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BEST PRACTICES TO SUPPORT LOCALLY LED RESPONSES



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Dr. Puji Pujiono founded and is senior advisor to the Pujiono Centre in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Dr. Pujiono previously founded the Indonesian Development - Humanitarian Alliance, a network of more than 700 Indonesian NGOs, and has more than 20 years of experience in professional and managerial positions in refugee protection and services, disaster risk management, and humanitarian emergency response in the field and headquarters. Dr. Pujiono was interviewed about the Sulawesi earthquake response and disaster management in Indonesia.

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Purpose:

To provide best practices that inform civil and military stakeholders of how significant localized responses in the Asia-Pacific are impacting operational environments in locally led disaster responses in the region.

Scope:

The years-long conversation on localization of humanitarian response has not often focused on the role national or foreign militaries may play in supporting locally led responses spearheaded by civilian agencies. This pamphlet is based on interviews and consultations with key national actors, a review of qualitative research and case studies focusing on the heavily locally led responses in Indonesia, following the September 2018 earthquake and tsunami in Central Sulawesi, and in Tonga and Fiji, following the January 2022 Tongan volcanic eruption and tsunami. Our synthesis of the conclusions found in these resources seeks to provide insights for consideration in military planning to enhance the support military forces can provide to civilian responders.²

What is Localization:

There are varying definitions of localization, ranging from a narrow meaning of making funding directly accessible to local organizations, to building the capacity of local actors and institutions, enhancing the use of local institutions as implementing partners, or advancing locally led humanitarian response and development.³ This pamphlet focuses on locally led responses. While all responses are led by the Affected State, large-scale international assistance can supplant local mechanisms and sideline the meaningful participation of local and national actors in decision-making. The emphasis on locally led responses prioritizes and supports local and national leadership in decision-making, as facilitated by actions to increase local capacity and resources. The most substantive and empowering approaches are toward locally led development that supports local institutions in a manner that promotes sustainability, reflects current ethical sensibilities, incorporates the voices of vulnerable groups, and prioritizes the perspectives and preferences of recipient governments, local civil society organizations, and host country professionals.⁴ The overall trend is to move away from large, international response mechanisms and as much as possible toward more local response capabilities, which are more responsive to and reflective of local needs.

Introduction

Why This Matters

There are better outcomes on the ground long-term when those directly affected by disasters and crises have greater decision-making power and capacity in crisis response and disaster management.

- **Early response and access** – Local community members will likely be the first and perhaps the only ones able to immediately respond to emergency needs.
- **Culturally appropriate response** – Local responders can more effectively communicate directly with affected populations, understand the local context, and are able to provide more relevant and appropriate humanitarian assistance.⁵
- **Acceptance** – It can be challenging for international staff to access people in need in conflict areas or earn the trust of people even in non-conflict areas. Local humanitarian responders are critical to effectively conduct needs assessments, distribute relief supplies, and interact with local populations in many other ways during aid operations.
- **Cost effectiveness** – Donor funding is often filtered through United Nations (UN) agencies or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) before supporting local humanitarian responders, increasing transaction costs and decreasing aid efficiency.⁶
- **Sovereignty and capacity building** – Supporting locally led responses respects the host nation's sovereignty and builds long-term local capacity.

The need for inclusion and empowerment of national and local actors in humanitarian assistance has been recognized by larger international humanitarian organizations and donors who have committed to international strategic initiatives for increased localization. The Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change are the most prominent of these initiatives. Since localization was made a formal priority in the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit's "Grand Bargain," there has been increasing consensus at policy and normative levels, underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic, that local leadership should be supported. Yet, change on the ground remains slow.

Military actors can play important and appropriate roles by supporting civilian-led local response. As logistics is a military core capability, militaries may also be able to contribute to building local capacities in logistics preparedness as localization in that aspect is nascent. In the Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific's December 2021 Seventh Session, multiple countries highlighted the need for military support to local authorities leading responses where needs exceed their capacity.

Key Points:

- Disaster response is led by national and local civilian agencies and responders, and the trend is growing to shift decision-making and implementation toward local actors.
- Military operations, whether of national or foreign militaries, that support civilian-led disaster response benefit from being measured, specific, and time bound, and by utilizing officers with situational awareness. Localization of disaster relief will require military interlocutors who are aware of localized adaptations and with the skills to interpret and adjust to those adaptations. For foreign militaries, interlocutors should also be grounded in international doctrine.
- International humanitarian responders work in support of the host nation and affected communities, and the nature of that supporting role is decreasing in visibility and decision-making influence in strong locally led responses.
- Foreign military assets are in a supporting role to provide unique capabilities, such as transport and logistics, and prepared to coordinate with national military counterpart. Localization may significantly change how affected state militaries liaison with assisting state militaries and what support is requested.
- Military personnel should participate substantively in civilian disaster dialogues and exercises and in civilian disaster planning to ensure understanding of local civil society organizations' roles.
- Leveraging civil-military disaster planning and preparedness projects can help to explore potential military roles in building localized logistical preparedness among civilian organizations.

Background

Localization in humanitarian assistance received global visibility at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, where international humanitarian organizations, including UN agencies and large NGOs, committed to the “Grand Bargain.” This was an agreement between large donors and humanitarian organizations to improve humanitarian action effectiveness and efficiency by getting more to people in need.⁷ The facets included increasing multi-year investments in the institutional capacities of local and national responders and providing at least 25% of humanitarian funding to them as directly as possible.⁸

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has recently articulated an embrace of localization that channels more funding to local organizations and has partners taking the lead in critical roles.⁹ In November 2021, Administrator Samantha Power pledged that 25% of USAID direct funding will go to local entities in the next four years, up from 6.2% in 2021, and that 50% of its projects over the next decade will put local partners in the lead to co-design projects, set priorities, drive implementation, and evaluate the impact of aid programs.¹⁰ USAID's Locally Led Development Initiatives has programs

supporting local ownership and leadership of development processes.¹¹

Localization intersects with several cross-cutting issues, including: women, peace and security (WPS), which advocates that crisis-affected women participate in making decisions that impact them;¹² pandemic health security as COVID-19 travel restrictions drew attention to localization;¹³ conflict resolution, as locally driven peace processes emphasize the need for bottom-up approaches that address grassroots issues in the local context;¹⁴ and climate change adaptation, which often includes disaster risk reduction and community-based resilience-building initiatives.¹⁵

Given this approach, it is as important as ever to adhere to established U.S. foreign disaster relief (FDR) policy. USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) is the lead federal agency for coordinating the U.S. government's foreign disaster response. When the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) deploys in support of FDR (historically 10% of U.S. FDR missions though less in recent years), DoD supports USAID/BHA. BHA plays a critical role in vetting requests for DoD assistance, to ensure effective and appropriate use of DoD assets. This ensures a coordinated response,¹⁶ which is usually more efficient and cost-effective.¹⁷

Localization has been a decades-long conversation in the humanitarian community that has entwined with decolonizing aid,¹⁸ which is the idea that international aid and foreign assistance should be reformed so that structures and practices are no longer legacies of colonialism where former colonial powers wielded outsize decision-making control over former colonies.¹⁹ Critiques are aimed at localization approaches that do not center locals or fail to listen to local input, particularly from marginalized communities.²⁰ "Localization without local participation is arrogant," one senior practitioner and researcher stated,²¹ reflecting a widely held perspective among various stakeholders directly affected by humanitarian action or development programs.²²

Best Practices

This section takes a close look at locally led responses in Indonesia, following the September 2018 earthquake and tsunami in Central Sulawesi, and in Tonga and Fiji, following the January 2022 Tongan volcanic eruption and tsunami, to illustrate identified best practices. First, some background on each event.

Indonesian Earthquake and Tsunami — On 28 September 2018, a 7.4 magnitude earthquake triggered a tsunami, which caused mass casualties and widespread damage to the coastal town of Palu in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. More than 2,000 people were killed, more than 4,600 were seriously injured, and an estimated 200,000 people were displaced due to the disaster, as indicated in Figure 1, which maps the epicenter in Central Sulawesi.²³

The management of this response was notably different than previous responses due to the Government of Indonesia's shift in policy to restrict direct intervention by international aid agencies. All assistance was required to be implemented through Indonesian institutions and in coordination with the relevant Indonesian authorities. Figure 2 shows the regulations issued by Indonesia's National Disaster Management Authority, BNPB, for international NGOs to provide assistance in Central Sulawesi.²⁴

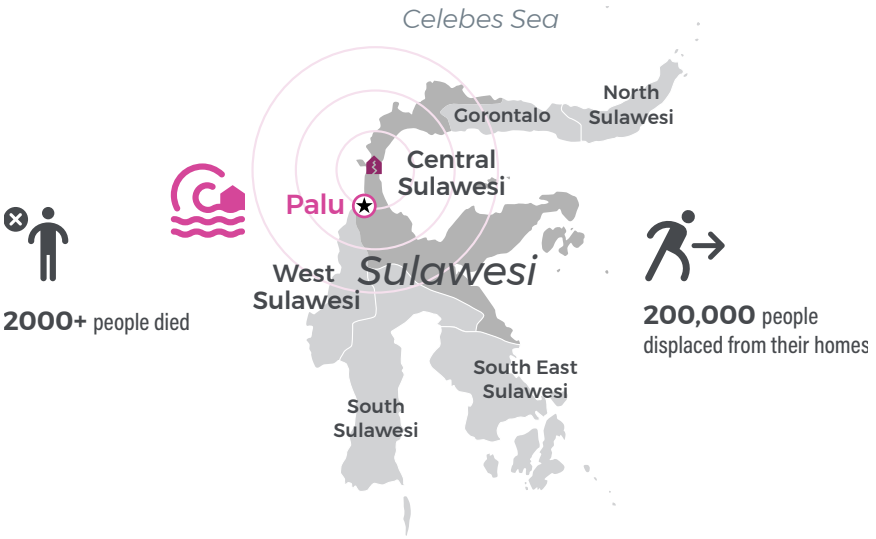


Figure 1: Map of September 2018 Earthquake Epicenter in Sulawesi, Indonesia

Regulations for International NGOs aim to provide assistance in Central Sulawesi

1. Foreign NGOs are not allowed to go directly to the field. All activities must be conducted in partnership with local partners.
2. Foreign citizens who are working with foreign NGOs are not allowed to conduct any activity on the sites affected by disasters
3. Foreign NGOs who already procured/prepared relief items in Indonesia need to register their assistance with the relevant ministries/agencies & mandated to work with local partners in distributing the aid.
4. If the respective NGOs have not registered their assistance with the relevant ministries/agencies, they are asked to register with BNPB for the distribution to the affected population on the field.
5. Foreign NGOs wishing to provide aid can do so through the Indonesian Red Cross (PM) or PMI's - with the guidance of the related ministries/agencies or local partners.
6. Foreign NGOs who have deployed its foreign personnel are advised to recall their personnel immediately.
7. A monitoring of foreign volunteers is required.
8. The delivery of relief items are being coordinated temporarily by BNPB through Balikpapan.



National Disaster Management Authority **BNPB**

Figure 2: Indonesia BNPB Regulations for International NGOs Responding on the Ground

International agencies without an established presence or local partners had to rethink their operations. More Indonesian responders led the response, participating in operational-level decision-making roles. Per Foreign Ministry spokesperson Arrmanatha Nasir, the aim of the policy was not to prevent assistance or volunteers from entering Central Sulawesi, but to ensure that foreign aid workers first coordinated with national teams or agencies.²⁵ National and local organizations helped mobilize women's networks, student bodies, and religious organizations. Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI – Indonesian Red Cross Society) was active as usual, but other groups included civil society and philanthropic organizations not always seen prominently in disaster response. National philanthropic organization Dompot Dhuafa opened an emergency command post at the disaster site and used radio broadcasts to recruit 300 volunteers, including doctors and teachers, to support the emergency phase. While a large amount of international civilian and military aid was still received, there was also an observed increase in the presence and active participation of Indonesian actors in coordination forums, which contributed to greater local and national leadership in decision-making.

Tongan Volcanic Eruption and Tsunami — On 15 January 2022, a powerful explosive eruption from Tonga's underwater Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai (HTHH) volcano catapulted volcanic ash and gas high into the stratosphere, caused ripples in Earth's ionosphere, sent tsunami waves around the world, and blanketed the island nation of Tonga under ash.²⁶ It was the largest volcanic eruption recorded by modern equipment²⁷ and generated tsunami waves of up to 15 meters (49 feet) high for the west coasts of the Tongan islands of Tongatapu, 'Eua and Ha'apai.²⁸ Tsunami waves affected areas across the Pacific, reaching as far as New Zealand, Japan, the U.S. West Coast, and Peru.²⁹ In the Pacific, Fiji and Samoa were affected by the tsunami, with the Fiji military playing a role in providing aid to Tonga as well as its own outlying islands. Figure 3 shows a map of Tonga, with the oval depicting the location of the HTHH volcano, as well as parts of Fiji, including the remote island cluster of the Lau Group that was affected by the tsunami.³⁰

The eruption affected approximately 84,000 people across Tonga – 84% of the nation's population – with the greatest needs reported across the islands of 'Eua, Ha'apai, and Tongatapu. The eruptions and tsunami resulted in three deaths in Tonga and damaged or destroyed an estimated 240 houses along with public infrastructure. One inch (2.5 centimeters) of ashfall covered major populated islands, though ashfall as deep as 4-6 inches (10-15 centimeters) was reported in some areas.

Tonga's communications were severely hampered for more than a week after the eruption and tsunami, which damaged Tonga's submarine communications cable. While little information was available, New Zealand Defence Force and Australian Defence Forces surveillance flights on 17 January showed significant damage to houses, roads, water tanks, and other infrastructure on the west coast of Tongatapu, the Ha'apai island group, and the west coast of 'Eua. On 18

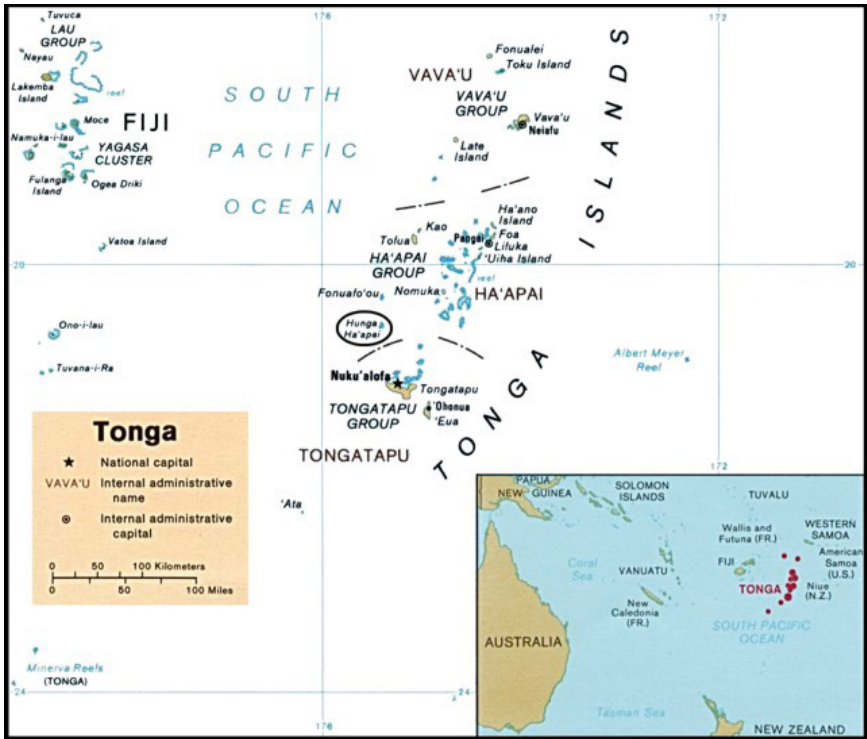


Figure 3: Map of Tonga (Volcano in Oval) and Fiji's Remote Lau Group Islands

January, the Prime Minister of Tonga declared a state of emergency. The National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) alongside Tonga Geological Services, Tonga Red Cross, and His Majesty's Armed Forces (HMAF) were deployed to Ha'apai on Tongan patrol vessel VOEA Ngahau Koula to conduct initial damage surveillance and provide immediate relief supplies.

The Tongan Government requested international assistance. However, assistance had to adhere to Tonga's COVID-19 safety protocols. Foreign personnel did not arrive to be responders on the ground. Once communications were established and ash cleared from the runway, foreign planes landed, delivering assistance with minimal contact with local personnel.

Best Practice: Military operations supporting civilian-led disaster response are measured, specific, time bound, and utilize officers with situational awareness.

The Indonesian National Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or TNI) comprised a majority of Indonesian responders on the ground during the first couple of weeks after the Sulawesi disaster. One week after the quake, Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, head of BNPB's Data Center for Information and Public Relations, detailed the assistance that the government had in evacuating victims; responders included 8,223 personnel, of whom 6,338 of them were members of

TNI, 1,560 were civilians, and 325 were foreign personnel.³¹

TNI evacuated survivors from Palu to Makassar in South Sulawesi, and they coordinated with the police, who identified the deceased using the Disaster Victim Identification method and took their fingerprints before properly burying them, retaining victims' data at the Palu Police office for future family reference.³²

TNI played a large role in conducting surveillance flights for the purposes of damage assessment, mapping, monitoring, and assessment of facilities including runway conditions for relief operations. TNI's supported search and rescue efforts until 11 days after the earthquake. TNI dispatched heavy equipment, including 11 excavator units and two bulldozer units,³³ to clean up building debris and remove rubble.³⁴ TNI also deployed health personnel,³⁵ some of whom conducted an airborne health patrol on 7 October in the Donggala Regency area of Central Sulawesi with 6 specialist doctors and 12 paramedics who conducted health and treatment patrols for disaster victims and evacuated patients with serious injuries by helicopter.³⁶

Ensuring military operations in disaster response are measured, specific and time-bound not only supports civilian leads in the response, but also benefits the military in several ways. First, these constraints help avoid "mission creep," where military resources and capacities are unnecessarily extended beyond the initial task, often in ways that are no longer a unique capability. Second, as a senior practitioner and researcher points out, it also protects the military from becoming embroiled in prolonged recovery efforts, where the goal has shifted from saving lives to rebuilding and development. Letting the military become involved in ongoing development situations with civilian administrations can entangle them in wider decision-making and procurement issues and can also create a dependency among civilian counterparts. Limiting the military's involvement to emergency relief, especially during the lifesaving search-and-rescue phase, allows them a clear exit while the vast majority perceive their role very positively.³⁷ Third, this also aligns with international guidelines for a better disaster response, including the Oslo Guidelines and the Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines for the Use of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response Operations (APC MADRO).³⁸

Utilizing officers with situational awareness is straightforward. One facet of this is awareness of civil-military coordination roles, as seen with the increase in civil-military training in past decades. However, another level is awareness of community disaster plans, especially if military representatives participated with civilian counterparts in jointly developing plans, as Indonesia's Pujiono Centre has started to document in their research. The hectic situation of a disaster response can sometimes eclipse pre-planned arrangements, especially if the military commander tasked with supporting response operations is of particularly high rank, which can draw more visibility.³⁹ Thus, having lower-level military personnel familiar with their roles and their partners can alleviate obstacles thrown up by visibility of top commanders.

In Tonga and Fiji, the militaries are much smaller than the TNI, but they still play an active and important role in supporting logistics and transport capacities during disaster response.⁴⁰ During the 2022 emergency response, the military of Tonga, His Majesty's Armed Forces (HMAF), supported the Tongan National Emergency Management Office along with other first responders including the Tongan Police and Fire and Emergency Services.⁴¹ HMAF contributed to debris clearance, evacuations, and distribution of relief supplies that flowed in from around the world.⁴² To enable critical international aid to arrive via airlift, Tongan soldiers cleared volcanic ash from the Fua'amotu international airport runway.⁴³

The Tongan Navy were deployed to isolated islands with medical teams, water, food, and tents.⁴⁴ Tonga's two patrol boats evacuated the outlying Ha'apai island group, which was devastated by tsunami waves around 5 meters (16 feet) tall. The VOEA Ngahau Koula patrol boat transported personnel evacuated from Mango Island to Masfield Naval Base.^{45, 46} Tongan Navy vessels were also used to distribute relief supplies to outer islands. Photo 1 depicts VOEA Late distributing pre-positioned and newly arrived supplies to remote communities.⁴⁷



Photo 1: The Tongan Navy's VOEA Late Loading of Disaster Relief Items for Distribution

HMAF also participated as a team member in the after-action review led by the National Emergency Operation Centre.⁴⁸

Best Practice: Ensure responders have knowledge and understanding of policies and legislation that delineate disaster response and planning relationships in the country affected.

As part of situational awareness, all disaster responders – civilian, military, national, and international – should understand the significance of disaster management legislation in the affected country. Legislation and policies differ significantly between countries.

Indonesia has a well-developed legal framework guiding the role of security forces, civilian agencies, and civil-military coordination in disasters responses. This includes Constitution Number 34 (2004) regarding TNI, Act Number 24 (2007) regarding disaster management, Act Number 39 (2008) regarding state ministries, and Head of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) Regulation Number 3 (2016) regarding system command handling emergencies and disasters.⁴⁹ TNI is formally integrated in Indonesia's civilian-led disaster management structure and has historically played an instrumental role in disaster response. TNI is legally obligated to provide disaster assistance in coordination with BNPB per Law 34/2004, as a component of military operations other than war, to include providing humanitarian aid and supporting search and rescue operations. BNPB has also signed several memoranda of understanding with the Ministry of Defense to better facilitate cooperation on disaster management activities.

TNI is included in the Disaster Management Steering Element. The TNI, along with the Indonesian national police (POLRI), multiple ministries, and NGOs, help comprise the Rapid Reaction Unit (SRC) of BNPB's National Emergency Operations Center. The SRC reinforces the regional government to carry out technical assistance, equipment, and logistical support when the local government's capacity is exceeded.⁵⁰

Best Practice: The host nation government, including the military, should engage and support at the appropriate national or sub-national levels as needed.

Indonesia's BNPB coordinates emergency response efforts with regional disaster management offices (Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah, or BPBDs), the TNI, government ministries, the Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI), NGOs, and international donors.⁵¹

In Indonesia, even at the city or municipal level, military entities with district command are present, along with the regional BPBD. Each city or region has policy strategies, programs, and plans. Awareness of how plans and programs work at the level are useful, as they explain civil-military coordination and interagency roles. Engaging at the appropriate level becomes particularly important when disasters are scaled above the local village, town, or municipal

level. For larger sub-national disaster responses in Indonesia, such as the September 2018 Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami or August 2018 Lombok earthquake, more intricate coordination is involved, particularly with mayors having territorial jurisdiction and the provincial governor having administrative jurisdiction.⁵²

Through this process, facilitating local logistics capacity development is a potential national military role. Research on the localization of logistics preparedness in humanitarian assistance has focused on transferring capacity and decision-making to local and national actors from international humanitarian organizations. However, as logistics is generally a recognized capability of national militaries, their role in increasing localized logistical preparedness and building local humanitarian capacity could be explored through greater joint participation by civilian and military agencies in disaster planning and preparedness activities. There are opportunities for growth in localizing logistical preparedness in the identified areas of knowledge transfer, stockpiling and warehousing, and standard operating procedures (SOPs). For international humanitarian organizations supporting localization of logistics, there is a dominant view around transferring logistics preparedness capacities from international organizations to countries at the national level; transfers at other levels remain to be explored and better documented.⁵³

In the Pacific, at the regional level, the Pacific Humanitarian Team provides information and support to governments, NGOs, and communities. Disaster risk reduction communication flows down relatively well to the national level, in part due to nationally aligned cluster structures. For Pacific Island countries, pushing information down from the national to the provincial and district levels is where more communication challenges can be encountered. One Fijian disaster response researcher notes that, at the lower levels, there are many small administrative districts, some of which may be remotely located or working with different resources to build capacity bottom-up to sync with provincial and national levels.⁵⁴ One challenge is that the government-appointed village contact is usually not the village chief, who is already respected in the village. This separation can not only add an extra layer of coordination but also create the burden of gaining familiarity and trust. In Tonga, one strength facilitating the relatively quick local response to the HTHH volcano eruption is the dispersal of Tongan Red Cross (TRC) personnel. TRC has representatives in nearly every community, a reach that may have been aided by Tonga's relatively smaller size compared to other island countries.⁵⁵

Best Practice: International responders should strive to adapt to support through the local systems being used in locally led responses.

The Sulawesi, Indonesia response was locally led, not local-only. This case illustrates that while the affected country receives international support tensions can arise as the world adapts to national versus international mechanisms and processes.

A simple but comprehensive barrier can be language. When international humanitarian personnel dominate on the ground, cluster meetings are often in English, with interpretation or translation not always consistently provided. In the Sulawesi response, international agencies sought Indonesian nationals for surge roles, and significantly reduced use of international surge mechanisms and personnel. National and even some international responders welcomed this shift, as among other things, it mitigated the many cultural and language barriers that can accompany large numbers of international personnel deployed into the country. In a research survey of Sulawesi quake responders, about 89% of survey respondents indicated that cluster meetings were always (59%) or sometimes (30%) held in the national language, thereby mitigating a huge access barrier for local participation and leadership.

Despite the positive aspects of local leadership, some stakeholders note challenges. As international responders to Sulawesi were constrained to assist through local partnerships, demands for local NGOs increased.⁵⁶ International organizations that did not already have local partnerships tried to rapidly establish them. This overwhelmed local NGOs because international NGOs brought their own heavy administrative requirements; local NGOs could not always rapidly meet these demands and, therefore, missed out on large amounts of donor funding.

To bridge some of the gaps between a traditional response and Indonesia's new preferred way of operating, a new regionally tailored coordination mechanism, the Joint Operations and Coordination Center for International Assistance (JOCCIA), deployed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) and co-located with BNPB's National Assisting Post (Pospenas) in support of BNPB and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. JOCCIA coordinated incoming international humanitarian assistance, particularly from UN agencies and large international NGOs, a function that had traditionally been led by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which shifted to play more of a supporting role to ERAT at the JOCCIA.⁵⁷

Given the widespread casualties and damage in Sulawesi, Indonesia still accepted a considerable amount of foreign assistance but consistently enforced channeling it through local or national organizations to facilitate Indonesia-centric management of the disaster response on their soil.

In the Pacific, another regionally tailored coordination mechanism is the Pacific Humanitarian Team for disaster response and the Pacific Resilience Partnership for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. They employ cluster systems, striving to align as much as possible with national cluster systems of Pacific Island countries to facilitate information flow from the regional to national level.⁵⁸

This trend is also being seen as the Ukraine conflict has shifted international humanitarian system dynamics. As Ukraine repels the Russia's invasion, humanitarian aid has cropped up organically, relying first on community volunteers' personal networks reaching out to the Ukrainian diaspora and regional assistance. In doing so, they largely bypassed the bureaucratic administration of many large UN agencies and international NGOs. International organizations want to spend donor funds locally but are facing challenges to quickly do so in ways that stay within their administrative requirements. This has led to growing calls for the international humanitarian architecture to be more flexible in adapting to local on-the-ground mechanisms they are purportedly trying to support.⁵⁹ While there are some good rationales for international administrative requirements – namely transparent fiscal accountability – international organizations are being called upon to look where bureaucratic procedures do not serve a significant purpose.

Best Practice: International military responders continue to follow established principles for foreign disaster relief, and also prepare for coordination with their host nation military counterpart.

International military responders should keep following established principles that foreign military assets provide unique capabilities, often air transport and logistics, in support of the host nation. This has been long established in international guidelines (i.e., APC MADRO and Oslo) that advise foreign military assistance be limited to providing infrastructure support and indirect relief when possible.⁶⁰ (Note: The same guidelines do not prescribe this to national militaries, given state sovereignty in using its own military and the likelihood of national military personnel being among first responders, as is the case in most countries during disasters.)

Additionally, foreign militaries should prepare for coordination with their military counterpart in the disaster-affected state. While every nation is different, many countries in the Asia-Pacific with large militaries have their national military coordinate with foreign militaries providing disaster assistance.

In the response to the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami, the U.S. was one of 18 foreign countries that provided aircraft to support the response. The U.S. DoD worked in support of USAID, the lead federal agency for coordinating U.S. foreign disaster relief. All foreign military assets assisted in their unique capacity, largely supporting in airlift and logistics, and the U.S. was no exception. The U.S. military provided assistance in transportation, especially airlift, and airport logistics, including offloading. U.S. military aircraft flew 49 missions, delivering nearly 600 metric tons (MT) of relief items and transported USAID disaster experts, more than 110 aid workers, and more than 300 displaced Indonesians. DoD personnel offloaded about 1,570 MT of relief supplies for onward transportation from 115 aircraft at airports in Balikpapan and Palu.⁶¹

During the Sulawesi response, the TNI coordinated all foreign military assets through bilateral meetings with countries cleared to assist by the Indonesian government. The TNI appointed a dedicated Commanding Officer for the overall coordination of foreign military assets in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, the designated Operations Hub for the Relief Operation.⁶²

All best practices and principles for foreign militaries supporting international disaster response continue to apply. Foreign militaries assist in their unique capacity, usually with airlift and logistics. Additionally, foreign militaries should prepare to coordinate with the host nation military, which is a common disaster response arrangement in the Asia-Pacific.

Best Practice: Include military and civilian disaster management actors, including local civil society organizations, to conduct:

1. Joint disaster dialogues and exercises, and
2. Joint development of disaster plans and SOPs.

A range of local and national civilian and military actors will be involved in responses to even medium-scale disasters. Involving various actors in dialogue and preparation build local networks and strengthens disaster responses.

In Indonesia, TNI is already starting to jointly participate with civilian agencies in community disaster contingency planning. In a Pujiono Centre baseline capacity assessment of the displacement and protection cluster, TNI and POLRI representatives worked with Organisasi Perangkat Desa (OPD, a local-government organization often at the village-level) to develop contingency plans for disasters and crises at their local areas.⁶³ In a November 2021 workshop on Locally Led Disaster Preparedness and Protection (LLDPP) Project Lessons Learned and Improvement of the National Disaster Response Framework, findings included the importance of joint commitment of all government components, including TNI and POLRI, at both central and provincial levels.⁶⁴

As TNI is becoming involved in pre-disaster preparation activities, including mitigation, exercises, and training, there is an opportunity for exploring with civilian agencies how they might support building local logistics preparedness. In looking at localizing pre-disaster logistics preparedness, a study of international humanitarian organizations found that the majority emphasized transferring capacities to local organizations relating to three areas: 1) knowledge on how to prepare and respond; 2) stockpiling and warehousing; and 3) SOPs, policies, routines, and systems. Many also saw the need to transfer knowledge related to procurement and framework agreements, emphasizing procuring goods and services as locally as possible.⁶⁵ Many Indonesian local organizations were already procuring locally out of necessity in response to the Sulawesi earthquake, especially those organizations that were newly approached by international organizations to partner and who were unable to meet the heavy international administrative requirements. While the study focused on civilian organizations, given the logistics expertise of military organizations, civil-military coordination

on localized logistics preparedness is an untapped area of opportunity.

In the Pacific, senior disaster risk reduction personnel report the need for civilian and military stakeholders to engage in planning together, to enable coordination in responses. While it is noted the military is trained to be ready for response, they may enter with less familiarity of civilian mechanisms and process. Having military representatives participate in disaster preparedness exercises and community-based disaster planning will improve this coordination across the disaster management cycle. One Pacific Island expert emphasized that national disaster management organizations and military working in planning together would help. If planning is done well, to prepare communities to become resilient, then response is more automatic. It is considered important to also go beyond a response-oriented approach and systematically plan together long-term for disaster risk reduction.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Locally led responses are increasingly common and gained visibility amidst COVID-19 travel restrictions. Examinations of the response to Indonesia's 2018 Sulawesi earthquake response and the 2022 Tongan volcanic eruption indicate that the participation of a diverse set of local and national humanitarian responders, including a larger class of local and national NGOs is a positive change.⁶⁷ Locally led does not mean local only, and foreign responders, civilian and military, have to adapt to deliver better support.

Even if a response is nationally or locally led, there is a need to be aware of civil-military coordination at the appropriate sub-nation level.

Organizing integration of civilian agencies, military units and civil society in disaster dialogues and trainings will help relevant potential responders work together in the next disaster. Similarly, future disaster responses will benefit from military and civilian representatives jointly participating in the development of community disaster plans or contingency plans.

Lastly, civil-military planning and preparedness projects must be leveraged to explore possible military roles in supporting the localization of information sharing, planning, and logistical preparedness to build capacity among civilian organizations.

As the future of disaster response progresses toward increasingly locally led disasters, it is every stakeholder's responsibility to consider how to appropriately support it in any given situation.

Endnotes

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