Sharing Some Key Coordination Challenges Experienced by Humanitarian Practitioners Operating in the Middle East

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Outline

- Needs for coordination
- Discoordination costs
- Coordination practices
- Coordination of logistics efforts: Iran case
- Key practical challenges
- Cash-Based Transfer Program: Case study in Syria
Needs for coordination

- Interdependencies (Theoretical vs Practical)!
  - Resources
    - Data and information on needs
    - Infrastructure and facilities
    - Financial support
    - Technology
    - Know-how and expertise
- Unnecessary duplication of efforts & redundancy
- Accountability
- Improved performance
  - Operational cost
  - Deprivation cost
  - Communication cost
  - …

*(Thompson, 1967; Balcik et al., 2010)*
Discoordination costs

- Aid delays
- High logistical cost (e.g. needs assessment, procurement, ….)
- Ineffective last mile delivery solutions
- Dissatisfied stakeholders
  - Beneficiaries
  - Donors
  - Local communities

*(e.g. Kovács and Spens, 2011)*
Coordination practices

- Cluster approach (e.g. Jahre & Jensen, 2010)
- Synchronization of resource flows (i.e. information, money, supplies) (Day et al., 2012)
- Sharing on risk, benefit, information & resources (e.g. Balcik et al., 2010)
- Information system & technology (e.g. Arshinder et al., 2008)

Moderated by:

- Visibility
- Accessibility
- Availability
- Mutual-agreement & trust

The Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC) held a coordination meeting discussing dispatch of humanitarian supplies to Iraq
Coordination of logistics efforts in disasters (Thomas, 2003)
Humanitarian organizations’ network: Iran case

**Government**
- Ministry of Health – health cluster
- Ministry of road and housing – Logistics cluster
- Ministry of Interior – International relation and coordination (national and state levels)
- Water Organization and Power Ministry – WASH cluster
- Media Ministry – Media and communication cluster
- Municipality – Tehran Disaster Mitigation and Management Organization (state level)
- Military

**Non-governmental organizations**
- Local NGOs
- Red Crescent Societies
- Donors
- Local communities (religious teams, charities, …)
- Academicians

**International organizations**
- UN agencies represented in Iran (WFP, OCHA, UNDP, UNHABITAT, …)
- INGOs (Relief International, NRC, DRC, Caritas, …)
Coordination of logistics efforts: Iran case

Donors/suppliers:
- local communities
- religious foundations
- private individuals

Joint-Procurement Division led by local government state

Consignee in-kind donations:
- IRC

Warehousing:
- IRC
- Municipality (Disaster management division)
- Military (e.g., Gharagah)

Transportation:
- IRC
- Firefighters
- Military
- Municipality
- MOH & TEC
- Private sector

Last mile distribution:
- Volunteers at IRC
- head of local communities
- religious communities
- local NGOs

International supporting groups:
- INGOs (e.g., Relief International, DRC, NRC)
- UN agencies (WHO, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA)

Intermediaries:
- BAFIA
- IRC

TWGD:
- Tehran municipality- TDMMO (lead coordinator) including 14 working groups
  - consolidate needs assessment
  - communicate pipeline status
  - issue actions
  - requests to 14 members for resource allocation

Monitoring and evaluation:
- TDMMO
  - Local state government (disaster management team)

TDMMO
- Local state government (disaster management team)
Key practical challenges: Joint-Planning

- Lack of experts in coordination of logistics efforts
- Lack of a powerful and skilled lead coordinators
- Lack of fruitful coordination meetings during preparedness
- Lack of interpersonal and inter-organizational trust
- Incompatible organizational structures, culture and mandates
- Conflict of interest
- Religious and emotional aspects
Key practical challenges: Joint-Execution

- Involvement of large number of different organizations
- Direct delivery through donors to the affected people
- Incorrect estimation of needs resulting in oversupply and undersupply of aid (e.g. pile of mineral water, blanket, tent, …)
- Lack of transition structures for transfer of roles and responsibilities from one phase to the other
- Lack of resource and data visibility
- Lack of acceptance for leadership
- Third bullet point here.
- Lack of integrated and compatible IT system
Cash-based transfer (CBT) program in Syria: by Bashar Khoury, WFP Syria

- Over 6 million people displaced inside Syria since 2012 (OCHA report, 2017)
- Over 9 million need food assistance
- Refugees & IDPs; Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, and Europe
- CBT; a livelihood project in Syria
- Supports local markets and economy
Cash-based transfer (CBT) program in Syria:
by Bashar Khoury, WFP Syria

Challenges

- Lack of training and capacity building to implement CBT in local areas
- 70% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon do not receive their urgent needs accurately
- Miscalculation of invoices
- Wide range areas to cover with less security
- Large number of distribution points and amount of fragmented data
- Unbalanced and unfair cash distribution (political pressure, religious, race and etc.)
- Difficulties to track cash expenditures (Afghan and Syrian refugees) caused harm to the local economy

Potential solutions

- Training beneficiaries on using Voucher & banking card
- Conduct market research using reliable data to understand the basic urgent needs
- Tracking entire CBT stages from logistics standpoints (e.g. updated status of available goods, retailers, continuous monitoring, etc.)
- Improving coordination between the involved HOs conducting CBT program in the region
- Using advance data analytical tools such as blockchain technology to carefully monitor and control the program throughout the entire region
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Q & A