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briefing paper

When Things Fall Apart: Building Organizational Strength of Humanitarian Aid Organizations

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At times of disaster—both man-made and natural—the global community has increasingly turned to a unique group of organizations specializing in response to catastrophes: humanitarian aid organizations (HAOs).

In the aftermath of emergencies—from hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, to earthquakes in China, to armed conflict in the Sudan—HAOs have provided disaster relief services, typically by entering scenes of destruction, setting up large response teams, and then exiting (or scaling back operations) within a short timeframe, sometimes within just a few months. In the process they have served millions of affected people, spent billions of dollars, implemented hundreds of programs—and witnessed firsthand incredible devastation and suffering.

> HAOs constantly balance competing demands: developmental change with emergency relief; visible and immediate impact with long-term sustainability; and donor and media demands with the needs of the population.

Public expectations of their efforts are high, particularly in situations receiving intense media coverage. And public censure follows quickly when things go wrong: HAOs are usually the first on the scene in the wake of a disaster, but their efforts are sometimes criticized as slow, uncoordinated, or insufficient to meet the scope of the calamity. As more organizations enter the field and solicit public support to aid victims of disasters, the humanitarian sector is facing demands for greater accountability and scrutiny of its capabilities to deliver aid to those in need.

Despite the critical work of these organizations, relatively little is known about how they operate or, indeed, about the extraordinarily difficult environments in which they operate. Most studies of humanitarian aid organizations have focused on simple metrics to determine program success or failure, and have ignored the crucial role that organizational structure and management play in ultimate outcomes. Given that structure and management strongly affect performance and shape program implementation, this is a serious omission.

What may be needed by the humanitarian sector is a model for fostering and measuring organization effectiveness. TCC Group has developed such a prototype for HAOs, based on four core capacities that it has identified as central to long-term success by nonprofits. These capacities, identified by TCC Group over its 30 years of experience working with nongovernmental agencies, are: leadership, adaptability to changing environments, effective management, and technical expertise. Utilizing these four functions, we have described organizational structures and core capacities that may be employed by HAO leaders, managers, field staff—and by HAO funders—to improve organizational effectiveness.

The Unique Operating Environment of HAOs

HAOs operate in an environment that is, at its best, complex. Their work with the disenfranchised and marginalized portions of society is at the mercy of political, social, economic, and environmental variables over which they have little or no control. This environment is made even more challenging by the immediate and unanticipated demands of an emergency.

While each HAO is unique, they share a number of critical characteristics. In general, they are mission-driven organizations, struggling with limited resources in a world that characterizes their work as charitable and voluntary rather than professional and skills based. HAOs constantly balance competing demands: developmental change with emergency relief; visible and immediate impact with long-term sustainability; and donor and media demands with the needs of the population. Whether nationally or internationally based, the role of the HAO evolves constantly due to changing needs, trends, and demands.

A brief look at the characteristics that define disaster emergencies is important to understanding the unique challenges that HAOs face:

While there is a degree of unpredictability for any organization, by definition it is a factor with which development and relief organizations must constantly cope.

Disasters are largely unpredictable. Beyond the obvious difficulties of predicting a sudden-onset emergency, even ongoing crises, such as the 30-year war in Sudan, have random ebbs and flows. While there is a degree of unpredictability for any organization, by definition it is a factor with which development and relief organizations must constantly cope.

■ *The lifecycle of emergencies makes response coordination difficult.* The typical lifecycle of a disaster includes fast growth, a rapidly reached peak, and then ambiguous or precipitous decline. During the initial stage, many organizations may become involved, entering at differing times with varying goals, and making it difficult to coordinate a unified response. Moreover, as media attention focuses on the crisis, there is often a rapid influx of emergency donations to many HAOs. Organizations must scale up quickly to meet pressing needs and utilize the donated funds. As the immediacy of the crisis wanes or the interest of the public diminishes, resources become scarcer and organizations must prioritize any remaining emergency programs. As donor attention winds down, humanitarian organizations with a commitment to returning the victims to a level of sustainable existence must somehow plan for long-term rehabilitation with limited funds.

■ *The lack of reliable information inhibits assessment.* Humanitarian aid organizations often lack trustworthy information regarding the composition and number of affected persons. In the first few days after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the number of reported deaths ranged from the low tens of thousands to nearly 200,000. Such ambiguity makes it difficult to know how to respond. Better monitoring techniques and modern technology have created reduced ambiguity with regard to information, but large gaps remain.

■ *Disaster locations are difficult to work in and offer little or no infrastructure.* Although many emergencies occur in areas with little infrastructure to begin with, even in those areas where it did exist, it is often destroyed by the disaster. The compromised infrastructure may include roads, transportation, telecommunications, and access to medical supplies, safe water, food, and fuel. This, combined with the affected population fleeing en masse from harm's way, can cause an HAO unusual difficulties in carrying out its necessary assessment and response.

■ *HAO personnel are exposed to danger and stress.* HAO aid workers, in most situations, consistently experience high stress as a result of constant work in chaotic and dangerous conditions, and, in the most extreme cases, are faced with life or death decisions for the populations they serve. Even worse, the level of respect and protection they counted on in the past has seriously eroded as the 1990s saw a dramatic rise in the targeting of humanitarian personnel in crises involving political and military disputes. The result has been a steady increase in the turnover rate for humanitarian workers[1] which, in turn, has created problems of continuity and performance for humanitarian aid organizations. As a result, some HAOs have come to rely heavily on volunteers and contract personnel to staff many of their programs. These workers, because of the transitory nature of their commitment, are often more difficult to manage than traditional employees. And volunteers without adequate training may be unprepared to operate in a crisis environment.

By employing certain organizational structures and core capacities, HAO leaders, managers, and field staff can overcome those unique challenges to organizational effectiveness.

■ *Organizations often must serve "two masters": victims and donors.* For mission-driven organizations, their primary responsibility is to the populations they serve. Yet, of necessity, HAOs must also heed the desires and requirements of the donors who make their work possible. In recent years, donors have become increasingly more active in placing restrictions on the use of their funds. So there may be substantial pressure to utilize funds quickly or in ways that may not serve the best interests of the disaster victims. All of these factors create conflict within an HAO because those who receive the goods and services are not the ones who pay for them.[2] And, adding another layer of complication, the host government having jurisdiction over the disaster area is often yet another "master" that humanitarian organizations must consider.

■ *Media coverage is often a two-edged sword.* While the media can be key in galvanizing public support for disaster response, its capriciously short attention span can create problems for HAOs.

The media is generally drawn to disasters that have a highly visible and dramatic impact on a large number of people, yet their attention often wanes quickly. As a result, humanitarian aid organizations struggle to balance the attention focused on the immediate scope and impact of the disaster with a perhaps more useful and holistic approach to the long-term needs of the affected populations. Not maintaining that delicate balance may result on the one hand in premature cessation of funding or on the other in harsh criticism of the HAO's strategy and effectiveness. Many HAOs have learned the hard way that managing emergencies also includes managing the media and public expectations.

Whether taken alone or together, the factors cited above highlight the need for HAOs to build the capacity to negotiate continuous and disruptive change. It is our contention that by employing certain organizational structures and core capacities, HAO leaders, managers, and field staff can overcome those unique challenges to organizational effectiveness.

A Tailored Organizational Model for HAOs

While it is true that all nonprofits must manage change on a regular basis, not all change experienced by organizations is of the same magnitude. Researchers in the field of change management assert that there are two basic types of change for an organization: continuous and discontinuous.[3] Continuous change occurs within a stable system and includes the daily operational adjustments that keep an organization on an even keel. Discontinuous change, in contrast, alters the fundamental environment in which an organization operates.

Organizations experience continuous change every day—from a program assessment that leads to a decision to eliminate a staff position to recognizing the need to upgrade computers in a department. Discontinuous change, however, usually results from a substantial event—either internal or external—that alters the operating environment of an organization.[4] Examples of these are the unexpected departure of an executive director or a major funder's decision to end support of an organization.

For humanitarian aid organizations, responding to external discontinuous change is part of their everyday existence. As can be seen in Figure 1, an HAO experiences an environmental "jolt" of discontinuous proportions for each disaster emergency to which it responds. Over the long-term, HAOs must strive to maintain a level of stability while responding to a disaster. And when several emergencies, occurring either simultaneously or in succession, impact an organization's operating environment, the organization may experience "continuous discontinuity."[5] In both examples, an HAO needs a different model to cope with such change.

As the axiom of modern architecture states, form should follow function. In the context of organizational management, this means that an organization's structure should support what it is trying to accomplish within a given environment. The organizational structure of HAOs, therefore, must first and foremost enable them to respond effectively to their volatile environment of discontinuous change.
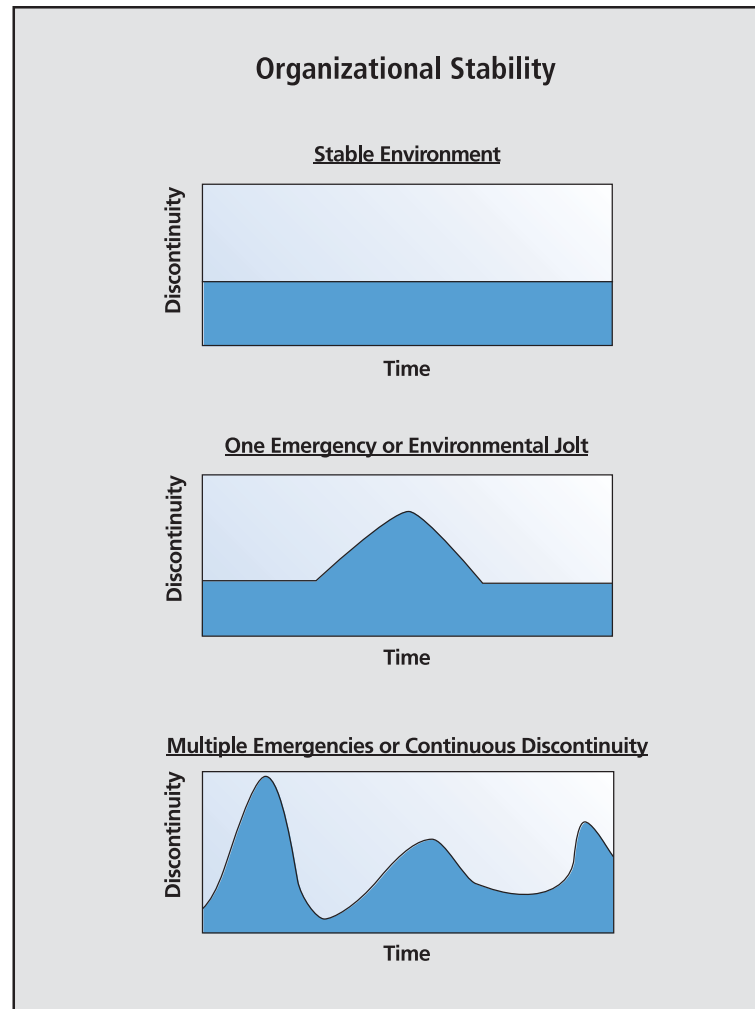

Organizational Stability

Stable Environment

One Emergency or Environmental Jolt

Multiple Emergencies or Continuous Discontinuity

Figure 1

Too often HAO leaders facing this dilemma have misunderstood the need for adaptability to mean that structure and adaptability are incompatible and have therefore generally ignored internal structural issues. The solution, however, is not to abandon the need for structure, but rather to embrace and embed change as an organizational norm within that structure. This allows the organization to preserve the benefits of stability such as core identity, effective systems, and operating efficiency, while institutionalizing the ability to "turn on a dime."

A tall order, perhaps, but as noted earlier, TCC Group utilizes a model of four core capacities as a general framework within which a stable organizational environment for HAOs can be created to manage continuous discontinuity. Each of the core capacities plays an important role in creating that environment:

■ *Leadership:* an overarching decision-making framework that adapts to changing environmental needs.

■ *Management:* accountability mechanisms that are positioned appropriately within the organization and shield the organization from internal shocks brought on by the discontinuous change of disaster response.

■ *Adaptive:* organizational learning that incorporates lessons from workers and specific disaster sites to create a holistic learning model.

■ *Technical:* qualified staff and appropriate response products that are readily available.

In practice, how would each of these core factors work to maximize an HAO's efficiency and effectiveness?

Leadership Capacity

Leadership capacity is the ability to create and define the mission of an organization, and then advance it by allocating resources to the priorities identified during the leaders' decision-making process. Leadership capacity in HAOs includes creating a governing framework that enables the organization to define its response in a discontinu-

ous change environment. And it especially includes inspiring and providing direction to employees, volunteers, and contractors in accomplishing the organization's identified mission.

To create and define an HAO's mission involves answering critical questions regarding the organization's role in emergency situations and in strategically allocating resources.

■ What is the HAO's role in the-relief-to-development continuum?
■ Are there priorities in terms of those the HAO serves? (such as refugees versus internally displaced persons or age versus sex)?
■ Will the HAO distribute aid even if it fuels a political or military conflict?

For most humanitarian aid organizations, the decisions on mission and resource allocation should incorporate several underlying principles:

■ *Flexibility* Generally, organizational missions should be concrete and provide solid guidance regarding the role of the organization and its basic boundaries. Yet in a rapidly changing disaster environment, a rigid mission for an HAO can cause an organizational identity crisis and dysfunction when it experiences unpredictable environmental jolts. In order to avoid such crises, HAOs should have missions that lay out general roles and boundaries, but which provide authority, either explicit or implicit, to be flexible in interpreting policy and roles.

The HAO's mission is analogous to the anchor of a boat: It keeps the boat from drifting aimlessly. The tighter the tether, the closer the boat remains to a given spot. The HAO mission anchors the organization and keeps it from drifting. But what happens when a storm sets in and the waves become larger? If the anchor's tether is too tight, the boat cannot ride the waves but will take on water and sink. Similarly, the HAO mission's tether must provide for some flexibility—some give or play in it – or the HAO will flounder like a boat.

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■ *Sensitivity to Change*   The HAO's mission must be sensitive to the affected population it seeks to serve. The board and executive leaders should be willing to accept flexibility in directing personnel and resources into new areas demanded by changes in the discontinuous environment—and to advocate for such flexibility from donors. This is especially important when workers on the front lines identify priorities that differ from the initial or conventional wisdom and that require reallocation of scarce field resources. For example, when field workers for OxFam and Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) felt they had received sufficient funding to do the necessary relief work after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the boards of those organizations made the controversial decision to ask their donors to direct funding into other priority areas where the organizations were working. The leaders felt this was preferable to accepting more funds that might not be used prudently in the tsunami disaster. This controversial decision might have discouraged some donors or opened the boards to criticism regarding their management of donors' funds. Nonetheless, these organizations chose to take what they felt to be an ethical and principled stand on the best use of resources.

Once an HAO's leadership has established the general direction of the organization through its mission, leadership capacity then focuses on the strategic allocation of resources to accomplish the mission. For HAOs, decision-making structures to allocate resources should be developed that reflect the changeable nature of the environment.

This can be best accomplished by empowering decision-making at optimal levels of the organization.   Expertise of personnel throughout the organization should be recognized and individuals —particularly those on the ground closest to the needs and victims—should be authorized to make decisions regarding funding priorities.

For example, in the early stages of the 2004 tsunami response, American Red Cross staff in the field provided regular updates and recommendations to Red Cross's Washington, D.C., headquarters, which then dispatched resources from warehouses and cities outside the affected regions. But as more Red Cross staff were deployed in the field, operational decision-making was shifted there, with headquarters staff retaining only overall coordination across the disaster areas.

Executive management and the board have key continuing roles throughout: They must monitor and ensure that no single disaster or multiple crises overwhelm or exhaust the resources and personnel of the organization. They must work to protect internal operations from the environmental shocks to which they are responding while proactively engaging the ever-changing situation. And they must be sensitive to their donors, while at the same time advocating for the best interests of the populations served by the organization.

Adaptive Capacity

Adaptive capacity refers to the ability of an organization to monitor, assess, and respond to changes in its environment. Most HAOs generally receive high marks for adaptive capacity as it relates to programmatic work. They have mastered rapid assessment in the field, quick response, and have even developed some promising methods of early detection.

But many humanitarian aid organizations are less proficient at adapting internally to a discontinuous environment. There are three mechanisms that HAOs can utilize to increase internal adaptive capacity:

For HAOs, decision-making structures to allocate resources should be developed that reflect the changeable nature of the environment.

■ *Short-term organizational assessment* HAOs can conduct short-term assessments of organizational capacity in the field. The format for a short-term organizational assessment can resemble a programmatic rapid-needs assessment in that it is not comprehensive and detailed, but is within a clearly defined framework and uses concrete indicators. The International Development Resource Centre uses a short guide for institutional assessment that is a good starting point (although some HAOs may need more extensive assessments).[6]

■ *Mini-Strategic Planning* While many HAOs engage in strategic planning on a regular basis as a best practice, the rapidly changing external environment within which HAOs must operate may require additional planning within shorter timeframes. Longer-term strategic planning, which provides overarching internal stability, can be complemented with mini-strategic planning processes that lay out objectives in three- to six-month spans —or even shorter, depending on how fast the external environment is changing.

■ *Recurring evaluation* Evaluation should be a continuing process throughout disaster response. But the type and rigor of evaluation will change over the lifecycle of a disaster. Initially, evaluation should emphasize adaptability and needs assessment, move on to quality of service delivery in the interim, and, finally, assess client outcomes. Evaluation results can be used to improve performance and credibility, especially given the increasing attention paid by donors and other outsiders to evaluation of humanitarian assistance.

Management Capacity

Management capacity is the ability of an organization to ensure the effective and efficient use of organizational resources. This includes:

■ *Effective human resource management,* including a recruitment program to attract diverse, talented employees who can help the organization achieve its objectives; receptive and considerate employees who are able to manage collaborative relationships with external stakeholders; leaders who give staff clear guidance, link individual and program goals, assess staff performance regularly, and encourage teamwork and collegial problem solving; and effective training for staff members.

■ *Sound fundraising and financial management,* including developing and adhering to budgets, paying bills on time and in accordance with cash flow budgets; keeping accurate financial records; creating financial statements regularly; and, crucially, using financial data to inform decision-making.

■ *Clear and proactive external and internal communications,* including enhancing transparency and accountability by communicating clearly to external audiences through a web site, publications, and other means about program goals, activities, and results; providing for effective internal communications with clear channels for staff members and regular opportunities for progress updates and reflections on lessons learned.

Most humanitarian aid organizations, to their credit, have developed strong management structures. Many have sophisticated human resource departments, development teams, and financial professionals to ensure effective and efficient use of their resources. However, in two areas, HAOs have exceptional management needs: media relations and information management.

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Feedback Loops of Organizational Learning for HAOs

Central Office Communication

Small Group Processing

Personal Reflection

Field Office Communication

Figure 2

Given the media's importance in shaping the public's perception of disaster emergencies and in stimulating donor support for relief efforts, strong media management capacity is crucial for HAOs. Media management includes cultivating good relationships with media contacts, creating and packaging information, and conducting awareness-raising campaigns. Good management requires media skills throughout the organization, not just for the media professionals within the organization but also by the field staff on the ground.

Information management for HAOs is often limited to collecting summary data after relief efforts are concluded, which are used primarily to report to donors on the effectiveness of programs. However, added benefit can be had if an HAO conducts evaluative efforts at all stages of its relief effort, despite the obvious challenges of doing so in the chaotic and high-pressured environment of an emergency. Such continuous evaluative learning—at the individual, department, and organizational levels—can help an organization capture important contemporaneous elements of its work and lead to needed refinements during its relief work.

Transforming data into organizational knowledge has two preconditions: the ability to share information widely within the organization and the capability of applying what is learned to current or future situations. HAOs that succeed in this effort employ several "feedback loops" that operate simultaneously internally and that sustain organizational learning and create meaningful interactions, relationships, and personal growth.

This feedback loop model (see Figure 2) enables an organization to ensure that important knowledge at each level is preserved, analyzed, and shared so that continuous learning occurs, during and between disaster emergencies. Building this management capacity to share information feeds into the adaptive capacity of the organization by supplying useful information from all levels of the organization that allows for incremental changes in approach, resources, and methodology.
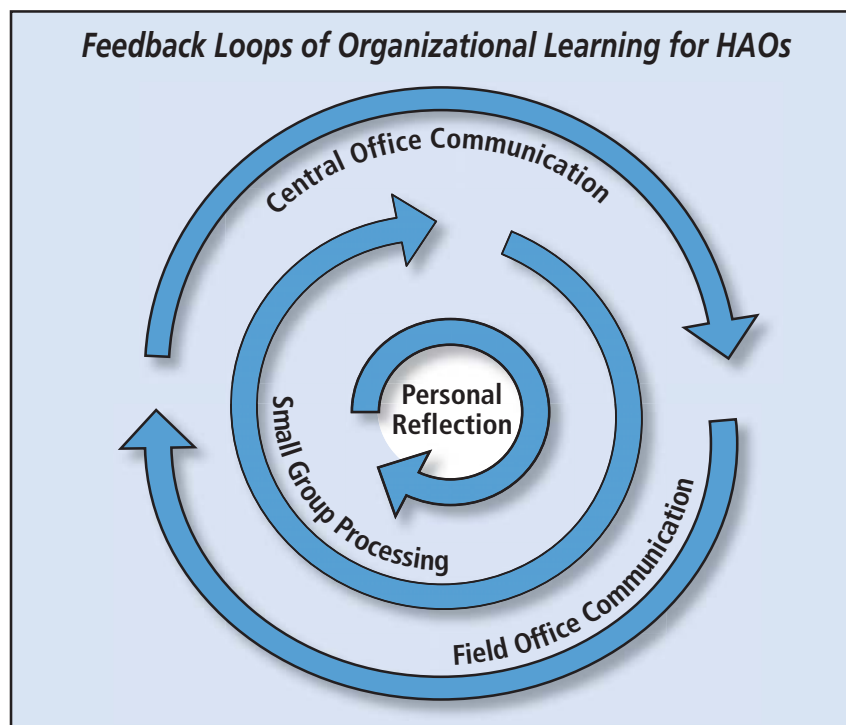
Communication between field office and central office. This is the conventional learning loop, whereby field workers send reports to headquarters, which are then reviewed internally and transmitted to donors. This is the aspect of the learning model most commonly carried out in HAOs. However, if information dissemination stops at this point, a crucial opportunity for additional learning is missed. If the central office collects field reports, reviews and compiles the material for "best practices," and then provides it to the field offices, valuable data can be transformed into immediately useful knowledge. Field staff can also benefit from generating the primary reports, reading the compiled headquarters reports, and responding to any perceived inaccuracies or discrepancies.

The most commonly reported complaint from field offices is the unresponsiveness of headquarters to their needs. In addition to compiled field reports, headquarters staff should report to field offices on their own work. This establishes dual accountability and a non-hierarchical information flow. Field offices should respond to the information from headquarters and give feedback on how headquarters initiatives are positively or negatively affecting their fieldwork.

Small group processing of events. This is sometimes called reflection or debriefing. It should occur both during and after emergencies[7] and should focus on describing events, considering their contexts, and identifying areas of strength and weakness. Field, regional, and headquarter-level staff should all participate to ensure a strong partnership, and, ideally, personnel from different disaster efforts should be included in order to share information across programs. In addition to the learning benefits, small-group processing provides a safe environment for staff to express intense emotions about their experiences and may, thereby, also serve to strengthen morale.

Personal reflection and recording of experiences. This feedback loop asks or encourages employees to record their experiences in private journals. It is meant to capture on a contemporaneous basis their experiences (as opposed to later reflection) in order for the employee or volunteer to utilize the information for personal growth and learning. It is important that all information in the journals be considered confidential unless explicit permission is given by the employee or volunteer to disclose it, and the information should never be used for personal evaluation purposes. Under these strict conditions, information in the journals might be used for organizational learning, as long as respondents give permission and remain anonymous. However, the act of doing personal reflection and establishing concrete measures of personal improvement can and should be built into the staff management review process.

See "Learning in the Thick of It" by Marilyn Darling, Charles Parry and Joseph Moore, July-August 2005 *Harvard Business Review* for a description of learning in high-pressure and time-constrained situations.

Technical Capacity

Technical capacity refers to the ability of an organization to implement the key organizational and programmatic functions necessary to achieve its strategic mission. Generally, organizations need skills in these areas:

- *Programs:* to effectively set goals and implement strategies.
- *Program evaluation:* to assess impact, learn, and make refinements.
- *Accounting:* to adhere to sound financial management practices.
- *Legal:* to establish structure, compliance, and tax issues.
- *Facilities management:* to manage, operate, and maintain space, equipment, and supplies.
- *Technology:* to store, track, analyze, and distribute data.
- *Communications:* to convey information to media and appropriate audiences.

Additionally, for HAOs, technical capacities typically include the ability to conduct the field work of the organization, such as rapid assessment and relief efforts (e.g., managing health, water and sanitation, shelter, food delivery, etc.), and the availability of the systems needed to deliver and support those services.

For most HAOs, technical capacity is the easiest and most overt capacity to address. One particular approach to technical capacity that has been recognized as particularly conducive to the HAO environment is standardized and responsive products and services that provide a platform from which response can be tailored to a specific situation. Many manufacturing organizations have decreased their response times by creating products that can be assembled in parts to fit the needs of customers. This allows them to be more adaptive to the needs of clients.

Many HAOs have realized that they can do the same thing within the context of emergencies, finding that such an approach can be critical to their effectiveness and efficiency.[8] For example, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) has a standard set of medical equipment that can be quickly shipped to any part of the world. They have additional 'medical kits' that respond to different emergency conditions, such as a high malaria probability or a large proportionate number of children. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has standard sets of equipment, with a ready supply available at any given time.

The key for HAOs is to determine which 'products' they offer can be standardized and what contingency items should be available. This could be in the form of personnel (International Rescue Committee has a crisis response team that is available on short notice and multi-disciplinary in make-up), supplies (such as the UNHCR or MSF examples), or programming (UNICEF has a program focusing on reuniting children with parents). While HAOs might create a core set of services and resources, they should be cautious about over-standardization that would hamper their ability to adapt to changing environments and deliver culturally appropriate services.

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NEXT STEPS

Because of the increasingly important part that humanitarian aid organizations play in alleviating the suffering of millions, efforts to improve their effectiveness and efficiency should be welcomed by donors, managers, and, of course, the unfortunate victims of their assistance. In this paper, we have only been able to sketch a preliminary framework to promote that goal. But it should enable those interested in pursuing excellence to take the next steps:

■ *For HAO leaders:* our model can serve as a starting point for engaging in broader discussions about how best to structure and build internal capacity for an HAO. The debate can begin, not just internally within an HAO, but also among leaders in the HAO community, where experiences can be shared and more highly developed organizations can assist those that are less so. The key to a useful discussion, however, is to ensure it focuses inward on organizational capacity and not on standards for service delivery, for which there already exists considerable debate as well as an established and accepted set of standards (e.g. SPHERE).

■ *For funders:* the model can stimulate a re-examination of funding priorities that may lead to grantmaking that builds capacity in HAOs, as well as more sophisticated and constructive emergency relief grantmaking. Already, some large institutional funders, namely the U.S. Agency for International Development, are offering support for capacity building by HAOs.

■ *For field staff:* the model can have a two-fold benefit—bringing line employees and volunteers into the organizational structure and capacity building effort, as well as ultimately providing them with knowledge, efficiency, and tools to do their jobs more effectively.

From Sri Lanka to Iraq to New Orleans, the employees and volunteers of humanitarian aid organizations are true heroes. It is our hope that this paper will stimulate discussion about the internal structure, capacity, leadership, and adaptability of HAOs and that the ensuing changes will heighten the ability of those heroes to relieve suffering humanity.

The core capacity model is among the tools that TCC Group utilizes to assist its clients in increasing the effectiveness and ultimate impact of their operations. Whether it is strategic planning, organizational assessment or capacity building strategies, TCC brings its nearly thirty years years of experience of working with nonprofits and HAOs of all sorts to bear in each of its assignments.

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Endnotes:

1. See "Understanding and addressing staff turnover in humanitarian agencies" by David Loquercio, Mark Hammersley and Ben Emmens, Network paper commissioned and published by the Humanitarian Practice Network at ODI. Available 8/11/08 at: http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?ID=2806

2. Network on Humanitarian Assistance (NOHA). 1998. *Management in Humanitarian Assistance, Volume 2*. European Communities, Luxembourg.

3. Watzlawick, P., J.H. Weakland and R. Fisch. 1974. Change: Principles of Problem Formulation and Problem Resolution. New York. Norton.

4. Meyer, Alan D., G.R. Brooks and J.B. Goes. 1990. "Environmental Jolts and Industry Revolutions: Organizational Responses to Discontinuous Change." *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 11: 93-110

5. This term is borrowed from the work of Haeckle whose work focused on for-profit corporations facing unstable operating environments. Haeckel, Stephan H. 1995. "Adaptive Enterprise Design: The Sense-and-Respond Model." *Planning Review*, Vol. 23 (3).

6. Organizational Assessment: A Framework for Improving Performance, by *Charles Lusthaus, Marie-Hélène Adrien, Gary Anderson, Fred Carden*, and *George Plinio Montalván*. Available at : http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-23987-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

7. See "Learning in the Thick of It" by Marilyn Darling, Charles Parry and Joseph Moore, July-August 2005 *Harvard Business Review* for a description of learning in high-pressure and time-constrained situations.

8. Kent, Randolph C. 1987. *Anatomy of Disaster Relief, The International Network in Action*. Pinter Publishers, London, UK.

About TCC Group

For nearly 30 years, TCC has provided strategic planning, program strategy development, evaluation and management consulting services to foundations, nonprofit organizations, corporate community involvement programs and government agencies. During this time, the firm has developed substantive knowledge and expertise in fields as diverse as community and economic development, human services, children and family issues, education, health care, the environment, and the arts. From offices in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco, the firm works with clients nationally and globally.

Our Services to International Organizations

TCC Group offers critical planning and management services that have been tailored to the unique challenges of international organizations, and draw on our understanding of the environment in which NGOs and international programs operate.

- TCC Group provides strategic planning support for private voluntary organizations, NGOs, and funders to sharpen focus, improve results, and promote growth.

- TCC Group consultants assist in establishing and supporting intermediary organizations whose purpose is to nurture and strengthen NGOs in developing countries. Our services include evaluation, capacity building, structural alignment, and managing organizational change.

- We help design and assess the programs of private foundations to determine effectiveness and future involvement. This includes impact assessment, exit strategies, and recommendations for new strategies.

- TCC Group develops initiatives for global corporations expanding their overseas programs to address critical business-related issues. We focus on developing effective partnerships across the business, public, and NGO sectors.

- TCC Group consultants advise business groups on new strategies and opportunities to improve societal functioning at the national, regional, and community levels. We also conduct seminars for companies and foundations on aspects of international corporate citizenship, including strategy, partnership development, and impact measurement.

How We Work

TCC Group tailors each new assignment to meet the individual needs and circumstances of the client. We develop a scope of work that responds to the particular challenges, timetable, and budget for the assignment. In addition, each project we undertake benefits from a team approach that involves individuals with different areas of expertise, skills, and backgrounds.

TCC Group is able to provide full-service consulting capabilities to any client. Sometimes clients engage us for short-term research, problem solving, or facilitation. Other times we provide comprehensive planning and evaluation assistance or conduct other activities over a period of a year or more.

Our Distinctive Qualifications

TCC Group is able to meld its deep knowledge of how effective nonprofits, philanthropies, and corporate social responsibility programs work with substantive expertise working in the international arena. TCC Group staff members have worked in the field and in headquarters of international organizations in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and have on the ground experience in creating and managing international initiatives, responding to disasters, working across borders, and negotiating complex program agreements.

TCC Group consultants have extensive backgrounds in fields such as human services, youth development, arts and culture, education, advocacy, international studies, and economic development. Our consultants also have strong analytical, research and group facilitation skills.

Our Clients

Our clients come from all parts of the nonprofit, philanthropic, and corporate community involvement world. They include new organizations that want an appropriately ambitious plan to get started, emerging organizations needing assistance in designing systems and structures as they prepare for growth, as well as established institutions re-shaping their strategies to address new demands and assess the outcomes of their services.