NCCI
Emergency Response and Access
February 2007

Introduction

A key element in addressing the humanitarian crises on the ground is for relief and aid agencies to have access to the areas where they are assisting the vulnerable. With growing acknowledgement by the international community that there is indeed a humanitarian crisis in Iraq, this issue take a more important place in the discussions about humanitarian aid in Iraq.

The international community is ready to support NGOs that can deliver and are accountable. However they want to know how NGOs can do it beforehand. The case of Iraq makes it difficult for NGOs to be able to deliver aid while strictly adhering to the Code of Conduct (CoC) as developed by ICRC, which remains non-negotiable. Humanitarian aid agencies and NGOs have to strike a balance between these principles, and managing the everyday realities of the ground to achieve their stated goals without compromising their integrity. In this context it is important to remind ourselves that there is a hierarchy within the principles of the CoC. At the top of this hierarchy is the absolutely non-flexible statement that "the humanitarian imperative comes first".

NGOs play a vital role providing support to affected people. Nevertheless, they often face obstacles in accessing the most vulnerable. The purpose of this document is to review access options and obstacles that reflect the situation on the ground and make use of the comparative advantages and experiences that NGOs have, to list what can be done, what solutions are viable and what support is needed to implement those solutions. Consequently, this report is a technical document aiming to improve the quality of aid given to the affected Iraqis in the field.

Before delving into the workshop's outcomes, it is important to highlight that the purpose of such working sessions is to find ways and discuss solutions to fill the existing gaps in the provision of aid for the most vulnerable people. With due acknowledgment to existing official Iraqi channels, the humanitarian intervention is not meant to replace what exists, but to try to reduce the vacuums in the access of beneficiaries to basic services.

Amongst the various strategies that were discussed and outlined over the 2 day workshop (Air dropping, massive cross-boarding, convergence points that can be used as safe haven for the population, etc); participants repeatedly returned to the need to bolster existing networks in order to improve coordination in terms of the emergency, which is necessary in order to make progress in improving access.

Accordingly, NGOs have decided to activate a nationwide field-based emergency cell that will improve the quality of aid responses by centralising and securing information on existing networks, improve field linkages and ease the access, and represent the NGOs at the newly re-designed UNAMI Humanitarian Working Group. Terms of Reference for this cell will be defined based on the objectives and tasks identified during the workshop. Geographical focal points will also be identified according to the cell members' commitments and will agree on shared indicators for the follow up of the humanitarian situation in their respective areas.

Main Findings

After participants identified obstacles and bottlenecks that reduce the humanitarian operating space, some common issues were raised to help increase access. Solutions were proposed to bypass the main barriers and blockages.

Despite their presence on the ground and their capacity to deliver, it has to be stated that NGOs cannot independently provide all the solutions nor respond to all the needs. A coordinated, global and inclusive strategy is needed with all the stakeholders involved in order to provide appropriate responses to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq.

Obviously, it has to be underlined that Humanitarian Operational Space is not given as an established space and that access is never taken for granted. Both have to be developed and sustained on a daily basis.

Four main issues are indispensable for access:

➤ **Presence on the ground**

It is a very basic premise, but you have to actually be on the ground trying to bypass obstacles in order to succeed. Accompanying attempts to counter barriers such as checkpoints requires creativity. This might appear obvious and trite, but it is often forgotten in distance programming interventions.

➤ **The need for coordination and networking**

With the increasing lack of trust and the quasi impossibility to move freely in central Iraq, coordination and networking are needed more than ever, to provide updated and accurate information, as well as in terms of keys contacts on the ground (that can facilitate access) or lobbying relays with authorities and main stakeholders.

➤ **The need to diversify resources**

Human resources, but also physical or financial resources need to be diversified to increase opportunities for access on the ground, as access is very often possible at a local level only. This means that staff should be diversified, and vehicles and drivers are available to transport goods from a point to another; warehouses strategically located for pre-positioning goods in various access points, etc.

➤ **Trust and Timing**

The quicker goods are delivered the better. Timing in terms of obtaining authorisations, responding to a crises and delivering goods is an important issue and can be shortened by creating links and relationships at local – community levels. Organisations that have better access to a spot are often those who have been working in the area for a while, are known to the communities, or are originally from the area. Indeed, creating trust is a critical issue and, time is a great concern for humanitarian organisations in order to save lives. Being present soon after a disaster or a big crisis can increase access as the acceptance and credibility of the organisation is reinforced by its actions as perceived by the community.

Matrix 1: Resources Vs Obstacles / Bottlenecks

It should be noted that these obstacles and the Matrix in general, refer primarily to the situation in the Central and South Iraq, and not Iraqi Kurdistan. This is because the levels of violence are lower in the North, reconstruction is further advanced, operational humanitarian space above the Green Line is at least partially respected and remote management is not generally necessary. As such, the Northern area is and can be used for cross-boundary strategies for the time being.

The participants have raised 2 main sets of obstacles for access to beneficiaries. There are obstacles that can be solved directly by NGOs during their intervention and those that can be solved by other partners through an efficient networking process.

There is a third set that will not be developed here which is more relevant to the context or the current insecurity and on which NGOs cannot have an effect to improve it, even if it affects them. Indeed, these obstacles can only be solved in the long-term with the support of all actors in Iraq.

Regarding the first point participants raised 3 ranges of solutions that can ease NGO access: **Networking**, **Diversity of Human Resources** and, above these 2 points, focusing on solutions at a **local level**.

Regarding the second point, solutions have mainly to be found with partners and the international community.

Access obstacles	Concerns and constraints	Existing Resources	Needed Resources
Unpredictability The situation in Iraq is changing on a daily – even hourly – basis.	• Attacks and reprisal attacks • Rumours and information on the field • Political or local decisions • Critical need for flexibility in the implementation of projects, including accessibility, flexibility and neutrality of funding • Change of Interlocutors • Change of rules	• Networking and coordination: Information exchange and cross-checking • Local based relationships with an organisations as opposed to individuals *Keys Contacts* *NGOs, NCCI; Local Authorities; Local Leaders; population*	• local relationship managed at an organizational level – not an individual level within the organisation • Develop pre-positioning at all levels from local to regional (Neighbouring countries) • Lobby political leaders and International stakeholders *Keys Actors to be engaged* *Donors; International Community; UN; Local Leaders; Local NGOs; Local and regional Authorities*
Multiplicity of Official Interlocutors The Iraqi Government is contested and resisted, and there are sometimes several powers in charge of authorisations (MNF-I; GoI; Local powers...)	• Coalition strategy • Insurgency • Local sustainability • Regional and international policy, agenda, reactions and timetable • conflicting agenda • Sectarian / factional divides • The Ministries responsible for responding to humanitarian emergencies are not legitimate in all areas • National emergency response strategies are not fully in place • Obtaining Authorisations is a lengthy process and are not always accepted by others powers present or responsible in an area • Multiplication of deals at local levels (particularly when travelling)	• Develop contacts at the local level • Deal with forces on the ground • Coordination and networking *Keys Contacts* *NCCI; LNGOs; Local Leaders; Forces on the ground; local authorities*	• Promote humanitarian specific status and intervention modalities at the local and the regional levels. • Raise the awareness on Humanitarian actions and actors • Global and Inclusive humanitarian strategy • Increase coordination and networking • Lobby authorities and Forces on the ground to create humanitarian corridors *Keys Actors to be engaged* *Media, Authorities, International Community; UN; Forces on the ground*

Access obstacles	Concerns and constraints	Existing Resources	Needed Resources
Reliable data for available funds The emergency funds that are available are often not neutral, not flexible, severely limited, or take too long to be disbursed.	• Lack of stability and security • Lack of trust (within country and between different actors) • Remote management • Lack of recognised monitoring process (by concerned actors) • Lack of knowledge about which NNGOs are reliable and implement valuable humanitarian work • Perception that Iraq is a 'wealthy' country that should cover humanitarian emergency needs • Over-assessments without responses that increase lack of trust • Teams are reduced and overstretched and cannot expand their networks • Quick impact responses are limited • Few resources to maintain networks at the local level • New solutions of access cannot be explored	• Advocacy on needs and on assistance • NGOs' presence on the field • Existing network for coordination and information exchange • Various sources of data *Keys Contacts* *UN; NGOs; NCCI; Media*	• Advocacy at the International Level • Declaration of a Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq • Need to include all actors • Create new channels to complement existing funding bodies • Have a centralised information management centre • Agree on indicators and monitoring mechanisms • Increase coordination and networking *Keys Actors to be engaged* *Media, Authorities, International Community; Donors; International humanitarian Platforms; UN*

Access obstacles	Concerns and constraints	Existing Resources	Needed Resources
Global insecurity and absence of a proper and neutral Operational Humanitarian Space Insecurity is the overriding obstacle that prevents the humanitarian means that are available from being deployed to their maximum potential in a timely and effective manner. Lines between Militaries, Aid workers, Political bodies etc… are blurred and perception of aid agencies are biased Operational humanitarian Space is severely restricted. The limited Humanitarian Space available is used mainly by INGOs and LNGOs. Some LNGOs are very efficient and have "access".	• All belligerent activity, including indiscriminate attacks against civilians and lack of recognition of and respect for IHL and HRL • Lack of' communication between NGOs • The needs of the population are not met which increase resentment against organisations. • Absence of the rule of law • Absence of trust • Absence of knowledge about and suspicion of humanitarian actors; Lack of visibility and definition of NGOs and aid agencies; and absence of ability to protect humanitarian actors; and impossibility for long-term awareness raising campaigns as to what an NGO is • Humanitarian assistance as a key part of the Coalition's political agenda or militias one • Security Plans (curfews, border closures, etc) • Humanitarian actors are denied access to areas most severely affected by official or unofficial forces • NGOs obliged to operate with extreme caution and discretion, struggling to continue operations while trying to maintain independence making it difficult / impossible to communicate and advocate in a proper way • Diminished acceptance and legitimacy of humanitarian actors in the eyes of the local population • Increase in insecurity of local populations that cannot protect aid workers • Long delays in providing humanitarian assistance • The full range of humanitarian activities required cannot be implemented • Coping mechanisms of host communities are eroding	• Awareness and education of Humanitarian principles to gain support and protection from local communities • Deals with armed groups to have access and be protected • Advocate for the respect of IHL and Rule of Law • Advocate for and increase neutrality • Use and develop local relays and keys partners at the local level • Peer assessments and monitoring (through more coordination and networking) • Strategy of capacity building of NGOs staff • Existing network for coordination and advocacy *Keys Contacts* *LNGOs, NCCI; Local Authorities; Local Leaders; population; Forces on the Ground; Media*	• Awareness and education of Humanitarian principles to gain support and protection from local communities • Deal with forces and armed groups to have access and be protected • Advocate for the respect of IHL and Rule of Law • Advocate for an increase neutrality • Peer assessments and monitoring (through more coordination and networking) • Advocate having specific rules for humanitarian actors to bypass security plans. *Keys Actors to be engaged* *Media, Authorities, Forces on the ground; UN*

Access obstacles	Concerns and constraints	Existing Resources	Needed Resources
Human Resources There is a high turnover of staff and difficulty to fill local management positions (brain drain)	• General insecurity *(Intimidation, Violence and crime directed specifically at educated and expert individuals: for example, kidnapping, torture, murder, etc)* • Lacks of funds lead to short visibility, low salaries despite a high level of requested commitments and competencies • Reduced capacity of organisations to recruit and keep talented and clever people who are able to foster access • The chain of access can be broken with the disappearance of one main individual key contact • Sectarian divisions within agencies staff • Reduced cross communities movements	• Networking and coordination between NGOs • Reliance on key organisations and local resources to facilitate access with a preference for an organisation-based contact list, which avoids breaking the chain if an individual disappears. • Dealing at the local level to have more protection for neutral people • Diversified staffs (sect, community, tribe, etc…) *Keys Contacts[1]* *Local NGOs, NCCI; Local networks; Local Communities, Local Leaders; Local authorities, Forces on the ground*	• Neutral and adequate funds • Awareness and education on NGOs' specifics to protect aid workers on the field • Increase security and application of the Rule of Law *Keys Actors to be engaged* *Neutral donors; Media; International Community; UN; Forces on the Ground; Local and national authorities*
Distance programming	• Insecurity or perception of insecurity • Impossibility for International staffs to go into hot areas or to stay full time in other areas in Central Iraq • Impossibility for some staff to go to an area • Lack of creativity from those who are not on the field or are unable to understand local conditions • Misperceptions are impossible to manage • Transfer of risks and not of responsibilities • Lack of knowledge about local realities • Lack of visibility, monitoring, and external evaluations	• Building capacity of national staffs • Transfer of responsibilities • Bringing best practices, experiences and ideas from other countries • Advocate to increase respect of IHL and Rule of Law *Keys Contacts* *Local NGOs, NCCI; INGOs; Training Centres; Donors community; International Community; UN; Media; Authorities; Forces on the Ground*	• Funds for more exchanges between people in the field and remote managers • Advocate to increase respect of IHL and Rule of Law to increase the possibility to educate remote managers to the reality on the ground • Agree on indicators and monitoring mechanisms *Keys Actors to be engaged* *Donors; International Community; UN; Authorities; Leaders and Forces on the Ground*

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[1] Keys contacts and Keys actors are listed in Annex 1

Access obstacles	Concerns and constraints	Existing Resources	Needed Resources
Over or fragmented assessments of emergency needs	• Danger of beneficiary and host community fatigue and disillusionment in humanitarian response • Lack of funds to cover the needs • Rely on local contacts who over estimate needs in order to have a consistent response or under estimate it for political reasons • Lack of trust • Risk that assessments undertaken are not the most suited to context and needs or are not neutral	• First assessment with distribution of some goods • Peer- assessments through networking, communication, coordination *Keys Contacts* *GOI; International and national NGOs, Local networks; Local Communities, Local Leaders; Donors community*	• Flexible funds (for more assessments with a first distribution; to launch assessments only if funds follow) • Have a centralised information management centre *Keys Actors to be engaged* *Donors; International Community; UN*
Corruption and conditional support	• Inadequate oversight • Contracts awarded without necessary financial safeguards; • Aid is being provided with strings attached • Inadequate monitoring • Critical needs remain unfulfilled and many projects are far behind schedule, and are of a sub-standard quality • Lack of trust from local populations; jeopardizes access, acceptance and perception • Donors' fatigue and reluctance • Overall legitimacy of international actors – including humanitarian workers - is negatively effected	• Peer monitoring including local communities • Accountability and transparency • Assistance based on needs and context *Keys Contacts* *Local NGOs, NCCI; INGOs; Training Centres; Donors community; Local Authorities; Local Leaders; population*	• Communication and Visibility • Assistance more flexible and based on needs and context • Implementation of law *Keys Actors to be engaged* *Donors; International Community; UN*

Matrix 2: Access Points and Facilitators

Most Access points have already been identified. Some are already in use, and others are considered as possibilities. Facilitators, often at a local level or specific resources have to be used to help with improving or creating access. In most of the points below, an updated database of local contacts managed by talented and adaptable managers able to deal with unpredictable obstacles are absolutely needed. The need to have diversified teams requires adequate funding, as multiple staff means more expenses.

Access Points	Existing	Possible	Facilitators and needed resources
Barrier Elements			
• Borders	Yes		Facilitators: *National and Regional Authorities; Regional Offices of International Organisations; Population* Resources: *Networking and lobbying; legal Framework*
• Boundaries	Yes		Facilitators: *Local Authorities; Forces on the ground; Local leaders; NGOs; Population* Resources: *Networking; information management; diversified teams; key contacts*
• Check Points	Yes		Facilitators: *Forces on the Ground; Local leaders, Local Authorities; NGOs; Population* Resources: *Networking; Information management; Lobbying; legal framework and diversified teams*
People Elements			
• Key contacts at a local level	Yes		Facilitators: *Local Leaders; Local Authorities; NGOs; Population; Forces on the Ground* Resources: *Networking; Information Management; diversified teams*
• Focal Points	Yes		Facilitators: *NGOs; Local Leaders* Resources: *Networking; Funding;*
• Beneficiaries	Yes		Facilitators: *Population; community leaders; NGOs* Resources: *Networking, information Management; diversified teams*
• Informal Networks	Yes		Facilitators: *Population; local leaders; criminal gangs; Family* Resources: *Networking*

Physical Elements			
• Operational Bases	Yes		<u>Facilitators</u>: *NGOs; Local leaders; Religious leaders; Teachers* <u>Resources</u>: *Existing Facilities (Mosques, Health and public facilities, schools, distribution points)*
• Pre-positioned warehouses		Yes	<u>Facilitators</u>: *NGOs; Local and regional Authorities; International Organisations; Local and religious leaders* <u>Resources</u>: *Funding and Lobbying; Existing markets; legal Framework*
• Existing structures	Yes		<u>Facilitators</u>: *NGOs; local leaders; local authorities* <u>Resources</u>: *Assessment; Information management; Networking*
• Natural Resources		Yes	<u>Facilitators</u>: *Authorities; Forces on the Ground; NGOs* <u>Resources</u>: *Funding; Lobbying, Networking; legal framework*
Movement Elements			
• Roads and transport corridors	Yes		<u>Facilitators</u>: *NGOs; Local and National Authorities; Forces on the Ground; Local Networks* <u>Resources</u>: *Information management; Networking; diversified teams; legal framework*
• Exchange stations *(change of vehicles / drivers to pass from one area to another)*	Yes		<u>Facilitators</u>: *Local networks; NGOs; population; Forces on the ground* <u>Resources</u>: *Funding; Networking; diversified teams*
• Air Access		Yes	<u>Facilitators</u>: *National Authorities; Regional authorities; International organisations; International Community* <u>Resources</u>: *Funding; Planes; sharing; legal framework*
• Massive Convoys		Yes	<u>Facilitators</u>: *Regional, National and Local authorities; Forces on the ground; Local Networks* <u>Resources</u>: *Funding; Lobbying; Sharing; legal framework*

Hidden Elements			
• Criminality – Smugglers		Yes	<u>Facilitators</u>: *Criminal gangs; Informal contacts; local networks; forces on the ground* <u>Resources:</u> *unknown*
• Black Market	Yes		<u>Facilitators:</u> *Criminals; population; informal contacts* <u>Resources:</u> *Items impossible to import (Fuel, Gas) if not available in local markets*
• Corruption		Yes	<u>Facilitators</u>: *Any facilitator who refuse to help without bindery* <u>Resources:</u> *unknown*

ANNEX 1

KEY ACTORS CONTACTED / TO BE ENGAGED

Note that relationships and actors might change on a daily basis. Therefore, databases need to be regularly revised at the local level, within the NGO and with its contacts at its level.

Categories	Keys Contacts on the field *(NGOs are generally already in Contacts with them; but some of them need to be engaged at another level)*	Keys Actors to be engaged *(They are not present directly on the ground yet but they might interfere to enable a better access)*
International Community		Countries (US, Europe, Region); Media; UN Security Council; MNF-I members states; International Organisations and donors; International Public Opinion
Regional Countries		Gulf States, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan
International Organisations	UN Agencies; IOM	Humanitarian Donors; Islamic Conference; Arab League; International Humanitarian Platform
Forces on the Ground	MNF-I; Iraqi Forces; Non-State Armed Groups (Religious-backed Militias; Political-backed Militias); Tribes; Neighbourhood protection Groups; Criminal Groups (Looters, Gangs); Private Security Companies	
Authorities[2] present at a National Level	GoI (Ministries); Kemadia	GoI (Presidential Office, Cabinet, Parliament); judiciary; MNF-I (Members States Embassies)
Authorities at a local level	KRG; Governors; Mayors; Mukhtar; Sectorial Directorates; Municipalities, Municipal Councils; Majlis Kabila; Police; Army; MNF-I (PRTs)	
Local Leaders	Tribes; Religious Leaders; Sheikh; Political Leaders (Head of parties, Municipalities, Parliament Members); Armed Groups leaders; Community Leaders; Economic Leaders (from businessmen to gangs leaders); Teachers …	
Population	Civilians; IDPs, Refugees; all potential groups of beneficiaries	
Private Sector	Media; Private companies	

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[2] "Authority" is understood as having a legal power, while "Leaders" might have a non-official power or only influence