

Reality check:

- Disasters are ugly
- Evaluations always look for signs of order
- So poor coordination is often highlighted as a problem
- But good work does happen when coordination is poor but it may not be noticed by hindsight.
- Those who benefit from it certainly notice and appreciate
- Nobody wants to be repeatedly assessed and see no benefit
- Disaster response is a process of making assumptions and confirming or changing them.
- Don't forget the value of solidarity- the human side of humanitarian response

What is coordination for?

- Avoiding duplication
- Ensuring coverage
- Speeding delivery
- Using facilities efficiently
- Prioritised needs addressed first

Perhaps the purpose has to change at different times.

What are the problems with extensive coordination?

- Takes time, often from people who have better things to do
- Dis-empowers some people/organisations in empowering others (so people have to agree to submit to coordination)
- Excessive coordination can delay when chaos may deliver
- Its complex (eg cross-cutting and sectoral), but works best when simple
- Can create a sense of exclusion of local authorities/local organisations.

Dilemmas and balance

- Coordinators dislike diversity, but diversity is important
- When does good coordination become an obsessive-compulsive disorder?
- When the circus comes to town, its easy to forget the local talent.
- Can an agency spend money without seeing for themselves first?

Solutions and improvements

- Don't confuse information sharing as coordination.
(Coordination needs information sharing, but information sharing does not constitute coordination)
- Hands-off coordination through standards and preset roles
- Establish effective coordination within particular groups with common core identity (eg UN agencies)
- Change the objectives of coordination for different phases
- Professionalise, especially locally
- Assess the situation, not the needs in the field