What We Know About Collaboration:

the ECB Country Consortium Experience

Emergency Capacity Building:
The 10. Key Factors for Success

www.ecbproject.org/consortium/guide

:: care   CRS   MercyCorps   Oxfam   Save the Children.   World Vision

What We Know About Collaboration: the ECB Country Consortium Experience

Table of contents

Visit: www.ecbproject.org/consortium/guide

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
AIM	Accountability and Impact Measurement
CALP	Cash Learning Partnership
CBHA	Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies
CDA	Collaborative Learning Project
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CEP	Consortium Engagement Plan
CSAS	Consortium Self-Assessment Survey
CVA	Capacity and Vulnerability Analysis
DREP	Disaster Response Engagement Protocols
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ELRHA	Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance
ECB Project	Emergency Capacity Building Project
HSDP	Humanitarian Staff Development Project
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group on Disaster Preparedness
JNA	Joint Needs Assessment
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NARRI	National Alliance for Risk Reduction and Response Initiatives
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Introduction: Purpose and Structure of this Resource

The Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project is a global humanitarian initiative led by six international agencies working through ECB country-level consortia in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Indonesia, Niger, and the Horn of Africa.[1] Since 2005, the ECB Project community has been working to improve the speed, quality and effectiveness of emergency preparedness and response in the humanitarian community by building capacity at the field, organizational and global humanitarian sector levels. The key principles of collaboration, partnership and non-duplication provide a framework for participating agencies to work together towards improved response.

The ECB Project has a rich history of collaboration and learning both at the global and field levels. Project communities of practice are developing many practical tools, reports, and case studies. This joint work is based on three inter-related themes that agency members identified as common challenges amongst all partners. These themes are: Accountability and Impact Measurement (AIM), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), and National Staff Capacity Building.

The ECB Project is a collaboration initiative which is part of the broader humanitarian sector; the participating agencies are committed to coordinating their efforts with other stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels – especially with disaster-affected communities. Project teams are working together to develop a cyclical process of experiential learning: 'action, reflection, and learning', with an aspiration that this cycle is owned by the participating agencies and communicate with the wider sector to improve our ability to respond to emergencies.

This country consortium learning is aimed at humanitarian and emergency staff working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations. It could be used as a reference tool for developing a country consortium or strengthening an existing collaboration among emergency response agencies and wider stakeholders, including local government and local communities in your country. It summarizes the key factors that ECB Project stakeholders identified to help you successfully consider working with a consortium in your country. It also provides a select number of tools and approaches to assist you with developing momentum with your joint activities. Members of the ECB country-level consortia also share some of the key lessons they are learning about building capacity together.

While much of the country level learning focuses on a purely humanitarian capacity building consortium and the benefits and challenges related to joint activities, many of the situations and approaches described could be applied to any multi-agency consortium.

This resource is structured as follows:

Table A: A Summary of the Learning: A quick reference chart of the Key Factors for Success

Part I: The Benefits of Collaboration offers clear answers to the question 'Why should we work together?'

Part II: The 10. Key Factors for Success identifies ten key factors you can consider when trying to build a country-level consortium of NGOs. It also recommends capacity building tools available from the ECB project that may be adapted to suit your partnership and capacity building goals.

Appendix 1: Toolbox 1-12: The tools referred to in the 10. key factors for success.

Appendix 2: ECB Themes and Tools for Country Consortium-Building: A Quick Review. The section offers a quick review of the ECB tools organized by three core themes – accountability, DRR and CCA, and national staff development.

Please email us your questions about this resource or any other ECB Project-related issues at info@ecbproject.org. *We wish you the best of luck in your collaboration efforts.*

---

[1] Each consortium is made up of some or all of the six global ECB agencies: CARE International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision, who, in partnership with other NGOs, UN institutions, local partners, communities, and government actors, are committed to working together to improve their national and field level emergency preparedness and response capabilities and practices. *To find out more about our ECB country-level consortia, visit: www.ecbproject.org/ECBconsortia*

Table A: SUMMARY OF THE KEY FACTORS, TOOLS & EXAMPLES

Part I: The Benefits of Collaboration Why develop a country consortium and what are the benefits?	

Part II: The 10. Key Factors for Success	
TOOLBOX REFERENCES	**CONSORTIA EXAMPLES**
1) Defining Common Aims & Objectives	
Toolbox 1 & 2 • Consortium Engagement Plan (CEP) (p.23) • The Good Enough Guide and Accompanying Materials (p.23)	• Demonstrating accountability to communities in Indonesia (p.10) • Assessing capacity in the Horn of Africa (p.11)
2) Ensuring Effective Leadership	
Toolbox 3 & 4 • Core Humanitarian Competency Framework (p.23) • Humanitarian Staff Development Project (p.24)	• Bolivia recognises leadership skills at all levels (p.12)
3) Ensuring Alignment	
Toolbox 5, 6 and 7 • Building Trust in Diverse Teams (p.24) • ECB Multi-Agency Simulation Package (p.24) • Consortium Self-Assessment Survey (CSAS) (p.25)	• Building trust in Bangladesh (p.13)
4) Demonstrating Visible Support and Reliable Commitment	
	• Collaboration and creativity in Bangladesh (p.14)
5) Prioritizing staff time to facilitate and support the process	
Toolbox 8 • The Partnership Initiative (p.26) • The Partnership Brokering Project (p. 26)	• Preferred qualities of consortium participants (p.15) • Collaboration, commitment and consistency in Bolivia (p.16)
6) Ensuring Transparent, Effective Communication	
Toolbox 2 • Good Enough Guide (p.23) • Listening Project & Infoasaid initiatives	• Quick decisions and consortium protocols in Indonesia (p.17)
7) Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities	
8) Funding the Process	
Reference: • ECB Case Study on Joint Fundraising (p.19)	• Off the beaten track – Uganda funding (p.19) • Joint fundraising opportunities in Bolivia (p.19)
9) Finding Common Approaches	
Toolbox 9, 10, 11 • ECB World Vision Adventures in Partnering Case Study A: Coming Together to Reduce the Impact of Disasters in Bolivia (p.26.) • Towards Resilience: DRR & CCA Guide (p.27) • A Guide to Measuring Change (2012) (p.27) • Addressing Staff Retention in the Horn of Africa (p. 27)	• Advocating for risk reduction in Bangladesh (p.20) • Identifying gaps: accountability in Niger (p.21)
10) Managing Crisis Within the Consortium	
	• Accommodating differences in consortia partners (p.22)
Concluding Note (p.23) **Toolboxes 1-12 (p. 23-26) and Appendix 2. (p.28-29)**	

Part I. Benefits of Collaboration

The first question to answer is, 'Why does your organization want to develop a country-level consortium?' As the next section will confirm, consortium-building can include numerous areas that you can focus on. It requires the expenditure of scarce resources when your agency's employees are most likely already overburdened. *So what are the benefits?*

> *'Increasingly frequent and larger disasters are causing harm to greater numbers of children and families. The world's capacity to respond is being stretched, and the ECB Project represents a model for strengthening our collective ability to save lives and alleviate suffering.'*
>
> **Michael Klosson,** ECB Principal and Vice President for
> Policy and Humanitarian Response at Save the Children

According to the ECB country consortia stakeholders contacted for this learning resource, the benefits are clear. They are not easily obtained, but with work and commitment they are achievable. Benefits include:

Improved initiatives

A determined, sustained effort by humanitarian organizations to build capacity together, share ideas, improve accountability and communication with communities, and reinforce coherent approaches to DRR will help to ensure that we are better positioned to respond to the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

Strength in numbers

Simply put, two agencies have a stronger voice than one; three are stronger than two, and so on. In Bangladesh, the lead agency notes the ECB country consortium developed a joint advocacy strategy to influence the government's *Disaster Management Act* to be more 'people-oriented' and to support the passing of the act. The consortium work together with a much wider group of partners; they speak collectively with one voice on this important advocacy issue. A consortium in many ways is greater than the sum of its agencies. There is, indeed, strength in numbers.

Strength in numbers: mobilizing media in Bangladesh

In May 2009, Cyclone Aila struck Bangladesh, causing much damage and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. Some estimates noted up to 20 million people imminently at risk of post-disaster diseases. With a relatively low death toll, however, media, government, and donors allocated insufficient attention despite the tremendous shelter, water and livelihood needs of the many affected.

Twenty NGOs collaborated on an advocacy campaign on behalf of those hit hard by Aila. Acting together, these NGOs mobilised media, helped journalists to visit affected areas, and managed to get this critical situation broadcast widely on national television. These 20 organizations collaborating together crucially galvanized the government and donors to pay attention and respond to the needs of the affected population.

Increased geographic coverage

No single NGO can cover one sector across an entire country. Agencies working together in a major crisis can come to agreement on who should work where and on what. However, this is easier if staff capacities and capabilities in different regions are known among agencies in advance. The capacity gaps can be filled through joint training *before* another emergency strikes. The training can include not only agency staff but also local government, UN or community representatives. This should result in agencies with the most appropriate skills working together with the right local stakeholders in the right areas.

If relationships are formed outside of an emergency, it could mean that partnerships and new joint programs activities also develop during future emergencies. Ultimately, when NGOs are working together, they are able to satisfy community needs more effectively and more quickly across the affected area.

Decreased duplication

Agencies working closely together are also more likely to avoid duplication of program resources, time and effort. A strong consortium can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of activities; it can encourage resources to be shared and look for and improve ways of dealing with difficult issues by learning from the experiences of other agencies and build this into capacity building programs.

Avoiding overlap: achieving efficiency in Bolivia

The consortium in Bolivia has doubled in size from the original five ECB member agencies as other NGOs, realizing the benefits to be gained, have joined.

As a result, the ten NGO members have made sound strategic decisions about which agency will work where, thereby ensuring geographic coverage of the country's highest risk areas in times of crisis.

One member of the consortium said this effort to eliminate overlap is made possible by the high level of trust established among the members over the months and years of collaboration.

Complementarity

One agency has expertise in water and sanitation. Another has long experience in transitional shelter programs. Yet another is known for its capacity in responding to food and nutrition insecurity. With these agencies working together, the existing capacity and various needs of a disaster-affected community can be jointly assessed and understood. A consortium brings together the comparative advantages of participating agencies to ensure that the community needs are met through working in partnership with local, regional and national stakeholders.

Donor attention

Donors today are being held to account very closely for the funds they disburse. Many key humanitarian donors are finding economies of scale by funding NGO consortia to respond to emergencies or to work on finding solutions to common challenges as a group. This enables a wider reach with potentially more limited resources. By forming a strong and effective country-level consortium, NGOs position themselves well vis-à-vis their donors to receive support for their efforts.

Examples of other humanitarian consortia:

Global and regional:
- Inter-Action
- NGO VOICE
- International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

Country:
- Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies in Sri Lanka
- The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)
- Pakistan Humanitarian Forum

Sector specific:
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Consortium in Liberia
- The Cash Learning Partnership (CALP)

Part II. A Summary of the 10. Key Factors for Success

Building a consortium, or simply strengthening collaboration among humanitarian agencies locally and nationally, can be exciting. If the process is carefully implemented, you can develop profound and positive changes in the way you respond to the needs of the communities you serve.

Successful collaboration does not happen without considerable effort and organizational support. It is not wise to presume that everyone knows how to collaborate from the outset. As ECB Project staff continue to learn about collaboration they have identified a number of key factors that, if managed carefully, will help you to succeed. These can be used together with ECB tools and approaches to help build relationships with your consortium partners.

Below is a summary of ten key factors for successful collaboration, followed by a more detailed explanation of each factor.

1. Defining common aims and objectives

- Share individual agency plans, resources and approaches;
- Analyze the challenges, weaknesses and/or gaps within existing programs;
- Identify activities that cannot be done better alone;
- Keep activities small and simple at the beginning;
- Develop joint strategies, initiatives, a common logframe and workplan such as a Consortium Engagement Plan (CEP).

2. Ensuring effective leadership

- Decide on a leadership model (e.g. lead agency, revolving leadership or secretariat model);
- Include responsibilities and accountability lines to other member organizations in job descriptions and performance reviews;
- Build trust with participating agencies using the ECB Project trust-building tool;
- Use the core competencies framework to define and improve leadership skills.

3. Ensuring alignment

- Use multi-agency simulation exercises to develop understanding of capacities, structures, and systems within different organizations.
- Adapt job descriptions, personal work plans and objectives, and organizational strategies to foster and sustain joint activities; prepare and plan for staff turnover.
- Prepare a workplan to define annual consortium activities.

4. Demonstrating visible support and reliable commitment

- Decide on your approach to securing support, from meeting informally once a week to signing memoranda of understanding;
- Senior staff – or their appointed delegates – should play an active and reliable role in consortium meetings where key decisions are to be taken;
- Give staff members time and space to participate in the process and authorize them to speak on the agency's behalf;
- Go where the energy is: encourage members interested in particular activities to take them on and move them forward.

5. Prioritizing staff time to facilitate and support the process

- Systematically allocate time for meaningful participation in consortium activities;

- Recognize that collaborative activities are time-consuming – revise job descriptions, performance plans, budgets, and staffing levels;

- Consider hiring a dedicated 'consortium facilitator' and support staff, and involve a number of agencies in the recruitment process;

- Rotate the physical base of the facilitator around participating agencies and appoint contacts (focal points) in each organization.

6. Ensuring transparent, effective communication

- Communicate valuable information regarding consortium-related activities quickly and transparently to other members;

- Speak with one voice and incorporate the valuable feedback that beneficiary communities are able to provide;

- Connect consortium members through face-to-face meetings, calls, and an online platform such as an intranet site to connect field staff and store resources in a neutral place.

7. Clarifying roles and responsibilities

- Agree on which activities will be carried out jointly;

- Write down agreements regarding agencies' consortium-related roles and responsibilities;

- Monitor agreed roles to ensure agencies are in a position to deliver the agreed results;

- Prepare short guidelines on how joint activities will be conducted and who will conduct them;

- Communicate guidelines and agreements to all agency staff, at global and local levels.

8. Funding the process

- Agree member contributions and applications for external donor funding;

- Allow sufficient time (several months) for multi-agency consultation and contributions;

- Prepare key documents in advance for example: contracts, finance processes and internal paperwork with partners before contracts are finalized with a donor.

9. Finding common approaches

- Take time to understand the approach each member takes with regards to common organizational issues;

- Jointly create program-related tools and approaches to help with gaps or challenges that individual agencies have not been able solve alone;

- Agree reporting templates and a monitoring and evaluation framework so that each partner gathers data in a similar way and results can be collated and analysed quickly.

10. Managing crisis within the consortium

- Expect crisis and do not be discouraged by disagreement;

- Act quickly and responsibly to rescue relationships;

- Allow members to air their frustrations and conduct an 'appreciative inquiry' reflecting on positive moments in the process;

- Provide opportunities for members to change or end an activity if it is not working.

The 10. Key Factors for Success – recommendations and examples

1. Defining common aims and objectives

What is important? Having clear aims and objectives is a must for the country collaboration, as is a demonstrated ability to deliver results. Participants in the consortium want to see things accomplished; without clear aims, objectives, or activities for the collaborative process, they can become disengaged. The damage to inter-agency relationships can be profound.

What can you do? Sharing individual agency plans, resources and approaches will be the starting point for understanding each member's mandate, priorities and ways of working. Opportunities to develop joint strategies and initiatives will result from analysis of the challenges, weaknesses and/or gaps within existing programs.

Developing a common logframe and workplan together as a consortium will ensure that the members are clear on why they are collaborating and what their priorities are.

Each ECB Project consortium develops a Consortium Engagement Plan (CEP) each year to agree on the common aims and objectives of the collaboration. The plans created also outline more detailed outcomes and outputs expected for each activity (see Toolbox 1).

The collaboration effort should lead to practical, tangible results; what several ECB stakeholders described as 'quick wins' in the start-up phase. Members need to collectively identify activities that cannot be done better alone. It is best to keep the activities relatively small and simple at the beginning of the process.

Consider 'starter' activities such as:

- Holding an inter-agency simulation exercise to understand each other's procedures and identify potential response gaps;
- Assess the current capacities of the member agencies; consider adapting or developing a self-assessment tool such as the *Consortium Self-Assessment Survey (CSAS)* (see Toolbox 7);
- Organize a joint training where there is a capacity gap and consider inviting other local or national actors to join;
- Translate key international documents, standards, or guidelines into local languages.

Demonstrating accountability to communities in Indonesia

The ECB consortium in Indonesia uses the *Good Enough Guide* (ECB Project, 2007) to inspire community and focus group discussions, set up feedback mechanisms with those communities, and train partner organizations in the 'Good Enough' approach to accountability.

After the 2009 West Sumatra earthquake, the consortium planned a shelter program based on cash grants to those in need. Due to limited resources, beneficiary eligibility required sensitive decision-making. Using 'Good Enough' approaches, NGO staff worked with the community to nominate beneficiaries most in need of assistance. Communities identified who should receive cash grants, selecting families in the village most in need of cash for shelter. The agencies put a feedback mechanism in place: they posted a list of selected beneficiaries in public places – village halls, mosques – so that people could see who had been selected by the community. If they disagreed with selections, they were encouraged to get back to the consortium members with their comments which were reviewed and responded to. Subsequent joint initiatives in 2010 and 2011 developed accountability for training for more staff and partners. Joint programs continued to use community feedback mechanisms to improve the quality and appropriateness of the response, and ensure that multi-agency activities are better coordinated.

Over time, members should feel that they are part of something greater than just their own agencies. Once trust begins to develop between members, it is possible to move on to more complex interactions such as coordinated or joint needs assessments (JNAs) and joint evaluations. These activities require a good deal of trust, but the results are very tangible and valued by members of the humanitarian community. ECB stakeholders recommend taking time to understand fully the current aims and interests of each partner organization and try to align collaborative activities with those aims and interests.

Sharing needs and solutions: Assessing capacity in the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa Consortium is working with the Inter-Agency Working Group on Disaster Preparedness (IAWG) to coordinate information exchange and organize joint training initiatives with ECB agencies and IAWG sub-groups. ECB Principals selected a regional approach due to the many cross-border issues affecting the area including DRR, climate change, conflict and refugee flows, trans-border pastoralist movements, and regional food supply chains.

Members from multiple agencies and partners developed simulation programs and training of trainers workshops in Kenya in March 2008, April 2010 and in Uganda in November 2010. Participants from over 20 humanitarian agencies furthered their understanding of where to focus future coordination and emergency capacity building efforts and identified key skills gaps in their agencies.

Collectively the consortium developed a report on a shared challenge together with People in Aid on 'Addressing Staff Retention in the Horn of Africa' (Vale 2010, see Toolbox 12). They also responded to some of the issues by successfully implementing a leadership & management course and core skills training program with participants from multiple agencies in 2011 and 2012 (see Toolbox 4).

What tools and guidance are available?

- ELRHA 2012 *Guide to Constructing Effective Partnerships Between Academic and Humanitarian Organizations*, available as an online interactive guide (see: http://ep.elrha.org/desktop.php) or a downloadable report (see: www.elrha.org/uploads/effective-partnerships-report.pdf). Read the step by step process on 'How to Collaborate' and Case Study 1.
- The Partnering Initiative recommends reviewing a series of key questions at the very start to identify whether a collaborative or partnership approach is appropriate. Answering many of these questions will ensure that potential partners are clear on the shared motivations for their work http://thepartneringinitiative.org/w/who-we-are/philosophy-and-approach/when-to-partner

The ECB Project has a number of tools and recommended activities to 'start-up' the collaborative process:

- The CEP defines the common aims and objectives of each consortium through a number of joint activities (see Toolbox 1).
- Organizing joint training to improve beneficiary accountability using the ECB Project's *Good Enough Guide* (see Toolbox 2) is an appropriate activity for a humanitarian consortium.
- Assessing consortium member agency capacities is another good starting point. The ECB Project recommends adapting a self-assessment tool appropriate to your context. The *Consortium Self-Assessment Survey (CSAS)* is one such tool (see Toolbox 7).
- Holding an inter-agency simulation exercise is an excellent way to build relationships with member agency staff in a quick and meaningful way (see Toolbox 6 on the *ECB Simulations Administrator's Guide and Multi-Agency Simulation materials*).

Over time, more complex activities can be initiated by the member agencies:

- Learning on Coordinated assessments (or JNAs) in five ECB consortia are evolving in partnership with the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS). Training is improving coordination and assessment and analytical skills of field staff. See: www.ecbproject.org/joint-needs-assessment
- In a resource entitled *What We Know About Joint Evaluations,* the ECB Project (2011) shares learning from multiple joint evaluations that have been conducted by country-level consortia. See: www.ecbproject.org/jointevaluations

2. Ensuring effective leadership

What is important? Without a clearly demonstrated and sustained commitment to the consortium-building process on the part of the leadership, consortium-building can be accorded low priority by agency staff and other members. Leadership qualities should be demonstrated at all levels of the partnership, not just at the top of the organization.

What can you do? Different leadership models are applied by different consortia. Some use a lead agency model. Others use a model of revolving leadership, with each agency taking the lead for a set period of time. Still others use a secretariat model. Whatever model is most appropriate to your context, the leader must lead by example with demonstrated commitment and presence at important meetings. Quick and effective actions and decisions demonstrate that collaboration is a high organizational priority. Job descriptions and performance reviews should clearly include collaboration leadership responsibilities and accountability lines.

The leader must be keenly aware of the status – the 'health' – of the collaboration effort, and whether problems require a change in leadership style to keep the process moving forward. Leading an inter-agency collaboration effort calls for a different set of competencies than leading a team composed of staff from one's own agency. Effective leadership of an inter-agency effort relies more on the skills of a 'facilitator' rather than those of a 'commander'.

Bolivia recognizes leadership skills at all levels

Bolivia consortium members recognize that consistency of country office leadership has enabled the consortium to evolve. The focal points function as key consortium decision-makers and their consistent participation is vital, as staff turnover undermines not only humanitarian action but consortia working.

Trust built up by consistent leadership has allowed senior leaders to represent the group in external fora and meetings – the benefits include strengthening their collective voice, allowing closer alignment of activities with external stakeholders and saving valuable leadership time. The management team also requires strong negotiation and coordination skills to ensure that joint activities remain coherent with agency strategies and plans.

The Bolivia members also recognize that leadership is important at the operational level, for example focal points sharing information with the rest of their colleagues and ensuring joint activities are understood by agency staff, even when they are not involved or if there are staff changes.

Working group or activity leaders play an important coordination role and need to have appropriate decision-making authority at critical moments. Managers must ensure activity leaders are accountable for their assigned responsibilities and delegate authority for them to be able to take decisions on behalf of the agency.

What tools and guidance are available? A successful collaboration effort requires participating agencies to trust the lead agency to act impartially and transparently (for a description of the ECB Project trust-building tool, see Toolbox 5).

Trust develops faster when the partner agencies see that a leader possesses the competencies essential to inter-agency leadership and management. The ECB Project website offers a core competencies framework that may help you think about the leadership skills that need to be fostered at all levels of the collaboration effort (see Toolbox 3).

The ECB Project website also offers information on leadership skills training opportunities through the *ENHAnce* leadership and management skills development program (see Toolbox 4).

3. Ensuring alignment

What is important? If you want to build a consortium then you need to ensure that all levels of the organization are *clearly* and *consistently* behind the effort. This includes individual staff members in the field, program managers, and senior directors in your country head office. It is not sufficient to have one or two enthusiastic staff members in the field pushing the effort along. If the partnership is not prioritized across the organization, it can quickly be affected by declining donor attention, high staff turnover, poor management or decreasing staff support. Working cooperatively with other agencies may be a new and different approach for staff used to working individually and exclusively within your organization.

Alignment is also needed among the agencies taking part in your country consortium-building effort. There must be agreement about why the process of consortium-building is needed, what shared problems you are trying to solve and where the relationship is going. Partners must *align* their activities and their 'ways of working' with each other to make collaboration work.

What can you do? Once a group of organizations decide to work together and have identified a clear set of goals, outputs and outcomes, each participating organization will need to consider *alignment* – and on occasion *re-alignment* – of their relevant standard operating procedures and strategies. Job descriptions, personal work plans and objectives, and organizational strategies will have to be adapted to foster and sustain joint activities and ensure accountability for staff involved.

'Alignment' can take many months – in some cases a year or more – of dialogue and consensus-building at all levels of the organization and with potential partner agencies. It will probably require small steps at first as trust is built, fears are calmed, new ways of working are institutionalized, and organizational culture is shifted. Enthusiastic supporters or 'early adopters' may become frustrated with the time it takes; nonetheless, those who have experienced the process recommend a solid foundation of senior management support and strategic alignment.

Plan for staff turnover as this will be inevitable to some extent. Ensure that reports and minutes of key meetings are gathered; ensure that a handover period is mandatory. Encourage that new staff members have a clear message from their supervisor that collaboration is important and that they will be evaluated on this (see Toolbox 12.)

Building trust in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, development of the CEP is conducted in a workshop with all partners represented. At this CEP workshop, a number of the formal and informal tools from the *Building Trust in Diverse Teams* toolkit (see Toolbox 5) are used to establish an open and trusting working environment. The tools help with communication, cross-cultural differences and developing an understanding of different individual and agency ways-of-working.

What tools and guidance are available? Alignment requires a high level of trust throughout the organization as well as among partners in the collaboration process. Trust does not, however, happen automatically; it takes time and effort. The ECB Project offers a tool for agencies and teams to begin the process of building trust and aligning the aims and 'ways of working' of member agencies (see Toolbox 5).

The effort to align the various aims and strategies of potential partner agencies also requires a good understanding of how each agency functions, in terms of capacities, structures, and systems. ECB Project stakeholders recommend the use of simulation exercises to develop this understanding (see Toolbox 6).

The ECB Project is developing an understanding of measuring progress against change and capacity building. This is facilitated by the *ECB Project CSAS* tool (see Toolbox 7).

4. Demonstrating visible support and reliable commitment

What is important? Closely related to the issue of aligning partner agency aims and strategies is the need for visible, constructive support and action by all staff participating in the consortium. Members who fail to observe their commitments can slow down the process, disillusioning others, delaying delivery and reducing momentum.

What can you do? Alignment of aims, effective leadership, and visible commitment*:* these are the building blocks of collaboration. Senior staff must indicate by their presence and by their decisions that collaboration is a priority for their organizations. Ideally, senior staff – or their appointed delegates – will play an active and reliable role in consortium meetings where key decisions committing members to certain actions are to be taken, and where the rules of engagement are decided and agreed. They must ensure staff members are accorded the time and space to participate in the process and are authorized to speak on the agency's behalf.

Commitment does not imply that everyone has to do everything. On the contrary, the consortium process should *go where the energy is*: encourage those members interested in particular activities to take them on and move them forward. Agencies should consider leveraging support and commitment at different levels. National offices could be supported by regional or global teams and structures to provide technical expertise, management support and funding support for joint activities.

What tools and guidance are available? The ECB Project is supporting staff to improve their leadership skills both for emergency response activities and to support joint activities through a multi-agency training program called ENHANce using 'Context' training materials (see Toolbox 4). In addition, the leaders of each consortium continually need to prioritize and re-prioritize the activities that add value and reinforce the commitment of all staff contributing to the collaboration initiatives. Supporting trust-building through joint exercises will help agencies to be accountable to one another and fulfill their commitments (see Toolbox 5).

Collaboration and creativity in Bangladesh

In some contexts, a formal consortium- building process with leaders signing memoranda of understanding (MOU) may be feasible from the start. In other contexts, this may be viewed as too much and too fast and a more subtle approach may be needed.

One ECB stakeholder trying to start up an NGO consortium in Bangladesh realized that formal meetings and discussions of MOU did not produce the desired results. She found that meeting informally once a week after work with her country director counterparts from other agencies seemed a better approach. As one ECB observer noted, this informal approach 'changed the landscape' and, in time, this informal group became a steering committee for the consortium with country directors taking an active part in a consortium that is widely regarded as a successful effort.

---

5. Prioritizing staff time to facilitate and support the process

What is important? Simply put: organizations make time for – and allocate resources to – their highest priorities. If there is *insufficient* time for a particular activity such as collaboration or consortium-building, if staff members are not given the time to implement their consortium commitments, it is because other activities are accorded higher priority.

'Finding enough time' is quoted frequently by ECB Project stakeholders as a key challenge to consortium-building and partnership. Staff members of emergency response organizations are extremely busy. Nonetheless, the 'challenge of time' must be seen in terms of organizational commitment and priorities.

While it is true that collaboration can occur informally, this is only the start of a process; more staff time will inevitably be needed if the effort is to become a formalized, sustained process. Some stakeholders suggest that collaboration can only be sustained with staff dedicated to the process.

What can you do? The time needed for meaningful participation in consortium activities must be systematically allocated, as is the case with other staff responsibilities. Supervisors must revise job descriptions, performance plans, budgets, and staffing levels accordingly to fully integrate the joint activities into each individuals work plan. Rather than allocating joint work as 'extra' it should be seen as an integral part of achieving individual and shared objectives defined by each participating agency. This will undoubtedly require a shift in thinking to ensure the collaborative efforts are not being delivered by too few enthusiastic supporters and / or seen as an additional burden by some. Continued management support and good communications will help to sustain widespread efforts and review whether an agency is delivering its commitments. Follow-up discussions should review work schedules, results and the time commitment required for collaboration.

Preferred qualities of consortium participants

Useful skill sets in a consortium include cross-cultural thinking; tolerance of ambiguity; ability to compromise as well as negotiate; and systems and process management abilities.

ECB Project stakeholders noted participants with the following personal qualities are more likely to engage constructively in collaboration activities:

patient	**positive**	**sharing**
flexible	**committed**	**resourceful**
transparent	**influential**	**trusting**
pro-active	**resilient**	**good communicator**

Most stakeholders underscored the value of hiring a dedicated 'consortium facilitator'[2] for the process, also known as a 'neutral broker', who functions independently of any one member organization. Donor funding or other pooled funding from member organizations can assure the continuity of this dedicated facilitator, who acts as a 'hub' for planning and communication with the member organizations. Responsibilities include arranging and facilitating meetings and joint program activities, reminding agencies of stated commitments, managing relationships with external entities, and following-up on meeting action points. Depending on the scale of the consortium, additional support staff will be needed to help coordinate joint programs, meetings and budgets and ensure the lead facilitator is not overwhelmed with administrative responsibilities.

ECB Project experience has shown that involving a number of agencies in the recruitment process for the facilitator – i.e. selecting a multi-agency recruitment panel, requesting contributions for interview questions and appointing a lead agency to coordinate the process – can all help to strengthen relationships and increase support for the project. It may also be helpful to rotate the physical base of the facilitator around participating agencies to ensure regular contact with all agencies and avoid bias within one agency.

Even with the dedicated facilitator working full-time on the process, other key roles and support are needed. Each agency should appoint contacts (focal points) in their organization. These focal points must have an explicit commitment, via their annual work plans or performance plans, to work with the facilitator and partners. This helps ensure accountability. A mechanism to review the performance of the facilitator and the focal points should also be established, although this will need to be managed carefully and sensitively by all partners.

An effective facilitator must ensure that the consortium strategy continues to align with agency strategies. The facilitator ideally possesses strong negotiation and listening skills, and demonstrates flexibility in interactions with consortium participants. When participant needs are considered and priorities carefully negotiated, then participants are more willing to commit time and effort to joint activities.

---

[2] In the five ECB country consortia, this is currently the 'Field Facilitator' position.

What tools and guidance are available? Selecting the right facilitator or 'neutral broker' with the right set of competencies can have profound impact on your collaboration process. Guidance on 'brokering' partnerships is available (see Toolbox 8).

Collaboration, commitment, and consistency in Bolivia

Bolivian consortium members provide coordinators for each of the consortium's three technical working groups in addition to the consortium's lead and field facilitator.

For example, CARE, as the lead for Accountability in the consortium, provides an employee to help organize Accountability events and to join in fieldwork and testing activities. This employee's job description includes participation in ECB-related work and deployments to support the consortium's work such as joint evaluations. One ECB stakeholder noted consistency of participation as a key success factor in the Bolivia consortium.

---

6. Ensuring transparent, effective communication

What is important? Clear communication is vital if a consortium is to build trust and endure: communication both *internally* among consortium members and *externally* with donors and the broader humanitarian sector in your country. Sharing information with stakeholders regionally can also broaden impact and reduce chances of duplication.

Just as an effective organization makes concerted, ongoing efforts to communicate vision, values, and priorities to all staff from top to bottom, so must an effective consortium communicate agreed aims and priorities to all members. A perception that individual agency agendas are somehow in conflict with agreed consortium activities can quickly diminish trust.

A lack of clarity with regard to the communication between the consortium and external actors can also pose a serious challenge for the consortium. It is important to speak with donors, other consortia or coordination networks, and other humanitarian organizations with one voice and on agreed positions.

Communities are able to provide valuable feedback. Remember that transparent, effective communication is a two-way process. When you are working in collaboration, it is even more important to share information about your joint activities, and capture feedback as to whether your joint programs are responding to the needs of the communities you serve.

What can you do? Member organizations must communicate information about collaboration activities quickly, clearly, and transparently. Efficient ways of connecting consortium members through face-to-face meetings, conference/voice-over-internet calls, and an online platform such as an intranet will help to connect field staff and store resources in a neutral place. Sharing the responsibility for organizing, chairing and following-up actions between members will ensure that the all actions are not left to the coordinator or one individual to complete.

It must be obvious to all members which activities are to be conducted as a collaborative effort and which should be conducted by individual agencies. Partners must demonstrate a commitment to work on agreed, common aims. Should a member act otherwise, the group should try openly to identify the circumstances that contributed to things going wrong and provide opportunities to share concerns, without assigning blame.

Capturing and sharing learning can be a key strategy of consortium development: building the aim of sharing learning into the objectives of the group; identifying a consortium focal point for learning, and tasking specific consortium members with the communication and dissemination of this learning.

It is important to incorporate communities' opinions on the appropriateness and effectiveness of joint activities. Is it understood who is leading the joint program? Are there clear, secure feedback mechanisms in place to support this process?

In addition, members must scope out other collaborative initiatives before forming a new project and monitor developments within the sector. In Bolivia, the Consortium of Bolivian Humanitarian Agencies is coordinating their initiatives and opportunities to share learning with the UN OCHA Humanitarian Network. Similarly in Bangladesh, the ECB Consortium is working to strengthen information-sharing, share learning, and avoid duplication of activities by working with the NARRI consortium.

Continued efforts to communicate your own activities will encourage support, information-sharing and engagement from other groups. Where members are part of multiple alliances, it is possible to combine meetings or events, aligning agendas, and therefore using resources more efficiently. For example, in the ECB Uganda consortium, when there are multiple meetings with different networks or institutions, one or more agency can represent the ECB agencies on behalf of the whole group. Feedback and opportunities for further engagement can then be discussed in subsequent consortium meetings. Using these opportunities to save time, share representation and connect with external initiatives will reduce the chances of collaboration fatigue.

Quick decisions and protocols in Indonesia

On 26 October 2010 an earthquake and tsunami struck the Mentawai Islands in Indonesia. Shortly afterwards, the Mount Merapi volcano erupted, displacing thousands. Within 24 hours, the senior leadership team within the consortium decided to replace a planned ECB simulation with a live test of the Disaster Response Engagement Protocols (DREP), newly developed by the ECB Indonesia consortium.

The DREP describes provision for engagement at the different stages of emergency response. With emergency onset, the agencies will discuss and agree on the level of collaboration to which they will commit. A key issue is how individual agencies intend to seek and use funds and share information.

The first live test highlighted several achievements using the DREP model: the group made quick decisions; lead agencies identified who would coordinate field operations in different areas; partners agreed via joint proposals each agency's geographic and sectoral strengths for deployment; and members honoured their commitment to share information within the agencies and with the wider community via a series of Joint ECB Situation Reports.

For more information, visit: www.ecbproject.org/protocols

What tools and guidance are available?   Members of the ECB Project country-level consortia are committed to sharing learning with other members and other consortia. These plans are laid out in their annual CEPs (see Toolbox 1).

Communication of shared learning is one of the main objectives of many *Multi-Agency Simulations* and the importance of this is outlined in the *ECB Simulations Administrator's Guide*. Participating agencies are encouraged to reflect on emergency response gaps identified in the simulation exercise and debriefing, to share that learning, and to identify ways to fill gaps in a coordinated fashion (see Toolbox 6).

Transparent communication is facilitated by high levels of trust (see Toolbox 5). The *Good Enough Guide* provides field staff with multiple approaches to improving the effectiveness of their communications with communities (see Toolbox 2).

The ECB country consortia are committed to sharing their learning with the wider humanitarian sector via a series of outreach events called *ECBinter-active*. These conferences, together with an online learning space and final report, share the learning captured from three years of joint activities. See: www.ecbproject.org/interactive and the final report Chapter 5 '*The Benefits and Challenges of Working in a Country-Level Consortium'*.

The Listening Project, part of the CDA Collaborative Learning Initiatives, also provides numerous case studies and learning from effective communications with communities. See: www.cdainc.com

The Infoasaid project provides practical steps for field staff with emergency communications in their *Communications is Aid e-learning course*. See http://infoasaid.org/e-learning/course/start/

7. Clarifying roles and responsibilities

What is important? A key part of any inter-agency effort is identifying who will be responsible for what. Developing a clear understanding of responsibilities can be challenging and time-consuming. Agencies attempting to build a consortium must, however, have a clear understanding of other agencies' willingness to take on specific roles. When a crisis hits the group, members must be able to depend upon others' stated agreements to carry out certain responsibilities.

Without clearly defined – and accepted – roles and responsibilities, the first 'test' of the consortium can prove frustrating for all concerned. Examples include a joint capacity building exercise, where agencies are counting on certain inputs from a particular agency, a development program, where communities have been expecting promised services that fail to appear, or an emergency response, where lives may be put at risk by an agency's failure to fulfill its responsibilities.

In a number of cases cited by ECB Project stakeholders, even when agencies accept responsibility for certain activities in strategic planning meetings, follow-up action is often missing. When agencies fail to carry out agreed responsibilities, it is more than trust that is at stake; the consortium itself – at least in its current form – is jeopardized.

What can you do? At a minimum, agencies must take shared responsibility and put their names against agreed consortium-led activities. Agreeing on 'who will do what' in consortium-led activities – as laid out in the CEPs developed by the ECB country consortia – helps to develop agency relationships.

Agreements regarding agencies' consortium-related roles and responsibilities should, if feasible, be written down, signed by the leaders of those organizations, and regularly reviewed. Short guidelines should be prepared clarifying how joint activities will be conducted and who will conduct them so that funding arrangements are transparent and accountable. Pre-negotiated agreements are especially needed when and if the consortium begins to broaden the scope of its activities from, say, joint capacity building exercises to joint emergency operations such as needs assessments.

Once the roles and responsibilities are identified and agreed, they should be communicated to all agency staff – at global and local levels – so that new staff or deployed staff can support and not hinder collaboration. Obtaining agreement on consortium responsibilities, and setting results and outputs that each agency is expected to deliver, will require negotiation. Here the role of the facilitator – the neutral broker – is essential.

What if partners fail to deliver? With diplomacy and, when appropriate, tactful use of peer pressure, the facilitator must ensure that members understand the implications of failure to carry out agreed responsibilities for the consortium and, more importantly, for the communities the activities are intended to serve. If partner delivery is less than the agreement, then the group, led by the facilitator, must take steps to adapt responsibilities and apply pressure to resolve the situation.

What tools and guidance are available? Examples of assigned – and agreed – responsibilities are available in the ECB Project country-level consortia's CEPs (see Toolbox 1).

8. Funding the process

What is important? An organization's priorities are evident in its budgets. When agencies agree to collaborate, there are budget implications and costs for whatever joint activities are agreed. Contributions are needed, for example, to hire a dedicated facilitator, to arrange office equipment and supplies, and to hire training facilities if required. When pledged contributions by member organizations to consortium-building activities are not forthcoming, the process is quickly threatened.

When establishing funding for a consortium, allow sufficient time for multi-agency consultation and contributions. It is more challenging when more stakeholders are involved and can take several months.

What can you do? Member contributions are generally viewed as a sign of commitment to a collaboration effort. In addition, ECB Project stakeholders agree that the value of external donor funding cannot be overestimated.

External funding helps to set a clear timetable and level of expectations for joint activities. This is not to imply that obtaining donor funding for collaboration is easy; there are some aspects of the ECB Project approach – capacity building in particular – in which some major donors have yet to provide serious financial support.

This fundraising picture may be changing as more donors begin to see the results and benefits of collaboration, and the potentially lower resources required to support the process. However, it is essential to include realistic costs of staff time, facilities, events and communications support in joint proposals. Consider whether start-up funding is required to support the proposal-writing process or staff costs and resources to establish the consortium before major funding is secured.

Prepare draft contracts, internal paperwork and clear processes with partners before the contract is finalized with the donor. Consider which agencies will host any shared staff – and who will bear the costs. Finally, remember that donors will want to understand how you are measuring the impact and value of the joint activities. It is important to be realistic about what can be measured and how agencies will learn from the pilot activities.

> According to one ECB Project stakeholder, *'It has been tough to get traction. At the start we only had financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; it took time to get more donors to understand the benefits of collaboration and joint capacity building; but now we have support from the UK government (DfID), the European Commission (ECHO) and other private donors'*.

Off the beaten track – Uganda funding

In Uganda, the ECB consortium had started to gain support from the Government and other humanitarian actors but had failed to raise funds by means of applying jointly for donor funds. Building on the idea that the consortium leverages the collective influence of the individual agencies, and recognizing the potential multiplier effect for their disaster management programs, Oxfam included joint activities into proposals with its traditional funding partners for a Resilience program.

This strengthened support for the consortium as it highlighted opportunities for individual members to develop program proposals on behalf of the whole consortium and in response to the needs and interests of the participating agencies and their beneficiaries. The approach was successful in overcoming funding gaps, created joint activities and helped to further deepen the collaboration of

---

What tools and guidance are available? A case study documenting the ECB Project experience in joint fundraising examines ECB Project's attempts (successful and unsuccessful) to fundraise, and the five models that helped them to do so: single agency, the global Fundraising Committee, fundraising at the country-level, advisor-led fundraising, and multiple agency approaches.

For more information see: www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/165-ecb-project-case-study-on-joint-fundraising (page 4, 6 and 8 all focus on country-level fundraising)

See our other case studies here: www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/tag/ECB+Case+Studies

---

Joint fundraising opportunities in Bolivia

One ECB stakeholder believes that joint fundraising is the way of the future: 'Donors have signalled that consortium proposals will be preferred, even if administrative costs for agencies are higher, because impact will be higher'.

The Bolivia consortium's fundraising group is developing a joint fundraising strategy to enable joint programming by more than nine NGOs. Each NGO provides a staff member for the fundraising group to coordinate fundraising attempts to fill funding gaps for locally-led activities.

One member of the fundraising group noted, *'The opportunity to meet other fundraisers [from other NGOs] regularly enables the exchange of ideas and, with the passing of time, these exchanges are more open, thanks to the trust that is generated'*.

9. Finding common approaches

What is important? Agreeing on common collaboration tools and approaches is likely to happen early in the consortium-building process. Each agency joins the process with its own individual 'ways of working'. For example, the organizational culture of some agencies is inherently more participatory; others may have far more hierarchical structures. Some agencies insist on a quantitative, evidence-based decision-making process; others may be more comfortable relying on qualitative judgments using past experience.

Differences of approach are inevitable and will become evident quite early on in the collaborative process. Agreeing common approaches and understanding the differences can have positive impacts both for collaboration and for the individual agencies whose management structures and systems may benefit.

Speaking with one voice:
Advocating for risk reduction and government accountability in Bangladesh

Recognizing that DRR and CCA activities have a more profound effect than short-term relief efforts, the ECB Project's DRR theme supports exploration of risk reduction models to help communities reduce their vulnerability to disasters.

In Bangladesh, ECB agencies are working on a joint advocacy strategy that is mobilizing civil society and the media to influence the government to approve the first *Disaster Management Act*. Several initiatives, including media campaigns, high level stakeholder conferences and policy papers, have highlighted the importance of community-level consultation during the legislative process. Mapping consortium member and government capacities has also identified serious overlaps in preparedness capacity building activities. Through the ECB collaboration, member agencies are improving the coordination of DRR initiatives and working with government and partners to implement needed changes.

What can you do? The first step is to take time to understand the approach each member takes with regard to common organizational issues such as internal decision-making, fundraising practices or accountability systems. Through this process of discovery, it may be possible to jointly create program-related tools and approaches to help with those areas where there are clear gaps or challenges that individual agencies have not been able to solve alone.

It is sensible to agree reporting templates and a monitoring and evaluation framework so that each partner gathers data in a similar way and results can be analysed quickly. It may also be possible for the consortium to create a joint fundraising approach to a donor who prefers to fund initiatives by partnering NGOs. Members of a consortium might also find it possible to increase their learning through membership in a consortium-led community of practice.

A community of practice can increase learning and sharing without necessarily having to go through the difficult process of standardising an agency's own program-specific tools.

Examples of ECB member agencies seeking common approaches to common problems are numerous:

- Many NGOs, lacking a formalized system or approach to accountability, have turned to the *Good Enough Guide.* ECB country-level consortium members have used this guide to develop a common approach to accountability, implemented joint training and assessments and developed trusting and cooperative relationships.

- Another area where ECB agencies are trying to find common approaches to a common need is DRR and CCA. A team of ECB Project DRR advisors is drawing together sector guidance and practical tools on how to work alongside local communities and institutions to identify, measure and systematically reduce risks posed by various types of disasters (see Toolbox 10.). In Bolivia they are supporting this work with training and testing a Risk Analysis and Participative Planning Tool (ARPP).

- An increasingly recognized concern among humanitarian agencies is the need to measure the impact of their disaster responses. This need is clear; the means are not. ECB Project stakeholders are currently working on the development of an impact measurement methodology for rapid onset natural disasters.

- Agencies are working together to explore how they can ensure the human resources function is not isolated but becomes a central part of their quality of delivery. This can help provide motivated staff that have good internal and inter-agency communication skills and who are more likely to be effective with communities.

- The issue of staff turnover is often cited as a major cause of program shortcomings among humanitarian agencies. ECB member agencies in the Horn of Africa have jointly tried to assess how agencies in the region handle the common concern of staff retention.

The important recommendation here is that each member of the collaboration should make a concerted effort to understand others' 'ways of working'. This can, in itself, build the relationship and strengthen collaboration. One consortium supporter recommends that learning how to collaborate is ongoing and therefore be should be viewed as an outcome of the process and not necessarily presumed as just a basis for achieving the process. [3]

Identifying gaps: Accountability in Niger

In a 2010 self-assessment of progress in building accountability systems, Niger consortium members agreed that transparency is one of their strengths, noting that information is regularly provided to communities on plans and activities, and that beneficiary selection information is commonly shared with communities.

However, results also noted the need for more resources to put accountability into practice; e.g. improvements to complaints mechanisms to ensure beneficiaries always receive a timely response to feedback. Trainings using the Good Enough Guide and Sphere Handbook are addressing these gaps.

What tools and guidance are available? The *Good Enough Guide* is one the best examples of efforts to develop a common approach to a problem common within many humanitarian agencies: the need for an effective, community-focused accountability system (see Toolbox 2). An ECB Project Case Study on the *Accountability and Impact Measurement Advisory Group* explores efforts to function as a community of practice, using the definition by leading theorist Etienne Wenger.

See all case studies: www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/tag/ECB+Case+Studies

In 2012, the *ECB Project Guide to Measuring Change (draft title)* will be on general release (see Toolbox 11). ECB agencies engaged in developing common approaches to DRR and CCA are developing a guide call *Towards Resilience: A Guide to DRR and CCA* in 2012 (see Toolbox 10).

10. Managing crisis within the consortium

What is important? ECB Project stakeholders find that building a collaborative relationship based on deep trust takes a long time – many months, and in some cases, years. During this period, there will almost inevitably be crises that pose serious challenges to the group: certain members may not contribute as expected; others may be slow in producing results or may simply choose to leave. The question is not whether these crises will happen, but how the members of your collaboration will manage crises when they do materialize. What do you do when the ten key factors highlighted in this learning resource are *not* addressed? How do you 'rescue the relationship'?

---

[3] Gerry McCarthy, IAWG Horn of Africa / PFIM consultant

> ### *Accommodating differences in consortia partners*
>
> Collaborating agencies may be different in terms of size, competence and the perspective they bring. There may be challenges associated with reconciling these different aspects, for example working with international NGOs, local NGOs, and government. Competition sometimes occurs among members of the consortium or between new consortia and existing ones over issues such as resources or responsibilities.
>
> The consortia will have to learn to accommodate differences in power, size, mandate, ideology, resources, status, etc. They should also consider situations where the organizational drivers or ideology of the collaborators are different, for example program partner versus subcontractor, service delivery versus rights-based program.   Consider questions such as 'When is an organization so different that it is no longer beneficial to think about formal membership in a consortium?' and 'What role should funders of consortia play?'

What can you do? When a crisis emerges, remember that your agency is only one of several in the consortium. Your response to the crisis must be like all of your other activities: collaborative, transparent, and open. After working on relationship-building since the start of the process, your group should have good levels of trust and strong relationships in place; these can be drawn on in times of crisis.

If the problem appears to rest with one member only, perhaps it is the result of that member's internal organizational issues; perhaps it is not fatal to your process. If the problem, however, is broader, then it definitely needs to be discussed. All members need to be given time and space at meetings to air their frustrations. Try to be creative despite the pressures of the crisis. If, for example, the crisis arises from widespread disappointment with the consortium leadership, perhaps there are other models of leadership that can be explored: more or less direction, more broadly shared leadership, rotating the lead agency position, etc.

When member frustrations have been shared, it is time for what ECB stakeholders refer to as 'appreciative inquiry': encourage members to reflect on positive moments in your process. It may be appropriate to make use of a collaboration 'timeline': encourage them to reflect on the time before the consortium existed when everyone functioned individually. Then bring them forward through the history of your process, encouraging the group to cite the successes that you have experienced together. Members may find that their current frustrations are less than when functioning in isolation.

Do not be discouraged by disagreement. Remind the group of Ghandi's belief that '*Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress'*. Agree to disagree, and start finding solutions and alternatives for continuous improvement.

Systematically build in a 'review process' as part of your joint activities; it is not necessary to wait until the end of the program period to assess your progress. It is important that joint activities are adding value and delivering the results that stakeholders need. Provide at least one or two planned opportunities for members to consider changing or ending an activity if it is not working before the end of the program (see Toolbox 1 the CEP & Toolbox 7 CSAS).

What tools and guidance are available? For more on the methods of 'appreciative inquiry', 'timelines', and other trust-building tools, the *Building Trust* toolkit is a useful resource (see Toolbox 5).

Concluding note

This reference tool is intended to enlighten and inform readers about the most successful approaches to – and tools for –developing a consortia and staff capacity at a country level. As the ECB consortia and participating agencies learn about new collaboration approaches and create resources to enhance the process of consortium-building, we will share these on our website at: www.ecbproject.org.

Please visit regularly to stay up to date with the latest 'lessons learned'. And, as always: *Best of luck in your collaboration efforts.*

Visit: www.ecbproject.org/learning

# Appendix 1. Toolboxes 1-12 – as referenced on pages 10-22

Toolbox 1: Consortium Engagement Plans

The Consortium Engagement Plans (CEPs) developed by the five ECB country consortia clearly identify joint activities for each year of the project. Each CEP focuses on the cross-cutting ECB Project themes of Staff Capacity, DRR and Accountability and Impact Measurement. CEPs include priority activities, timelines, budgets and assignment of responsibilities for joint activities. Agencies are appointed to lead different activities and it is not necessary that every agency is included in all activities. The purpose of each joint activity is to enable field-level practitioners to develop and hone their skills, understand how their peers and others within the sector are working, and to review, develop and test resources. There are explicit activities for sharing learning within the consortium and outside through communications and learning events. These are reviewed and revised jointly on an annual basis.

For more information, see: www.ecbproject.org/WhatIsCEP

To see the learning shared at regional learning conferences visit: www.ecbproject.org/interactive

Toolbox 2: The Good Enough Guide and accompanying materials
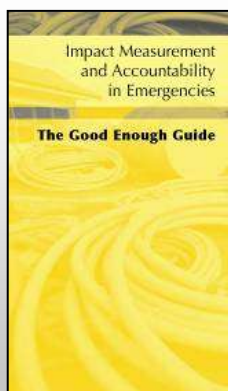
These training materials provide practical guidance to field workers on how to be accountable to disaster-affected communities. The tool defines the ECB Project concept of accountability and offers guidance on how to identify what beneficiaries themselves want and expect. It is accompanied by communications materials, suitable for both humanitarian and development programs, including accountability films, multi-lingual posters, and leaflets.

The guide is available to download in a range of languages: www.ecbproject.org/goodenoughguide

A training of trainers manual (2012) is available for single agency or multi-agency accountability training using the guide with other sector tools e.g. The Sphere Standards. See: www.ecbproject.org/good-enough-guide-training-module

Toolbox 3: Core Humanitarian Competency Framework

This leadership behavior framework articulates leadership behaviors – such as taking responsibility, communicating humanitarian values and motivating others – that the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) member agencies agreed are core to the humanitarian sector.

The framework developed was led by ActionAid and facilitated by People in Aid with input from ECB Project partners. Review the framework at: www.ecbproject.org/the-consortium-of-british-humanitarian-agencies-cbha/cbhaframework

Toolbox 4: Humanitarian Staff Development Project: Collaborative Learning
The *Humanitarian Staff Development Project (HSDP)* focused on developing national staff capacity to respond effectively to disasters. It is a good example of collaborative staff capacity development. The project drew on the expertise of humanitarian teams from the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) and the ECB Project, with expert guidance from People in Aid. Oxfam GB continues to lead the implementation of a second phase of training called ENHAnce, using the Context course materials in 2012.

The Humanitarian Leadership and Management Skills Development Program is for mid-level managers and team leaders with humanitarian experience and the *The Core Humanitarian Skills Development Program,* which introduces the core concepts of humanitarian programming. Both course are running in five countries and include participants from the ECB Project, CBHA members, the government and partner organizations.

For additional information, visit: www.ecbproject.org/enhance
Download the Context course materials for both programs, visit: www.ecbproject.org/context

Toolbox 5: Building Trust in Diverse Teams: The Toolkit for Emergency Response
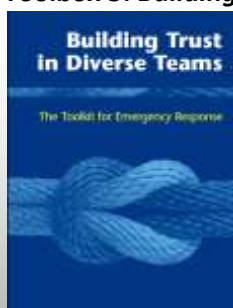
Research shows strong links between the level of trust in a team and more effective collaboration, higher levels of organizational commitment, and easier support for change initiatives, all of which are essential to enabling 'alignment'. This toolkit supports humanitarian practitioners, human-resource departments, and emergency professionals in efforts to improve team effectiveness. The toolkit defines criteria for trust and offers exercises to enable you to build and measure levels of trust.

A shorter version – ***Building Trust in Diverse Teams: A Concise Facilitation Handbook*** – is also available (in English, Spanish and French). This toolkit provides teams and facilitators with exercises to develop trust among team members. The exercises can be adapted and contextualized to your country and used to get to know your partners and build relationships.

Download the full or concise version at: www.ecbproject.org/buildingtrust

Toolbox 6: ECB Simulations Project Administrator's Guide

The *ECB Simulations Administrator's Guide* is for trainers and facilitators and explains how a team can conceptualize, implement and capture learning from a single or multi-agency simulation. You can use practical assessment templates, task sheets, questionnaires, briefing notes, preparation guidelines, and evaluation forms to prepare. Structured debrief sessions will enable participants to explore the challenges they experienced during the simulation.
- A multi-agency simulation can clarify the main differences in your partners' approaches to leadership, capacity building or humanitarian response. It will identify the comparative advantages each partner brings to the coordinated effort.
- In Bangladesh a simulation exercise tested the *Bangladesh Protocols for Disaster Engagement*. Participants confirmed overwhelmingly that the exercise helped the group to review and finalize this important agreement.

Download the *ECB Project Simulation* materials and the *Administrator's Guide* at:
www.ecbproject.org/simulations - available in English, French or Spanish.
Download the *ECB Project Simulations Case Studies* at: For more details, visit:
www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/220-simulations-case-study-playing-with-reality

Toolbox 7: Consortium Self-Assessment Survey (CSAS)
The *Consortium Self-Assessment Survey (CSAS)* is a systematic self-assessment tool, using structured online questionnaires, to be completed by members of an ECB country consortium. The CSAS helps members develop insights into emergency capacities within their particular country, monitor the progress of their capacity building programs and adjust both strategic planning and implementation accordingly. In conducting the assessment, each member convenes a group of senior and technical staff within their country program or organization to respond to the self-assessment survey questions.

For more information on the CSAS tool, visit:
www.ecbproject.org/measuring-our-progress/measuring-our-progress

Toolbox 8:
The Partnering Initiative (TPI)
There are many lessons and resources that are useful from this group of experts. The Brokering Guidebook outlines the importance the 'broker' role and provides helpful approaches for multi-stakeholder partnerships.
See http://thepartneringinitiative.org/w/resources/toolbook-series/the-brokering-guidebook/

The Partnership Brokering Project
Partnership brokers (also known as process facilitators, process managers, change leaders, or partnership intermediaries in different contexts) are vital to the effective scoping, design and management of partnerships for sustainable development or for humanitarian relief. Without them, most partnerships fall short of their potential and many fail. The brokering role requires a range of professional skills and competencies as well as a deep understanding of partnering opportunities and challenges. The role evolves and changes over time during the life cycle of a partnership.
For more information on partnership brokering, see: www.partnershipbrokers.org

Toolbox 9: ECB World Vision Adventures in Partnering Case Study A: Coming together to reduce the impact of disasters in Bolivia

This report covers efforts by the ECB consortium in Bolivia to develop a common approach to DRR and CCA: to share learning and develop a consolidated single capacity and vulnerability analysis (CVA) tool that draws key elements from current agency tools.

Download the report at: www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/115-ecb-world-vision-adventures-in-partnering-case-study-a---coming-togther-to-reduce-the-impact-of-disasters-in-bolivia

The full ECB Project case study library can be viewed at: www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/tag/ECB+Case+Studies

Toolbox 10: Towards Resilience: A Guide to Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (2012)

A team of experts and DRR advisors from the global and field level of ECB agencies are developing practical guidelines on how to identify, measure and systematically reduce disaster risks while working with local communities and institutions. This guide is intended primarily for field workers, including humanitarian and development practitioners, project officers, and all those who need to apply DRR and CCA principles and practices in 'real-life' scenarios.

The guide, which will be available in 2012, will emphasize simple, practical solutions, and provide easy-to-use tools for risk assessment and DRR mainstreaming. It will be closely linked with the revision of the Sphere standards and will reference other practical resources focused on DRR.

For more information, see: www.ecbproject.org/drrguide

Toolbox 11: A Guide to Measuring Change (2012 draft title)

This guide, and supporting capacity building materials, will include the development of a methodology for measuring the contribution to change a program is making following rapid onset natural disasters.

This new program is being led by Oxfam GB, together with an inter-agency editorial team from World Vision, CRS, Mercy Corps and the ECB Project team who are working together with the British University of East Anglia. After field-testing in emergency contexts, this tool will be available in 2012.

For details, visit: www.ecbproject.org/ImpactMeasurement

Toolbox 12: Addressing Staff Retention in the Horn of Africa

A study conducted for the Horn of Africa consortium by People in Aid (Vale 2010) found that ECB agencies face the common problem of competing for the same staff talent. They are recruiting from and contributing to the same evolving and expanding pool of talent. This report (Vale 2010) highlights the options available to organizations to improve retention of today's humanitarian professionals. These include talent development, employee engagement, good management and workforce planning.

Download the report at: www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/83-addressing-staff-retention-in-the-horn-of-africa

Appendix 2. ECB Themes and Tools for Country Consortium-Building: A Quick Review

In this appendix, we briefly review the main themes of the ECB Project and list the core tools available under each theme that could be used to build capacity in your country or help you in your collaboration efforts. (Please note: If the tool has already been described in Part II, we simply note the Toolbox number for quick reference.)

Some of the tools can be adapted to fit the needs of your various stakeholders. For example, ECB Project staff capacity development tools including our *Simulations Administrator's Guide*, *Building Trust Toolkit* and *Management and Leadership Programs* could all be adapted and contextualized to build leadership and momentum in your country consortium.

Other tools will demonstrate the emergency capacity building gaps identified by ECB Project agencies and ways to respond to needs identified by participating agencies. Groups worked to create these tools in partnership with networks and organizations including People in Aid, ALNAP, DRR, CCA, and simulations experts, accountability advisors and human resources professionals.

Please visit www.ecbproject.org/resources or email us for more information at info@ecbproject.org

1. Staff Capacity Building

The ECB project 'Staff Capacity' theme has a number of tried and tested tools to help your agencies collaborate on staff development issues. The following tools are the most relevant to your consortium-building efforts:

Building Trust in Diverse Teams: The Toolkit for Emergency Response
See Toolbox 5. For more detail, visit: www.ecbproject.org/BuildingTrustInDiverseTeams

The ECB Project Simulations Administrator's Guide, including guidelines and materials on a Multi-Agency Simulation. See Toolbox 6. For more details, visit: www.ecbproject.org/simulations

Simulations Case Study: Playing with Reality
Capturing our learning from multi-agency Simulations. For more details, visit:
www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/220-simulations-case-study-playing-with-reality

The National Staff Development Program
The program includes:

- Two competencies frameworks: **The Core Humanitarian Competency Framework**: A shared resource for the humanitarian community, this framework identifies six core competencies essential to all staff in emergency response; and the **Leadership Behavior Framework for Humanitarian Response.** See Toolbox 3. For more detail visit: http://www.ecbproject.org/the-consortium-of-british-humanitarian-agencies-cbha/cbhaframework

- Two staff development programs: **The Core Humanitarian Skills Development Program** *and the* **Humanitarian Leadership and Management Skills Development Program**. See Toolbox 4. For more detail visit: www.ecbproject.org/enhance

- To download the materials for the ENHAnce training programs visit www.ecbproject.org/context

Staff Retention and Turnover
See Toolbox 12. For more detail visit: www.ecbproject.org/StaffRetentionAndTurnover

2.   Accountability and Impact Measurement (AIM)

Through the ECB Project 'Accountability and Impact Measurement' theme, member agencies are developing common approaches to ensuring accountability to the communities they serve. The focus is inspired by the 'Good Enough' approach: doing what is safe, essential, quick and simple to build accountability to disaster-affected people. Two tools should be noted:

The Good Enough Guide: Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies
See Toolbox 2. For more detail, visit: www.ecbproject.org/GoodEnoughGuide

***A Guide to Measuring Change* (2012) (draft title)**
This is a more detailed overview of how we can improve our ability to measure the changes our programs have contributed towards following rapid onset emergencies.

See Toolbox 11. For more detail, visit: www.ecbproject.org/ImpactMeasurement

Case Study on Global Accountability & Impact Measurement Advisory Group
A snapshot of learning from this community of practice
For more details, visit: www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/162-case-study-on-accountability--impact-measurement-advisory-group

What We Know About Joint Evaluations of Humanitarian Action: Learning from NGO Experiences'
(under review 2012). This is a summary of our learning from conducting joint evaluations after emergencies in multiple context. For more details, visit: www.ecbproject.org/jointevaluations

AIM Inter-agency Standing Team
Our team of deployable staff are trained on accountability and impact measurement principals and provide a selection of services including accountability training and evaluation support.

For more details, visit: http://www.ecbproject.org/interagencystandingteam

Coordinate Needs Assessments (Joint Needs Assessments)
Partnered with ACAPS, ECB Field consortia are working together with government and UN partners, ECB agencies are training teams to work together to gather, share and analyze assessment data following emergencies. For more details, visit: www.ecbproject.org/jointneedsassessmentjna

3.   Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change Adaptation

The ECB 'DRR and CCA' theme supports the exploration of risk reduction models with the objective of helping communities reduce their vulnerability to disasters. Your collaboration efforts can be much enhanced by efforts to develop common approaches to DRR.

***Towards Resilience: A Guide to Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation* (2012)**
See Toolbox 10. For more detail visit: www.ecbproject.org/NewPractitionersGuideToDRR