima are well known and disseminated among all staff, for example, the Ground Rules in Sudan. Broad principles can be the basis of more detailed negotiations, for example, WFP in Somalia used the code of conduct developed by the SACB as the basis of negotiation of principles with local authorities in Baidoa.
- Agencies have unified positions in-country and internationally, for example in cases where ground rules have been broken by belligerents leading to a suspension of humanitarian interventions. In such situations it is essential that a consistent message is communicated.

[86] See Annan, K. (2000b) 'Opening Remarks at the International Peace Academy Symposium on Humanitarian Action,' New York. mimeo.

- Donors and governments support the stance of those negotiating access by providing additional leverage or undertaking complementary diplomatic and political action. The Technical Committee (TC) on humanitarian assistance for Sudan that brings donors together to talk about access, humanitarian principles, communications and security has produced several joint protocol agreements signed by the government and warring parties useful to hold the parties to account.

Challenges
Securing agreement among UN agencies on who has principal responsibility for negotiating access is critical. Disagreements on what should be the fundamental principles for such negotiations also constitute a major obstacle to effectively coordinated responses within the UN. How UN staff interpret their agencies' mandates can confound essential agreement on basic principles, which in turn can jeopardise successful access negotiations. For example, it was particularly difficult in both Afghanistan and Burundi to agree on a definition of 'live-saving interventions'.[87]

NGOs' views on whether the UN should secure access on behalf of all humanitarian agencies varied: the majority argued that access negotiations was a key role for the UN to carry out on behalf of NGOs. Yet some were anxious to maintain their independence in conducting their own access negotiations. As the UN does not have the power to 'bring NGOs to heel', it remains a challenge for Coordinators and their teams to see that all negotiations and negotiators increase, rather than jeopardise, respect for humanitarian principles among warring parties and/or local authorities.

5.1.7 Monitoring Strategy

According to their ToR, Humanitarian Coordinators should monitor and evaluate the overall implementation of the humanitarian strategy and plan to ensure that changing circumstances and constraints are identified and addressed. However, despite the measures taken by the IASC,[88] the study team found little evidence of strategic monitoring among UN agencies other than the CAP mid-term review. This is evidently linked to weak strategy setting processes and an absence of clear goals and benchmarks against which to assess the impact of a response. It is a sign both of weak humanitarian coordination and a more general weakness of humanitarian action that there is so little investment in assessing impact.[89]

Despite the lack of positive examples of monitoring the progress and impact of strategies from which to draw, interviews and studies provided ideas on how monitoring is critical to effective coordination and response.

Effective monitoring is essential to:
- Evaluate the positive and negative impact of humanitarian response.
- Ensure that the response addresses changing circumstances.
- Assist with context analysis and lesson learning.
- Useful to provide coordination teams with information that, if recorded and retrievable, allows the coordination function to act as an institutional memory for others. Being able to inform or remind people of what went before becomes particularly important when staff turnover is high. It also facilitates subsequent evaluations of the response, which are important for accountability.

Challenges
The fundamental challenge for monitoring to be truly effective is establishing the benchmarks or indicators against which to assess impact. Yet this is frequently the source of debate. In the Sudan, for example, agencies have had great difficulty agreeing upon such indicators.

Monitoring also requires dedicated resources both to carry out and record findings. In some settings, even the most minimal monitoring, that is simple follow up on decisions made in coordination meetings, is thwarted by the lack of capacity.[90]

[87] For further elaboration on this point, see Toole, D. (2001) 'Negotiation of Humanitarian Access and Assistance: Observations from Recent Experience', Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, Working Paper.
[88] The 1997 Secretary-General's Reform Report notes that the IASC agreed that *'simple field-based monitoring systems be established...with [the] Resident Coordinator setting clear benchmarks and objectives'*. The IASC is also looking at the possibility of an inter-agency mechanism
[89] On the consequences of weak monitoring, see Wiles et al (2000) Independent Evaluation of Expenditure of DEC Kosovo Appeal Funds Phases I and II, April 1999–January 2000 Volume I (ODI in association with Valid International: London).
[90] The UN is not alone in this. For comments on the Red Cross Movement in this regard, see Anema et al (2000) op. cit.

5.2 Facilitating Collaboration: Tasks and Services

5.2.1 Security

For interviewees, security, logistics, and communications systems all fall under the rubric of common services. All these were described as adding value to individual agency responses and boosting the profile of the coordination structures that offered them.

Security is a key preoccupation of the UN system, as the death toll among humanitarian workers rises. To strengthen currently inadequate UN security measures. UN agencies have been pushing for stronger centralised resources of skilled people to support agencies on the ground. Yet UN Member States remain resistant to funding additional security measures.[91] This leaves the burden on UN agencies who both provide funds and second staff to UNSECOORD, all in a context of donor pressure on UN agencies for cost-containment.

The IASC has a working group dedicated to agreeing measures to improve inter-agency collaboration on security. Although many interviewees mentioned coordination of security measures, there was little detail on precisely what role the Humanitarian Coordinator should play. Yet many people asserted that poorly coordinated security measures impact negatively on the overall coordination effort, as this corrodes trust and therefore the collaboration that is central to coordination, as well as placing lives in jeopardy.

In Somalia, the SACB literature suggests that collective response to security threats has been one of the major achievements of the coordinating body.[92] However, the focus on security in Nairobi contrasted starkly with reported weak or ad hoc coordination on security matters in Baidoa.[93] In Kosovo, one of the main security related coordination issues has been the inability of NATO KFOR to provide clear, timely and adequate information to the humanitarian agencies.

Drawing on interview, case studies, past studies and the IASC Security Task Force, a number of important ingredients emerge that are useful to increase collaboration among agencies.

Good security coordination includes:

- The Coordinator's team should have a dedicated security capability focused on collecting information and ensuring that a common security plan is established (and regularly reviewed). This can be used as a basis for providing security analysis and threat assessment. For example, agencies in the Northern Caucasus have benefited from an office dedicated to security managed by UNSECOORD, which has become a resource for the humanitarian community at large.
- A common security plan which includes common conditions/criteria for evacuation/relocation.
- A common security communications channel for operational and other partners in humanitarian action.
- The commitment by all humanitarians to provide information to security focal point(s) in order to facilitate mapping incidents, common training, and establishing minimum security standards. For example, the UNCU for Somalia aims to create an incidents' database with the UN Chief Security Advisor.
- Regular consultation with NGOs and the Red Cross Movement.
- Open and transparent discussion on arrangements for staff security.
- Clarification by the UN on what protection and evacuation arrangements can be provided to non-UN agencies.[94]
- The development of a protocol for the use of armed guards, as done in for example, in the Northern Caucasus and Sierra Leone.
- Building relationships with the local communities in order that they use whatever influence they have over armed groups who might threaten the provision of humanitarian assistance.

[91] In December ACABQ refused 90% of what was requested to strengthen measures to provide field security. It pressed instead for central management of existing resources.

[92] See the SACB's security guidelines document of May 1999. This has principally involved banning activity in areas where there have been incidents. However, it is not clear how the decisions are made about when to lift bans, and recent experience suggests agency resolve to abide by such bans is fracturing.

[93] At the time of the study, a zonal security officer had just been placed in Baidoa focused explicitly on improving inter-agency coordination on security.

[94] Sommers (2000) highlights that successful management of security information took place only after circumventing UN regulations aimed at preventing UN agencies from sharing information and coordinating security with NGOs.