Humanitarian architecture

The architecture of humanitarianism is changing in this complex, challenging world:
- more countries are developing National Disaster Management capacities
- growing number of actors including national actors
- diversification of donors
- new forms of humanitarian action from military and private 'for-profit' sector
- changing approaches to coordination

All responders need to understand the role of different actors, and to ensure coordination and that aid is appropriate to the local context through linking to existing national disaster management, contingency and development plans and policies.

Role of governments

"Each state has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory" UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182

States have four main roles and responsibilities regarding humanitarian aid:

1. providing assistance and protection
2. declaring a crisis and inviting international aid
3. monitoring and coordinating external assistance
4. setting the regulatory and legal frameworks governing relief assistance

There is growing focus on role of national governments, due in part to increasing wealth of some developing countries, growing willingness and ability to respond to disasters without external assistance, and their emergence as donors.

Role of local and national responders

Increasing recognition is being given to local communities, families, national and local government, civil society and the private sector who are almost always first to respond to provide humanitarian assistance.
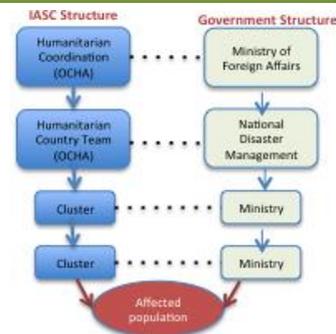
Whilst they often have an overwhelming advantage in bringing relief to communities, coordination is key, with international aid agencies and local organisations working in partnership to ensure consistency in standards and accountability.

Role of international organisations

When national governments are unable to respond to the scale of the emergency, they can request international support through UN Resident /Humanitarian Coordinator to UN OCHA's Emergency Relief Coordinator.

OCHA in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) are responsible for bringing together national and international providers to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. See also pages on *'UN and International Organisations'* and *'Cluster Coordination'*

Actors include UN, international NGOs, Red Cross and Red Crescent, regional intergovernmental forums, assisting governments and increasingly, the private sector. Some may already be in-country and quickly able to mobilise a response.

Four models of humanitarian action

Consultative model – national government and civil society have capacity to respond to large-scale disasters, limiting need for international help, e.g. Chinese earthquake 2008.

Collaborative model - some capacity for domestic responses; national and local actors unwilling to hand over leadership to international actors. National/subnational actors seek leadership role, e.g. Ethiopian drought 2015.

Comprehensive model - appeal for international help to mobilise funds and capacities to coordinate assistance and deliver goods and services directly to affected populations. Needs are so great, and local capacities so overwhelmed, that international agencies take the lead: Level 3 emergency, e.g. Nepal earthquakes 2015.

Constrained model - political interests limit humanitarian space by violations creating crises, by deliberate limitations of access or, in many cases, by both, e.g. Yemen conflict 2015.

(Ramalingam, Mitchell, 2014)