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NGO collaboration in natural disaster response efforts- A comparative case study of earthquakes in Asia

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NGO Collaboration in Natural Disaster Response Efforts- A Comparative Case Study of

Earthquakes in Asia

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An Honors Program Project Presented to

the Faculty of the Undergraduate

College of Arts and Letters

James Madison University

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by Richelle Stefanie Grogg

May 2016

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Justice Studies, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at [venue] Honors Symposium on [date] April 15, 2016 .

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Abstract

This paper examines the response of NGOs to natural disasters, specifically in regards to collaboration efforts. The study utilizes a comparative case study methodology of most-similar design to look at three specific disasters- The Kashmir Earthquake, The Sichuan Earthquake, and The Japan Earthquake. Within each of these earthquakes the organizations Doctors Without Borders, the International Red Cross, and Oxfam International's specific responses will be highlighted. The collaboration efforts will be examined utilizing general questions focusing on willingness to collaborate, commitment, and compatibility of objectives. Ultimately, this study found that all three components seem to be hypotheses worthy of further study.

Introduction

Natural disasters are an inevitable problem across the globe that have affected millions throughout time and will continue to kill individuals, leave many homeless, disrupt economies, and cause instability to nations. Due to the serious risks disasters pose to society, the response efforts and prevention strategies employed throughout the international community need to continually adapt and improve. The international community responding to these disasters includes UN agencies, developed nations, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs). NGOs in particular have an important role to play in response efforts as they operate in unique ways, and are responsible to a different set of stakeholders than governments and UN agencies.

NGO actions can often be uncoordinated, and not scrutinized as closely as government practices are. This is why it is important to ensure that these organizations are being held accountable to those they are attempting to help, and utilizing the most effective forms of intervention. This study seeks to examine the way NGOs respond to disasters, and how they interact with other responders. It will specifically focusing on collaboration efforts, as they have frequently been mentioned in the literature as an area that NGOs have not adequately addressed.

This study will use a comparative case study approach of most-similar design, to look at three specific disasters. The disasters are all large earthquakes that took place in Asia since 2000- The Kashmir Earthquake, The Sichuan Earthquake, and The Japan Earthquake. Within these earthquakes three NGOs have been chosen to review their reports to look for specific evidence of collaboration. These organizations are all large, reputable NGOs known for their disaster response efforts, and who all participated in providing aid following these disasters and shared some report on their efforts.

Collaboration will be examined using three general questions applied to all the organizations and disasters, in hopes to generate hypotheses to be further explored in future research. The focuses of these general questions are willingness to collaborate, commitment or trust between responding groups, and compatibility in objectives or services of the organization. Each of these have been suggested in the literature as either preconditions for collaboration, or components that contribute to collaboration success.

Ultimately, this study found that all three components seem to be hypotheses worthy of further study. Willingness to collaborate seems to be a precondition for any collaboration to take place, as previously suggested in past studies. Both trust and compatibility seem to have roles in the process as well, though their relationships are less straightforward. These three general questions should be further explored with a larger sample to determine empirical data regarding their correlation with collaboration.

Literature Review

Collaboration is essential when seeking solutions to complex problems. This is the case for natural disasters, where the effects are so vast that no one entity or organization is able to solve every problem and assist every person in need of help. Collaboration, cooperation, communication, and coordination are all words that tend to get used interchangeably when referring to two or more groups working together. However, collaboration stands apart from the others as it is not simply about working together, but rather creating something new and better because of that shared work (Denise, 1999). Collaboration contains elements of cooperation, communication and coordination in order to be achieved, but collaboration is what is truly integral to successful disaster relief.

For the purposes of this study collaboration can be defined as "the process of shared creation: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own" (Schrage, 1990, p. 140). Though this term is frequently used in a variety of settings it holds significant importance to the implementation of real and meaningful solutions to the problems created by natural disasters and their devastating effects on humanity around the world. We will return to the topic of collaboration and coordination after discussing disaster response, the role of international politics, NGOs, and organizational learning.

Responding to Disaster

Natural disasters are unavoidable and horrendous events in numerous ways including loss of life, hindering country's ability to function, and high costs of rebuilding and providing relief after they occur. As Comfort, Ko and Zagorecki highlight in their 2004 study, not only do disasters create physical problems (such as injuries and infrastructure damage), but they also

damage "sociocultural infrastructure," meaning economic, social, and organizational components of communities. This makes disasters a multifaceted problem for nations to prepare for, deal with, and overcome afterwards. Sadly, according to studies it seems that natural disasters are not only here to stay, but are actually getting worse (Von Medling, Oyedele, Cleland, Spillane & Konanahalli, 2011; Mannakkara & Wilkinson, 2013). These studies point out that climate change appears to be making storms and disasters both more frequent and intense than before. This demonstrates how vital it is for organizations, nations, and governments to have adequate responses to these disasters.

There are four phases of the disaster cycle that have been identified - mitigation and preparedness (which occur beforehand), response (during and after), and recovery (short and long-term actions following the disaster) (Von Medling et al., 2011). While mitigation and preparedness is vital to a community's outcome following a natural disaster, there is ultimately no way to stop these disasters, only minimize the damage they have done and help as much as possible in the aftermath. All phases are important to the process, but this study will focus primarily on the response and recovery phases. According to Comfort, Ko and Zagorecki's study in 2004, the initial stages of response involve protecting lives and helping the injured, while the recovery periods focuses on long-term effects, such as unemployment, infrastructure, medical care and housing. This study also emphasized that proper response upfront can significantly lessen the needs during recovery in the long-term.

Disaster relief includes a variety of activities to help assist communities that have been affected by natural disasters. Tierney, Lindell, and Perry defined disaster relief as activities that "reduce physical, social, and economic vulnerability and to facilitate the effective provision of short-term emergency assistance and longer-term recovery aid" (2001, p. 256). Generally this

equates to improving life and can include actions such as rebuilding, mitigation efforts, repairs, regulations and other activities that aim to better the current state of things and improve (Von Meding et al., 2011).

There are various methods for disaster relief, and many have different ideas as to what is the best way to really help. The "Build Back Better" strategy proposed by Bill Clinton following the tsunami in East Asia offers a holistic approach to recovery that tries not only to restore communities but improve them and make them more resilient (Mannakkara & Wilkinson, 2013). Other studies have emphasized the need for information to determine "demand flow," using estimates of magnitude and effect to figure out how much help and supplies are needed (Comfort et al., 2004). These sorts of strategies rely on multiple partners effectively working together to share information, or create a fully holistic approach to relief. There has not been a consensus on the most effective strategy for response and recovery, but almost all strategies incorporate collaboration as a necessity to success.

Natural disasters are often too vast and harmful for one entity to fix everything on their own, which is why collaboration becomes so necessary in assisting in these dire and crucial moments. According to Hutchinton's study, earthquakes specifically, which will be the primary focus on this study, provoke two responses from the international community: either they are overwhelmed by the devastation and believe the high price of repair and aid make intervention impossible, or they see international organization as the only way to help (2000). Walking away from those in need would be a mistake by the international community, so the only way to overcome these devastating tragedies is to join together. "Large and seemingly unsolvable problems are best approached from a cooperative angle, combing resources and preventing duplication" (Kapucu, 2008, p. 256). Kapucu highlights here that there is no better way to

overcome a daunting task, such as disaster relief, than systematically working to share resources and delegate tasks.

The Politics of Disaster

The idea of an international organization to coordinate disaster relief was first brought to the table following World War I (Hutchinson, 2000). This first attempt was the International Relief Union (IRU). This organization failed due to political constraints, weak funding, and difficulty in properly administering the organization. There have been attempts since, but still no international consensus on how to best coordinate, or collaborate, in order to increase the effectiveness of disaster relief. Most currently the UN has created the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (Arlikatti, Bezboruah & Long, 2012). This office is ideally supposed to help coordinate the efforts of different agencies around the globe; the ultimate goal being to increase cohesion and effectiveness. Clearly collaboration is seen on the international stage as a necessity to improving response to natural disasters.

One of OCHA's main approaches is the implementation of "cluster coordination," which divides humanitarian organizations (both NGOs and others) that work in areas such as "shelter" or "health" ("Cluster Coordination," 2016). By bringing together these groups into clusters the hope is the organizations will communicate more about the issues that they specifically are working to fix. However, there does seem to be some problems in this approach so far. This system came into affect before the infamous response to the Haiti earthquake disaster, which began public discussions on NGO response effectiveness. This clearly demonstrates that there are many issues left unresolved. Specifically, these problems include the lack of mechanisms for accountability, an ineffective hierarchical structure, and low inclusivity of local people and organizations, among others (Heath, 2014).

One of the problems of the politics of disasters occurring on the international level is what Barnett and Walker refer to as the "Humanitarian Club" (2015). This club is "an organized and hierarchical network of states, donors, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that centers on the UN system" (Barnett & Walker, 2015, p. 131). These organizations are driven to retain their own power and control over the disaster relief process, and therefore avoid change that would move power to aid beneficiaries, i.e. local actors that may want to be involved in the process. This is a serious barrier to effective collaboration, since these powerful actors are not willing to share decision-making power and resources and often sideline local agencies that want to be involved. There is the possibility of positive changes coming in the future as these actors are organizing a World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 to address this problem, among others.(Barnett & Walker, 2015). Additionally, Southeast Asian nations have taken it upon themselves to coordinate outside of "the club" through the creation of ASEAN, and using their organization to train workers and share information (Barnett & Walker, 2015). Both the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit and the creation of ASEAN demonstrate that there is hope for collaboration despite political complications.

Nongovernmental Organizations and Disasters

NGOs have become a large component of the response and recovery process for natural disasters. Studies have found that NGOs have the potential to not only help during disaster response, but can do an effective job in the mitigation, preparedness, and recovery phases as well (Arlikatti, Bezboruah & Long, 2012; Ismail, Majid, Toosli & Samah, 2014). NGOs are becoming very powerful in their ability to help with development, stepping in where government has failed, and working in many nations around the world spreading influence (Jarvik, 2007). NGOs operate differently than other international government organizations do. As Amagoh outlines they have

5 specific attributes: they are separate from state organizations, they cooperate with and are sometimes funded by state organizations but actions are outside of government influence, NGOs are typically not for profit, they are often voluntary in membership and activities, and they operate based on ideals (2015). This gives them a very different approach to dealing with disaster relief, and changes how they operate in these situations. NGOs face different barriers, have different assets, and varying capabilities.

The common explanation for why NGOs have gotten involved in disaster relief is one of "government-failure," or that there was a hole that governments were not filling that NGOs moved in to assist with (Weisbrod, 1975; Hansmann, 1987; Arlikatti, Bezboruah & Long, 2012). By assisting with disaster relief, NGOs are creating their own niche in the process that governments currently are not, and possibly cannot, fill. Arlikatti, Bezboruah and Long's study found that NGOs role differed from governments because they focused on vulnerable and marginalized populations (2012). This study also highlights the main activities that NGOs are involved with when it comes to disaster relief, "basic health and social services, humanitarian relief programs following natural or manmade disasters, and promoting the interests of the poor through developmental projects and/or advocacy initiatives" (Arlikatti, Bezboruah & Long, 2012, p. 65). A different study takes this prescription a step further, pushing NGOs to not only develop satisfactory projects, but also transform communities using a multi-faceted approach that addresses all needs, and is holistic in nature (Von Meding et al., 2011).

There are, however, many that find fault with NGOs' activities in disaster relief. One of the most serious allegations raised about NGO aid is that they may do more harm than good and could actually be hurting reconstruction (Mannakkara & Wilkinson, 2013; Von Medling et al., 2011). These arguments suggest that NGOs may rush to get involved in disaster relief without

the capacity or knowledge to actually intervene properly, which can make future reconstruction more difficult. Another common problem researchers in the area point to is lack of accountability (Barnett & Walker, 2015; Jarvik, 2007). This is because they are not held in check by elections, they do not fully operate within the free market, and if their projects in a country fail they will not have to answer to anyone for their mistakes. So while they may have good intentions that is not enough, and without being held accountable for their actions they may never learn from their mistakes or they may make decisions without carefully considering the weight of their choices. Another problem critics highlight is the western superiority that often colors their decision making in developing countries, which can lead to a reluctance to create real partnerships with the local communities that they are working in (Von Medling et al., 2011; Barnett & Walker, 2015). NGOs may ignore input from local governments and people, believing what they think is best should be implemented, without considering the perspectives of those who may understand the needs of the community greater than they.

Collaboration between NGOs has been highlighted by many studies as being a key to more effective intervention following natural disasters (Von Medling et al., 2011; Arlikatti, Bezboruah & Long, 2012; Lu & Xu, 2015; Ismail et al., 2014). In a 2014 study aiming to outline critical success factors for post-disaster reconstruction in NGOs good communication/coordination, significant community participation, and government involvement were all included as factors (Ismail et al., 2014). All these elements are components of the larger idea of collaboration, not just between NGOs but between NGOs and other key players, such as community members and governments. Arlikatti, Bezboruah and Long focus in on the relations between NGOs and governments, by indicating that the work both do are complimentary of one another, which would allow them to work well together if they were to coordinate their efforts

more efficiently (2014). Lu and Xu put it most simply by highlighting that when NGOs use collective decision making and share their resources they help avoid making the situation even more confusing and disastrous than it already is (2015).

Organizational Learning

Organizations need to learn in order to improve and stop making past mistakes, and learning almost always contributes to an organization's ability to perform better (Whatley, 2013). This is true of all organizations, including NGOs and is especially true when it comes to humanitarian interventions where lives are at stake. Not only does learning help improve organizations, but it has been argued that "learning is the foundation for accountability, dissemination and influence" (Edwards, 1997, p 235). Further, Edwards' study points out that because of the increasing demands from donors to see results, and NGOs facing greater scrutiny from the public, learning is becoming a necessity. Learning from disasters includes not only implementing mechanisms to receive feedback during response, but also taking the next step to examine past responses and grow from them too.

Despite the growing evidence in support of organizational learning in NGOs there still seems to be evidence that it is not changing quickly. A study by Twigg and Steiner found that many NGOs had difficulty taking learning from just policy discussions to actually implementing the change (2002). This points out one of the main issues that continues to arise, learning is not just about making information available and discussing it but actually taking that information and putting it into real action. Some of the barriers to organizational learning that have been suggested include cultural deterrence, highly centralized and hierarchical structures that discourage innovation, and too much information with nobody processing it (Edwards, 1997)

Whatley's study suggests that there are three main components for organizations to consider when trying to develop a strong capacity for learning- these are commitment from leaders, culture that encourages learning, and mechanisms that support it (2013). NGOs in particular may need to learn while they act ("learning-by-doing"), because of the nature of their actions it may take beginning to act to really understand what works and what does not in order to begin to learn from it (Edwards, 1997). It is possible that it is difficult for NGOs involved in disaster relief particularly to learn while they are responding because of the high intensity and need for immediate actions and reactions. While they do not have the time to learn while in the midst of responding to a disaster, that means that they should instead be focusing on learning after so they can apply new knowledge before the next disaster strikes. This is vital for collaboration efforts, because organizations need to not only begin to implement collaboration strategies but learn from past efforts to improve it in the future.

Collaboration

Ultimately, what is to be learned from the complicated process of disaster relief is no one sector can do it all on their own. Collaboration is a necessity and governments and NGOs should be working together to allow their work to be complimentary and integrated, rather than disjointed and ad hoc (Arlikatti, Bezboruah & Long, 2012). Collaboration, however, is not something that can be implemented with ease, which is why it still continues to be a problem facing NGOs, international agencies, and governments around the world.

A particularly important component of collaboration, which often gets forgotten and ignored by NGOs, is working with the local people they are providing relief for. As Barnett and Walker put it, "Relief work remains something done to others, not alongside them" (Barnett & Walker, 2015, p.132). They argue that there is a disconnect between what those receiving need

and the aid being given, and they are not using these individuals, despite the beneficial assistance they could provide. While there are obviously moral implications for not including those most affected into the process, NGOs are also missing out on opportunities that would improve their own efforts as well. Individuals and local agencies have a vested interest in helping their community, and often are knowledgeable in ways that NGOs may not be. Lawther in 2009 found that when communities were involved and invested the outcomes were more sustainable, their capacity grew with training, and the economy was stimulated. Additionally, another study found that on the individual level there was a link between involvement in reconstruction and mental or emotional recovery of the community, as they felt empowered by their work and control over their lives (Sullivan, 2003). Of course there are barriers to overcome in order to accomplish this goal- such as creating trust, NGO and government's hesitation to give power to low-income groups, and allowing communities to do more than just labor but also take part in decision making (Lawther, 2009).

There are additional barriers to collaboration when it comes to negotiations on the global level, as well as local implementation. Lu and Xu point out a number of problems getting in the way of collaboration in their study, such as confusion created by varying objectives, competition for resources, lack of trust between organizations and with the government (2015). There are a number of other barriers that can get in the way of collaboration once it attempts to be implemented too, including: lack of commitment to the collaboration, confusion over roles of actors, temporary nature of partnerships, and lack of management to implement the change to collaboration (Charles, Lauras & Tomasini, 2010).

However, there is potential to overcome these barriers, and even turn them into potential enablers of collaboration (such as sharing resources rather than fighting over them). There have

been a number of studies that have suggested some elements that create an environment conducive to collaboration. This includes, similar goals of the organizations, how embedded the collaboration is, willingness to cooperate, trust between those involved, openness of the structure of the organization, stability of the environment, funding set aside for collaboration efforts, and presence of a central coordinator (Gulzar & Henry, 2005; Charles, Lauras & Tomasini, 2010; Ismail et al., 2014). So while collaboration has not yet been fully achieved and there is still a long way to go there is much hope for NGOs in the future to form promising, beneficial, and powerful collaborations to improve natural disaster relief efforts.

Methodology

This study utilizes a comparative case-study method to analyze the effects of collaboration on NGO responses to natural disasters. Utilizing this method allows for generalizations to be drawn between the incidents, and allows for testing of effects on a systematic level (Manheim, Rich, Willnat & Brians, 2007). The comparative method is generally used to discover relationships, and not necessarily produce measurements or quantitative results (Lijphart, 1971). This case study in particular is a hypothesis-generating case study, which attempts to create hypotheses to be later tested with a larger sample of cases and with empirical methods (Lijphart, 1971). Lijpart's article also emphasizes that the strength of case studies come from the ability to deeply analyze a small number of cases, and contribute to the literature through building on existing theories. This study can be seen as a process to explore relationships between collaboration and other variables in NGO aid following natural disasters, in hopes to discover areas for further exploration in future studies.

A "most-similar systems design" method was implemented, meaning that very similar incidents were chosen with certain elements in common (Manheim et al., 2007). Lijphart's study suggested that one way to increase the accuracy of case studies is to choose comparable cases (1971). This allows researchers to hold some variables constant to reduce the number of "operative variables" and create a more controlled study (p 687). Another suggestion in the literature for creating comparable cases is to chose incidents in a similar geographic location, and with a common history (George & McKeown, 1985).

The criteria for similarity used in this study is time period, geographic location, nature of the disaster, and scale of impact. The three disasters to be studied are earthquakes that occurred in Asia since the early 2000s, and were of a large scale. The cases are also spaced throughout

time in hopes that learning will be able to be observed between disasters. NGOs may learn from past response efforts and apply new knowledge to the next event. The three disasters are specifically the Kashmir Earthquake, Sichuan Earthquake, and the Japan Earthquake.

Case studies are focused because the researcher is addressing the aspects of the case that are relevant to the study, and developing questions to ask of each specific case (George & McKeown, 1985). These questions are general, relevant to all cases, and reflect the goals of the research. In order to intensively examine the cases under review this study will look at questions regarding collaboration and NGOs responding to the disasters. The purpose will be to determine what factors may contribute to an organization's likelihood to utilize collaboration in their response effort. Based on the literature of collaboration between organizations a variety of factors to create success have been identified. Willingness to want to collaborate, commitment or trust between groups, and compatibility in goals or services, in particular, seem to be the most fundamental elements mentioned in a variety of studies (Whetton, 1981; Gulzar & Henry, 2005; Charles, Lauras & Tomasini, 2010).

Question 1: Are organizations that demonstrate more willingness to collaborate more likely to participate in collaboration efforts?

The first component, willingness to want to collaborate, can be considered a "pre-condition" for collaboration (Gulzar & Henry, 2005). Two separate studies have labeled this factor as a necessity for any collaboration to take place at all (Whetten, 1981; Gulzar & Henry, 2005). All of the organizations need to demonstrate the most fundamental desire to want to collaborate in order for it to be likely they will successfully collaborate. This will be

demonstrated through the reports' mentions of collaboration, and the degree to which it is emphasized by the NGOs under examination.

Question 2: If more trust or commitment exists between the responding organizations will collaboration efforts be more frequent?

The next general question to be explored in this study is the existence of trust between the various partners, and how that affects the collaboration efforts of the NGOs. Both Gulzar and Henry's study, as well as Charles, Laurus, Tomasini both cited trust and commitment as fundamental elements of successful collaborations (2005; 2010). In this study we will not just look at trust and commitment within the NGO community, but also the host country's government. An NGO's ability to work within a country can be impacted by the trust the country displays towards them in allowing them to work in the state, as well as work *with* the state.

Question 3: If organizations have similar objectives and services provided are they more likely to create collaborations?

The final general question that will be applied to the case studies is the compatibility in goals, objectives, or services of the organization. This has also been identified as one of the features of organizations that can help collaboration efforts when goals align (Gulzar & Henry, 2005; Charles, Lauras & Tomasini, 2010). If two actors are attempting to work towards the same objective or are providing similar services then they have more overlap in their overall goals, and therefore this can facilitate collaboration much more easily. This is likely the motivation behind strategies such as the UN Cluster Approach. If NGOs (or governments and other agencies), have

similar goals during the relief process, then they will be more likely to enter into collaboration efforts with one another.

The Disasters

The Kashmir Earthquake

On October 8th of 2005, an earthquake hit South Asia. Affecting India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan- but the most damage was done in Pakistan where the epicenter of the earthquake was (Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, 2006). According to this same report the magnitude was measured to be 7.6 on the ten-point Richter Scale. Additionally, it was reported that 75,000 people were killed, 70,000 were injured, and as many as 3.5 million people became homeless or were at least temporarily displaced. In addition, this source reported that 780,000 buildings were either damaged or destroyed, as well as many roads, and power and water supplies were affected. The earthquake also triggered a number of landslides that made reaching individuals during the response more difficult.

The response efforts were largely viewed as successful, especially given the size and nature of the disaster, and were largely coordinated by the Pakistan Army (Wilder, 2008). This created an incredibly interesting dynamic, as many humanitarians were at least initially uneasy with the idea of working under the direction of a military. Their influence was largely by default, since they were the most powerful organization in the country, and no real plan for disaster response had previously existed in Pakistan Wilder, 2008). However, despite initial hesitation to work with each other, it seems that because of the intensive work through coordinated efforts, aid workers and military officials formed "mutual respect, and trust" for each other (Wilder, 2008, p 59). Overall, the presence of a strong coordinating force within the country seems to have had an impact on the effectiveness of the overall response, as well as collaboration efforts.

The Sichuan Earthquake

The Sichuan Earthquake took place on May 12th in 2008. It is also referred to as the Wenchuan Earthquake. The earthquake was an 8.0 magnitude earthquake on the Richter Scale (Agence France-Presse, 2008). This report database indicated that the epicenter of the quake was the Sichuan province in China, though the damage spread throughout 40,000 miles of the country. The same source reported nearly 70,000 people were killed, 17,000 more were missing, and 374,000 were injured, 5 million people were left homeless. Additionally, it estimated that there was an estimated $29 billion in loses for the country. The infrastructure of the many of the homes, and public buildings such as schools were mostly made of mud bricks (Daniell, 2013). Many of the buildings collapsed in the quake due to their poor structure. The devastation from the earthquake was so vast that it is the first time in recent years that China requested international assistance for the large-scale recovery efforts, despite their initial resistance (Daniell, 2013).

Following the disaster Human Rights Watch reported that the country was not adequately responding to the disaster (Richardson, 2010). This included examples such as pressuring parents of children killed in the collapse of a school building not to seek civil action, arresting reporters who attempted to cover the extent of the damage, and other propaganda efforts by the state. The government of China was very slow to begin trusting help from the outside world (Richardson, 2010; Cochrane, 2008). This likely hindered any collaboration efforts that the organizations may have attempted, since the government of the country was at first completely unwilling, and then later still reluctant, to accept help and let outside agencies in.

The Japan Earthquake

The recent Japan Earthquake hit on March 11th, 2011. The earthquake's magnitude was measured as a 9.0 (United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2011). The strength of which also triggered a devastating tsunami that hit the coast shortly following the initial earthquake. This OCHA report stated that the earthquake killed 11,600 people, displaced nearly 500,000, and over 16,000 people were missing. In terms of infrastructure damage, 138,000 buildings were damaged and 17,000 were destroyed. Not only did the earthquake trigger a tsunami, but also caused the meltdown of a nuclear power plant. This meltdown released dangerous radioactive materials, and caused further displacement and danger for people in surrounding areas.

The context of Japan is different than the other countries because of the developed nature of the county. Organizations often rush to help following a disaster because they occur in countries where it is clear that the nation alone will not have the capacity to address the many problems. However, when the earthquake hit in Japan there was a delay before organizations decided to directly respond (Gannon, 2014). According to one source, the Japanese government not only welcomed help from the international community, but "appealed to the world for it" (Choate, 2011). There was mention in reports, however, that there was not a successful attempt at a national coordinated response from the county, despite their appointment of a member of parliament to act as a "go-between" for NGO and government activities (Gannon, 2014; Choate, 2011).

NGOs Under Examination

In addition to reviewing three key disasters, three NGOs have been identified that played a part in all of the disasters. These organizations are the International Federation of the Red

Cross, Oxfam International, and Médecins Sans Frontières (or Doctors Without Borders). The first criteria for selection was that the organization played a role in the three disasters selected for these case studies. The next important feature in looking for the right organizations was that they had published at least some sort of report or overview of their work in the country following the disaster. Additionally, these three organizations were listed as the top organizations for International Emergency Response in a list published by Philanthropedia, a website that rates verifiable charities working in a variety of areas (Philanthropedia, 2011). By picking three well-ranked organizations that all worked in the regions affected by the disasters following the earthquakes it allows this study to continue to implement a "most-similar" design strategy.

The data collection is largely based on reports released by these organizations. This enables examination of their involvement, collaboration efforts, and ability to learn from past responses. However, different agencies structure their reports in various ways and are not necessarily uniform between disasters. This leads to a limitation in the study, as some organizations released much more detailed reports and certain disasters seemed to receive a more comprehensive report for organizations than others. However, this variation in reports could be indicative of the organizations desire to learn, or a reflection of their developing tactics for reviewing their efforts. Therefore, the depth of the reports is considered in the analysis of the data collected from the sources.

International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) was founded in the early 1900s, and has now grown to be the world's largest humanitarian organization with nearly 200 member societies (Our vision and mission, 2016). The organization provides aid in a variety of humanitarian disasters, including natural disasters such as

earthquakes. They have four central focuses- promoting humanitarian values, disaster response, disaster preparedness, and health and community care- indicating that they are involved in all stages of the response process, from initial responses to recovery (Our vision and mission, 2016). The international organization responds when disasters are past the capacity of local agencies to act alone, and they continually provide support and resources to their offices around the globe.

More specifically, the organization lays out 4 specific objectives of the organization. Their goals are to: 1- reduce impact of disasters; 2- reduced impact of health emergencies; 3- increase capacity to address vulnerabilities; 4- promote values such as diversity, inclusion, and tolerance (Our Objectives, 2016). In terms of the specific services the organization provides, it varies greatly and is dependent on the situation. This includes, procurement and transportation of supplies, community infrastructure improvement, blood donation, pushing for policy changes regarding disaster policy, and more (What we do, 2016). When it comes specifically to disaster response, their activities include food supplies, cash voucher programs, setting up health facilities, providing clean water, psychological support, and more.

Oxfam International

Oxfam International is composed of nearly 20 other smaller organizations that operate at national and regional levels across the globe, and has been around since the 1990s (Who we are, 2016). Their main target is to help address poverty, however they also respond to crises to help rebuild. They specifically focused vulnerable and marginalized populations, to try and empower them to overcome the challenging circumstances surrounding them. They also place a great emphasis on collaboration, working with not only their regional affiliates but striving to create other partnerships when possible to create "global co-operation and cohesion" (Our purpose and beliefs, 2016).

Oxfam international has six specific objectives when it comes to their overall aim of decreasing poverty. These objectives are, improving human rights internationally, improving gender equality, responding to natural disasters, fighting climate change, securing global food supply, and helping the poor obtain adequate cash flow (How we fight poverty, 2016). When it comes to their disaster relief efforts the organization they help in the short-term by assessing needs, distributing food, constructing sanitation equipment, shipping emergency supplies, providing shelter kits, . They also emphasize that they stay in the country to help in the long-term as well, through helping individuals grow and buy food, as well as finding stability again following the disaster (How we help in times of crisis, 2016).

Doctors Without Borders

Established in France, Doctors Without Borders is also known as Médecins Sans Frontières (or MSF). When the NGO was first founded in the 1970s it had only 300 staff members and was limited in how many countries it was able to respond to (Founding of MSF, 2016). Now, the organization responds to disasters all around the world, has offices in over 25 countries, and employs 30,000 people. The organization is able to help millions of people every single year, and provide quality care at times when it is most crucial.

While MSF is largely focused on the medical care of the individuals affected by disasters and other humanitarian crises, they also support other objectives. The organization provides quality medical care, but also bears witness to crisis and tries to bring attention to international problems, and remains neutral in areas of crisis providing medical attention to whoever requires it (About MSF, 2016) . MSF has very targeted services that they bring to areas experiencing disasters- they provide trained, professional doctors to respond in areas of humanitarian crises (Founding of MSF, 2016).

An important note about the organization is the limited nature of the reports made publicly available for the data review. While they do produce annual reports, and detail their specific efforts in the country they are much more limited in length and depth than the other organizations. They ultimately seemed to be for the purpose of attracting more donors, rather than growing from their experience and sharing information about their successes and failures for other organizations to learn from.

Evidence of Collaboration

Kashmir

At the time the Kashmir earthquake struck the UN was still in the midst of developing their cluster approach, but decided to implement it anyway in hopes that it would assist in the response efforts (Cochrane, 2008). An analysis performed by the Humanitarian Policy Group ultimate found that while it may have helped overall, there were confusions such as, "the unclear role of the clusters, the confusion between cluster leads and their own agency's objectives" (Cochrane, 2008, p 20). A similar report published by the Feinstein International Center found that there were other problems with collaboration, including too many ineffective cluster meetings, a "UN centric" feel, leaving out of Islamic groups, and ineffective decision making (Wilder, 2008). Additionally, there is some evidence that many local agencies, especially small ones, were being sidelined because of meetings held only in English, too many cluster meetings, location of meetings, and NGOs paying competitive wages that hurt local staff retention (Wilder, 2008; Cochrane, 2008).

Despite some of this negative press surrounding the NGO response, there were some elements of cluster system and the general response that were found to be productive. It was suggested that the cluster meetings "were a useful forum for information sharing and networking" despite not being great for coordination (Wilder, 2008, p. 23). Additionally, organizations, including the IFRC, were commended on using the opportunity to improve their relations with the Islamic nonprofits and groups in the area (Wilder, 2008). As mentioned earlier, the contributions of the Pakistan Army to coordinating the response effort seem to have made the entire response very effective given the magnitude of the disaster.

The reports released from the agencies themselves showed some evidence that they had made some strides in regards to collaboration. Oxfam and IFRC credited Pakistan agencies, specifically the Earthquake Recovery and Rehabilitation Authority, as being an organization that supported their efforts and helped to coordinate them through regular meetings (Oxfam International, 2006; International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC], 2012, Final Report). This reflects the strong presence of the government of Pakistan and the military in trying to involve themselves in the disaster, as was mentioned in the external reports (Wilder, 2008). From Oxfam and IFRC's reports it is clear that they also recognized the power of having a central coordinator housed in the nation.

In Oxfam International's report, they also brought into question how much their agency had utilized local communities' input into their relief efforts, and even tried to open conversations with their stakeholders to find out how to better incorporate them in the future (Oxfam International, 2006). While the Red Cross did not touch on the problem with local collaboration specifically they did list coordination among their recommendations for the future in their report stating, they wanted to "Improve coordination between programmes to ensure monitoring data collecting is shared to avoid duplication, save cost and maximize resources" (IFRC, 2012, Final Report, p 21). This demonstrates that both Oxfam and IFRC at the very least saw collaboration as a priority, and recognized their need to further improve it in the future.

Contrastingly, MSF had limited mention of collaboration in their reports of the disaster (Medicins San Frontiers [MSF], 2006). The organization only made mentions of referrals they made to regional hospitals. Surprisingly, there was even some evidence of the organization working against collaboration, by getting their own helicopters for their private use rather than sharing resources with local agencies and organization. This allowed them the freedom to travel

to areas they prioritized, but did not allow other organizations the same freedom. However, one source mentioned that MSF's desire to ensure independence of their operation was likely motivated by their objective and emphasis of neutrality. Since the army was leading many of the missions and largely controlled the response efforts, MSF was wary of aligning too closely with the group and wanted to be sure their integrity was not called into question (Charles, Lauras & Tomasini, 2010).

Sichuan

Following the Sichuan Earthquake in China, most of the attention around collaboration was focused on the Chinese government. While many organizations were trying to send help, volunteers, and money, the government was reluctant to allow NGOs and outside countries to help in the response efforts (Richardson, 2010). This makes it somewhat difficult to analyze what sort of collaboration would have been possible if the country had been more open to international assistance from the start. However, one head of a health department in China noted that he received hundreds of calls from various NGOs, when it would have been more streamlined to just receive one call and have that individual disseminate the information to all others (Lu & Xu, 2015). This demonstrates the mechanisms were not in place for collaboration, but it is unclear how much the government resistance impeded NGO efforts.

Oxfam in particular seems to have made the most strides to improve their collaboration efforts in this response. Their report following their response to Sichuan mentioned 20 organizations they worked alongside, including local nonprofits, government agencies and other NGOs (Oxfam Hong Kong, 2009; Oxfam Hong Kong 2013). Their reports also demonstrated that not only did they work with these organizations, but also offered training sessions to help build up their local partners and help them increase their capacity in the future. These

organizations were all local nonprofits and NGOs in China that shared similar objectives to Oxfam. Not only was Oxfam International working with local groups but they included local villagers as well in a method called "participatory work" (Oxfam Hong Kong, 2009; Oxfam Hong Kong, 2009). Further, they considered this to be a defining characteristic of their program, and felt it improved upon passed attempts to collaborate.

The IFRC's report focused primarily on collaboration with the Chinese government, though not local nonprofits. In their report they identify the Mianzhu Labor Bureau and the International Labour Organization as being essential for helping those affected (International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC], 2012, Emergency Appeal). However, they did mention that working with the Chinese government created barriers. Specifically their report highlights that the IFRC found it difficult to develop programs supported by the international community that were also accepted in the Chinese context, where the government had a strong presence in how they wanted things done. This clearly demonstrates the lack of trust and commitment on the part of the government.

Similar to the Kashmir report, this report from MSF was also very limited in evidence and mention of collaboration. The only mention of collaboration from MSF in their report was their work with the local chapter of their organization during their response (Medicins San Frontiers, 2009). Clearly there is a complete alignment of objectives and strategies between the international and local chapters, so working together would have been incredibly less difficult than forging outside collaborations. This does not mean that they did not work with anyone else, but it does demonstrate that they did not see it as important enough to mention.

Japan

The situation in Japan created a very different setting for INGO intervention and local nonprofit involvement. Since Japan is a more developed nation than either Kashmir or China, which made many NGOs and other organizations hesitant to rush in at first (Gannon, 2014). Japan had many individuals and groups set up to help, but INGOs had not worked in the area and had no ties with them so they ended up sidelining and ignoring them rather than incorporating them into their response efforts. So while there may have been a willing host government that trusted these organizations, and wanted to see them help there were still barriers to overcome.

Oxfam International continued to emphasize their efforts to collaborate with others, taking even further steps than in the past disasters. They placed special emphasis on continuing to focus on the partnerships with local nonprofits (Oxfam Japan's response to the Earthquake and Tsunami, 2013). In the report, they list each partner organizations, which include both international NGOs and local nonprofits. Again, these organizations all seem to be ones that match their objectives and strategies closely. MSF also made some mentions of their attempts to fill in the gaps of emergency response, indicating they were trying to effectively collaborate by not duplicating services (Medicins San Frontiers, 2011).

The IFRC does not offer any new steps in their collaboration with the response they provided in Japan, however they continue to stress the importance of collaboration in their report (Tablott, Staines, & Wada, 2012). The IFRC worked with the local Red Cross, and made attempts to work with the government despite trouble communicating. It seems that the Japanese government attempted to help facilitate this collaboration, by implementing a "Japanese Platform," a foundation supporting aid and coordination between different organizations and sectors. The platform served as a point of coordination for the national NGO sector. One area the

IFRC did make strides in was the meetings they hosted during the recovery stage with 14 other NGOs to share updates, and communicate the problems they were all facing (Talbott et al., 2012). Again, these organizations seem to be ones within their objective areas of focus. Finally, in the recommendations section of their report they included a concern for collaboration, and a desire to begin building relationships with other agencies and NGOs in countries *before* disaster strikes to aid the response and recovery process. This also demonstrates their desire to continue making strides towards more and better collaboration efforts in the future.

Discussion

The response efforts of Oxfam International, the IFRC, and MSF to the earthquakes in

Kashmir, Sichuan, and Japan were all varied in their approaches. More importantly, however, the

organizations were all across the board in their efforts to collaborate. In general trend seems to

be that Oxfam International excelled the most at improving their collaboration efforts, especially

when it came to working with local people and nonprofits. IFRC also made great strides in

making collaboration a priority. MSF showed a few instances of collaboration efforts, but they

seemed greatly limited in comparison to the other organizations.

Kashmir

Table 1- Collaboration Results: Kashmir Earthquake

Organization	Willingness to Collaborate	Trust	Aligned Objectives and Strategies	Demonstration of Collaboration
IFRC	Yes	Yes (both government and NGO)	N/A	Limited
Oxfam	Yes	Yes (both government and NGO)	N/A	Limited
MSF	No	No (not NGO)	N/A	No

As is seen in Table 1, the organizations had some success with collaboration, but it was

limited following the Kashmir earthquake. While sources stated this was one of the most

effective efforts at responding to a disaster and that collaboration was positively impacted

because of the military's lead role, it seems that was not entirely true for all the organizations

examined here. The organizations here benefitted from the desire of the Pakistan government to

trust and work with them, though they were not necessarily trusting at first. MSF, however,

never fully trusted the Pakistan government, likely in large part due to their desire to remain

impartial. The organization also never seemed willing to collaborate with any of the

organization, which clearly made collaboration almost impossible. Both IFRC and Oxfam demonstrated limited collaboration efforts during this disaster. While they were involved with the cluster approach, they themselves did specifically seem to seek out organizations that aligned with their goals and strategies which possibly limited their efforts.

Sichuan

Table 2- Collaboration Results: Sichuan Earthquake

Organization	Willingness to Collaborate	Trust/Commitment	Aligned Objectives and Strategies	Demonstration of Collaboration
IFRC	Yes	No (not government)	No	Limited
Oxfam	Yes	No (not government)	Yes	Yes
MSF	Yes	No (not government)	Yes	Limited

The summary of the results from the Sichuan earthquake collaboration efforts can be seen summarized in Table 2. It is clear that there is some progress in the efforts collaboration. Oxfam was able to create some meaningful collaborations, specifically with organizations that aligned with their objectives and strategies. IFRC made attempts, but were largely hindered due to the reluctance of the Chinese government to trust them. MSF did make small strides, mentioning their collaboration with their own local chapter but had no other instances mentioned or working with other organizations, or the government.

Interestingly, Oxfam seems to have generated some meaningful collaboration efforts even without the commitment of the government. This is possibly because of how much of a priority the organization sees it as, or that the trust of government is not always imperative for success. Additionally, it could indicate that because they chose to create partnerships with other NGOs and nonprofit- not the government like IFRC had- they were able to bypass this factor.

Japan

Table 3- Collaboration Results: Japan Earthquake

Organization	Willingness to Collaborate	Trust	Aligned Objectives and Strategies	Demonstration of Collaboration
IFRC	Yes	Yes (both government and NGO)	Yes	Yes
Oxfam	Yes	Yes (both government and NGO)	Yes	Yes
MSF	Yes	Yes (both government and NGO)	N/A	Limited

All the organizations continued to improve in their collaboration efforts by the time the Japan earthquake struck. The organizations all showed a willingness to collaborate, even MSF to a lesser degree than the others. The Japan government was very willing to accept the aid of the organizations, and did their best to implement a variety of tools to help facilitate communication (though some seem to have limited success). This seems to have improved all the organizations' ability to collaborate.

Additionally, both IFRC and Oxfam showed evidence in their reports that they were able to work with organizations that aligned with their objectives and strategies. This seems to be a natural way organizations begin reaching out to others that they find similar to their own. While MSF did mention working to fill in the gaps of disaster management, they had no mention of specifically working with organizations that aligned with their objectives or strategies. This makes it difficult to interpret the nature of extent of the collaboration efforts they participated in.

While not directly related to this research, one interesting observation drawn from the various reports overtime was the decrease in importance of the cluster approach. The cluster

approach from the OCHA is one of the strategies utilized in the international response to all three disasters, and is still a part of the UN's international approach today ("Cluster Coordination," 2016**)**. Interestingly, there was little mention of the cluster response in any of the reports, especially after the Kashmir earthquake- where it was initially debuted. Even though this strategy is still currently part of the UN strategy, it does not seem to be an important aspect of these organizations' response efforts. Their lack of concern about or mention of the cluster approach, may suggest it is not effective or even something the organizations are actively involving themselves in.

Conclusion

Oxfam International specifically seemed to care a great deal about collaboration, and it was obvious that it became an increasing priority for them throughout their reports. Collaboration was always mentioned in some form in the reports, whether initially as an aspect they needed to improve and later as a point of pride (Oxfam International, 2006; Oxfam Hong Kong, 2013; Oxfam Japan's response to the Earthquake and Tsunami, 2013). From their first report following Kashmir to their reflection on Japan, they seem to be more explicitly creating partnerships with various NGOs and local nonprofits, and even local victims they incorporated into their processes. While IFRC were not as quick to implement collaboration efforts as Oxfam International, their final report in Japan clearly demonstrates how they had begun to prioritize communication and hopefully indicates they will continue to grow in this area in the future. They began to work with organizations that aligned with their missions and strategies to become even more effective than previously. Doctors Without Borders made slow and gradual progress in their move towards collaboration, and while they made no significant or meaningful attempt at collaboration in these efforts their trend seems to be moving in the right direction.

While this is just a small piece of the NGO network and focuses on just a few specific disasters, these organizations are some of the front runners when it comes to involvement and response to natural disasters. The hypotheses generated in this comparative case study, seem to have promise for further exploration in future empirical studies on NGO collaboration. Some seem to have a stronger correlation than others with collaboration efforts, but all seem to be somewhat interrelated.

Question 1: Are organizations that demonstrate more willingness to collaborate more likely to participate in efforts?

There was not a single instance of collaboration in these case studies that happened without the willingness of the organization to want to be involved in collaboration efforts. All the organizations had to at least mention a conscious effort to want to work with other organizations or the government in order for this factor to be considered affirmative. This does provide further evidence to support the theory that this is precondition for collaboration to take place. Not only is it intuitive that organizations need to be consciously on board with supporting collaboration, but the data collected here further supports this question.

Question 2: If more trust or commitment exists between the responding organizations will collaboration efforts be more frequent?

This question seems to have more mixed results than the first. While it does not seem to be a precondition, like willingness, in that collaboration was still possible without the mutual trust and commitment of the organizations and the government there still does seem to be support for its inclusion. In all instances where there was mutual trust between the government and the NGOs there was some level of collaboration, whether it was meaningful or just limited efforts. However, in China where there was not trust or commitment from the government all the organizations had varying degrees of collaboration that they participated in. It seems that while this may have been a barrier to collaboration, as IFRC seemed to suggest in their report, it was not impossible to get around. Oxfam in particular did an effective job of working with other non-government organizations in the country to avoid this lack of trust problem. Additionally, when the lack of trust came from the organization, in the case of MSF and Pakistan, there was no trust

present at all. This could imply that while a government trust is a benefit to collaboration, organizational trust is more of a necessity. Ultimately, more research would need to be conducted to understand the cause of this variation.

Question 3: If organizations have similar objectives and services provided are they more likely to create collaborations?

Organizations that have similar objectives and services seem to be more likely to collaborate. Like with the trust variable, it does not seem to be a necessity for collaboration. There were a few instances of collaboration that occurred without the presence of similar objectives. However, it seems that when organizations did have meaningful collaboration attempts they were with other organizations that had those similar objectives and services. This relationship is not straightforward, and would benefit from further research into its intricacies.

There were some limitations with this study. Firstly the study only focused on three specific cases within a single geographic area, which limits its transferability to other disasters or organizations. The organizations were also all larger NGOs, which means they may be even less representative of the smaller actors. The primary limitation in this study is the varying nature of the reports examined. There is not a standardized reporting method between organizations, or even within them. This means that the reports from the different organizations look very different from one another and included a variety of different information. Additionally, even from one disaster to another the organizations formatted their reports in very different ways as well. This means that sometimes it was not possible to gather the necessary information, which is why "N/A" was sometimes seen in Table 1, 2 and 3. It also means that there may have been

instances of collaboration that happened but were just not mentioned in the report because the agency did not see it as part of the report's objectives. This is one of the reasons why more research should be done to elaborate upon the findings in this study.

While there are limitations in this study, it generates a group of hypotheses that should be further tested to determine their relation to collaboration efforts. Future studies should firstly attempt to fill in the gaps where information could not be found just through the method of report reviewing. For example, discussing alignment of goals with other agencies, or explicitly asking about agency's willingness to collaborate. More empirical studies could be used to actually determine the casualty of these variables in instances of collaboration. Another area for future study is the use of regional and international reporting on collaboration, to utilize a third-party view of the efforts. This would help to determine whether or not NGOs are being consistent or biased in their organizational reports of their efforts following these disasters. Utilizing both international news reports (such as the Washington Post or BBC) and more local news agencies it would allow for a fuller picture of collaboration to come together.

Another suggestion for future research is the follow-up to determine if organizations are actually learning. While it appears here that they seem to be improving over time there is not clear evidence that organizational learning is necessarily place. Future studies could further explore this topic of organizational learning as it applies to collaboration, and possibly other areas of NGO work in natural disasters. Learning is an important part of the response process because these organizations should ideally be continuing to improve their response efforts overtime to become more effective and ultimately save more lives.

Willingness to collaborate, trust and commitment, and alignment of goals should all continue to be explored to expand this area of study. Collaboration continues to be a key point of

discuss in collaboration efforts, but also seems to be appearing more frequently in organization's

reports. This gives all the more support to researching the factors that encourage the successful

implementation of collaboration. As NGOs begin to utilize this method more frequently in their

response efforts, they should be aware of the context and conditions of collaboration that give

them the best chance at success.

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