

HPG Report

Collective approaches to communication and community engagement in the Central Sulawesi response

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Acronyms

AAP	accountability to affected populations
AHA Centre	ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management
BNPB	National Agency for Disaster Management (<i>Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana</i>)
C4D	communication for development
CCCM	camp coordination and camp management
CCE	communication and community engagement
CCEI	Communication and Community Engagement Initiative
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities
CEA	community engagement and accountability
CEWG	community engagement working group
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CoP	Community of Practice
CSO	civil society organisation
CwC	communicating with communities
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FAQ	frequently asked questions
FGD	focus group discussion
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HDX	Humanitarian Data Exchange
HFI	Humanitarian Forum Indonesia
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICCG	inter-cluster co-coordinators' group
IDP	internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IM	information management
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration

LAPOR	Citizens' Aspiration and Complaint Online System (<i>Layan Aspirasi dan Pengaduan Online Rakyat</i>)
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PMI	Indonesian Red Cross (<i>Palang Merah Indonesia</i>)
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene

1 Introduction

On 28 September 2018, Central Sulawesi was hit by a series of earthquakes (the strongest of which had a magnitude of 7.4), triggering a tsunami that reached up to three metres, causing landslides and liquefaction.¹ As of 18 July 2019, 4,845 people had been declared either dead or missing; 110,000 houses listed as destroyed, damaged or lost; and more than 172,000 people displaced (IFRC, 2019). While the government of Indonesia and the residents of Central Sulawesi were unprepared for this type of disaster, it was not unexpected.²

The Central Sulawesi response was the first time a collective approach to communication and community engagement (CCE) had been implemented in Indonesia. The Central Sulawesi Earthquake Response Plan, launched one week after the disaster by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), proposed using the experiences of UN agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Red Cross Movement to ‘strengthen collective approaches to gathering, analysing and responding to community feedback’ and ‘to support Government feedback systems that are already in place’ (Indonesia HCT, 2018a: 2). This project defines collective approaches to CCE as

a multi-actor initiative that encompasses the humanitarian response as a whole, rather than a single individual agency or programme, and focuses on two-way communication: providing information about the

situation and services to affected communities; gathering information from these communities via feedback, perspectives and inputs; and closing the feedback loop by informing the communities as to how their input has been taken into account. The goal of a collective approach to CCE is the increased accountability to and participation of affected communities in their own response.

Emphasis on accountability to affected populations (AAP) and its related approaches – for example, communicating with communities (CwC), community engagement and accountability (CEA), communication for development (C4D) – has been growing over the past few years. It was included in the 2014 Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), the 2016 Grand Bargain via the ‘participation revolution’ workstream, and the 2017 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Commitments on Accountability to Affected People. In January 2017, following a year-long, sector-wide consultation, the Communication and Community Engagement Initiative (CCEI) was established. The CCEI sought

to help improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian and health emergency responses, through a harmonised, timely, systematic and predictable collective service for communication and community

1 Liquefaction occurs when soil loses its strength and stiffness due to instability such as shaking during an earthquake, causing it to behave more like a liquid than a solid.

2 Legends of earthquakes, ‘large waves’ and ground instability in the region have been passed down for centuries. One of the local languages, Kaili, has words for liquefaction, even though it has not occurred in Sulawesi for centuries. More recently, Central Sulawesi experienced a strong earthquake several weeks following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami; and, in 2012, an Indonesian geologist, Risna Widyaningrum, published work on the possibility of liquefaction in Palu (Fiantis and Minasny, 2018), but the disaster hit before the research could be used to create contingency plans.

engagement with affected communities throughout all phases of the humanitarian programme cycle (CDAC Network, 2017).³

1.1 Methodology and limitations

This case study is part of a wider project commissioned by UNICEF on behalf of the CCEI to identify solutions to address current bottlenecks and challenges, as well as develop evidence of the added-value and limitations of collective approaches. Along with case studies in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and Yemen, this case study will feed into a final report, which aims to:

- identify concrete options for addressing current bottlenecks around coordination, leadership and funding of collective approaches;
- develop qualitative evidence of the added value and limitations of collective approaches; and
- highlight future implications of collective community engagement and accountability approaches, given the rapidly changing nature of the humanitarian environment.

In particular, this study will examine the following research questions:

- What are the incentives and challenges for funding collective approaches/services in emergency responses?
- How do these collective approaches to CCE integrate into the coordination architecture?
- What are the different models for integrating these collective approaches in existing coordination structures?
- What is the role of the resident/humanitarian coordinator and the HCT?
- What capacity, including surge capacity, is needed to support such approaches?

- What are other (non-funding-related) bottlenecks and challenges to move towards more collective approaches?
- What are the conditions needed to support the setting up of such approaches?
- How are these collective approaches perceived and received by affected populations?

The Indonesian case study aims to understand how collective approaches to CCE can be implemented in locally led humanitarian crises where there is a strong, functioning government in charge of the response and a heavy presence of local and national actors.

This case study used a qualitative approach, via interviews with key stakeholders who worked in the Sulawesi response, as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) with affected communities to understand how collective approaches to CCE were (or were not) implemented in the Central Sulawesi response, and what that can tell us about these approaches for future responses. Forty-nine interviews with key stakeholders were conducted either in person or remotely between 15 January and 27 February 2020 (see Table 1). Meetings with key stakeholders were held at the beginning and end of the fieldwork (which took place between 5 and 17 February) to explain the project and to present the findings of the research and preliminary recommendations to validate and strengthen the analysis.

These interviews and meetings were supplemented by six FGDs with affected communities in the districts of Palu and Sigi, in Central Sulawesi (see Figure 1), conducted by two Indonesian researchers. The FGDs were populated with the help of the local researchers and through purposeful and snowball sampling, whereby participants who were affected by the earthquake, tsunami and liquefaction referred others to join the study. Many of the FGD participants are still living in camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), unable to return home and uninformed about when they will be able to

3 The CCEI was set up as a collaboration between the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). It has since been integrated under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion.

Table 1: Key stakeholder interviews

Stakeholder	Number
UN agencies – international staff	3
UN agencies – national staff	10
INGOs – international staff	6
INGOs – national staff	4
Red Cross movement – international staff	1
Red Cross movement – national staff	4
Donor governments	1
Government officials – national level	2
Government officials – local level	2
National/local organisations	12
Intergovernmental/regional organisation	4
TOTAL	49

move into temporary or permanent housing and where this will be located.

Although the Sulawesi response was tied to the response in Lombok, the focus of this paper is limited to Sulawesi due to restricted resources and capacity for this case study, as well as the absence of international organisations in Lombok compared to Central Sulawesi. A few interviews were completed with actors who had worked either in Lombok or in both responses. Another limitation was the inclusion of fewer interviews with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement than desired due to the emerging Covid-19 outbreak at the time of the fieldwork (February 2020).

Figure 1: Map of affected area



Source: Indonesia HCT (2018a).

2 Overview of the humanitarian response to the Central Sulawesi earthquake, tsunami and liquefaction

The earthquake, tsunami and liquefaction that hit Central Sulawesi occurred less than two months after another large earthquake had struck a different Indonesian island to the south, Lombok. With two large-scale disasters occurring in quick succession depleting the country's supply stocks and human-resource capacity, and the tsunami and liquefaction resulting in a more complicated response, the Government of Indonesia welcomed (though did not request) international assistance for the Sulawesi response three days after the disaster (IFRC, 2019). The central Indonesian government has a strong disaster response system with the capacity to address large-scale disasters (Humanitarian Advisory Group and Pujiono Centre, 2019). To support this capacity, it chose the regional intergovernmental organisation – the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) – rather than OCHA to coordinate offers of assistance from international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). INGOs whose offers were accepted were restricted by the government to implementing through local partners, with national staff leading on the ground in Sulawesi and international staff largely required to remain in Jakarta to shore up national capacity from there. This offers a preview of how future disasters in southeast Asia may be managed (Humanitarian Advisory Group and Pujiono Centre, 2019). The response was locally led, not because the international humanitarian community relinquished power, but rather because the national government retained it.

2.1 Government-led response: the new normal

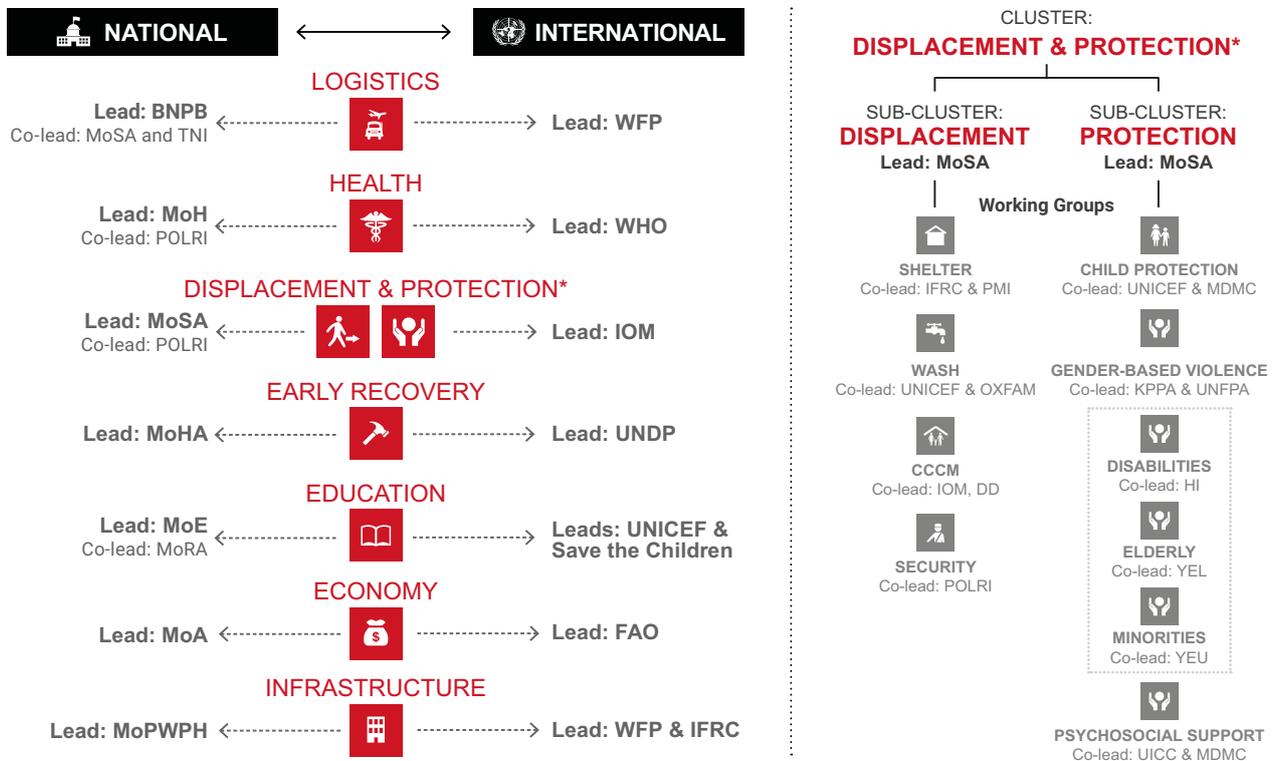
Indonesia's coordination system for disasters is a modified cluster system, embedded within a larger national government system, where the clusters (that in a traditional humanitarian response are led by various UN agencies) are led by different ministerial departments with UN agencies as co-leads (see Figure 2). The Central Sulawesi response was the first time that the government had fully implemented this coordination structure. As seen in Figure 2, the typical UN clusters do not neatly align with the ministries, which has resulted in some ministries co-leading multiple clusters and limited their capacity to sustain coordination activities. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), for example, was the governmental lead for the displacement and protection cluster, which incorporates several sub-clusters that are often full clusters at the international level, such as shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) and protection.

The clusters and sub-clusters were coordinated through an inter-cluster co-coordinators' group (ICCG), which was led in the emergency phase by the National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB) under the National Supporting Post and the Central Sulawesi Provincial Secretary, with assistance from OCHA. Beyond clusters

Figure 2: Coordination structure

Central Sulawesi Earthquake Response Plan (October 2018–December 2018)

COORDINATION STRUCTURE



Note: Dompot Dhuafa (DD), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Humanity and Inclusion (HI), Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), Indonesian National Police (POLRI), Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak/Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPA), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Education and Culture (MoE), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (MoPWPH), Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC), National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Universitas Indonesia Crisis Centre (UICC), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), Yayasan Emong Lansia/HelpAge Indonesia (YEL).
 Source: Indonesia HCT (2018a).

and sub-clusters, several working groups were also established, some of which have now been folded into the government cluster system. This has been the case with the cash working group and the information management (IM) working group, though the government is still considering if and how to take ownership of the community engagement working group (CEWG).

INGOs that came to Sulawesi to help the response were required by the government to participate in the cluster system (Humanitarian Advisory Group and Pujiono Centre, 2019).

In the Central Sulawesi response, though BNPB was pre-determined to oversee the entire

response according to the contingency plans, in practice the national government tasked the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs with this role. This complicated the coordination mechanism, leading to confusion around the chain of command and delays in decision-making. Roughly 6,000 members of the military and police were also brought in to help coordinate logistics and help with safety and security – extra capacity that was welcomed by the local government officials interviewed for this study; the local government was also affected and staff needed to take care of their own families before returning to work.

2.2 Collective approaches to CCE in Sulawesi

The Central Sulawesi response was one of the first in the region to attempt to implement a collective approach to CCE, following on from previous responses in the Philippines in 2013 and Nepal in 2015 (Davies, 2019). In Indonesia, this approach was driven by the HCT, and in particular OCHA and UNICEF, alongside IFRC (with the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI)) – each of which played a key role. On the ground, OCHA provided technical support through a series of secondments of CCE regional and global experts, UNICEF provided financial support for these secondments and IFRC/PMI operationalised the effort. In Jakarta, the HCT advocated the benefits of CCE at a strategic level with the Indonesian government. The main added value of the collective approach in Sulawesi was collating feedback gathered from on-the-ground consultations and individual feedback mechanisms⁴ of organisations working in the response, and presenting that feedback in a united way to key stakeholders. Overall, the collective approach to CCE in Indonesia was a coordinated system of CCE with collective advocacy to decision-makers, driven by a collaborative spirit.

Although the Indonesian government led the overall disaster response and the AHA Centre coordinated international organisations, neither led the collective approach to CCE. Instead, the government, alongside local civil society organisations (CSOs) and community representatives, were involved in the collective approach to CCE on a limited and ad hoc basis. According to one respondent from the AHA Centre, coordinating CCE was outside of their mandate and capacity as coordinators at the international level. Thus, the collective approach was neither top-down nor bottom-up. It was largely an international priority that was not integrated into the overall strategic priority of the response and was not formally adopted by national or regional coordination

mechanisms, nor did it involve systematic participation of affected communities. The three main organisations driving CCE in the response – OCHA, UNICEF and IFRC – were not in a position of decision-making, nor were they representative of the Sulawesi population.

In Central Sulawesi, there were two tangible outputs of the collective approach to CCE. The first was the establishment of a CEWG ‘to support inter-cluster coordination in developing, prioritizing, testing and distributing commonly agreed lifesaving and life enhancing messages ... [and] to mitigate gaps, misinformation and duplication’ (Indonesia HCT, 2018b: 6). The CEWG gave humanitarian actors a space to come together and discuss broader issues arising from feedback and discuss how they affected the overall response.

Most members of the working group were staff members from local, national and international organisations whose main roles were not primarily CCE, and there were only a few consultants dedicated to communication, community engagement and/or accountability (and typically only in Indonesia on six-month contracts). In the initial stages of the response, the CEWG met weekly in person and kept in touch daily via WhatsApp. The group was led by several national staff members, typically working for IFRC with the exception of one UNICEF consultant who led the group for the first half of 2019. Restrictions on international staff working in Central Sulawesi meant international surge capacity could not be used in on-the-ground leadership or technical delivery roles, as is often the case in other responses. Thus, the positioning of the CEWG as led by a national staff member and by the IFRC in connection with the national society, PMI, made sense, but there were some capacity gaps as coordinating a CEWG is, according to one respondent, ‘not something IFRC normally does ... but because someone needed to coordinate the working group, it fell to PMI and IFRC to do it’.

During CEWG meetings, working group members shared the concerns of the community gathered from on-the-ground interactions and

4 These included FGDs, assessments, hotlines, suggestion boxes, phone-in radio shows, social media, etc.

their own feedback mechanisms. They then identified the top three to five priorities, which members took to the appropriate cluster or sub-cluster. For example, if one of the issues arising was the lack of water in a particular IDP camp, that issue would be relayed during the WASH sub-cluster meeting by humanitarian actors who attended both meetings. Links between the CEWG and the other clusters and sub-clusters was informal and relied on goodwill and networks among humanitarian actors. Questions related to government decisions and policies were put to the Office of Public Relations (Pusdatina), and if they could not answer, the question was raised to the level of the Provincial Secretary (Sekda). The government did not formally integrate the CEWG into their decision-making process during the response, although officials did occasionally attend CEWG meetings and are increasingly interested in incorporating more CCE practices into the government's disaster response framework.

The answers gathered from the clusters, sub-clusters and government were taken back to the community via a printed frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet and shared as a PDF via WhatsApp. Other ways of communicating with the community were through humanitarian actors, health workers and volunteers on the ground. After several months, an online dashboard was created where complaints and feedback were logged, uploaded regularly to the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) and with a link posted on the government website. It was created and managed by various coordinators of the CEWG. The dashboard, however, does not appear to have reached its full potential, with around 40 downloads and 3,447 uploads by only four organisations (CARE, Oxfam, PMI and Save the Children).⁵

The second main output of the collective approach to CCE was *Suara komunitas* (*Community voices*), a bulletin that aimed to amplify the voices and concerns of affected people, in the hopes that the response would become more people-centred, as it adapted to people's needs. It was produced by the CEWG in connection with PMI, IFRC, OCHA, Pulse

Lab Jakarta and UNICEF and published in both English and Bahasa. Described as a 'vital product' by one respondent, this bulletin combined information from all and for all humanitarian agencies and was used to bring issues to the agendas of key stakeholders and decision makers at different levels of government as well as humanitarian actors who were not a part of the CEWG.

Data for the bulletin was collated from a variety of sources, including a weekly talk show on Radio Nebula co-hosted by PMI alongside government or local organisations, a joint needs assessment conducted by Humanitarian Forum Indonesia (HFI), site assessments conducted by the MoSA and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), perception surveys with women and girls by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), community focus groups and other feedback from social media and face-to-face discussions with affected people.

The first edition of *Suara komunitas* appeared more than a month after the earthquake, in November 2018, and included information on how affected people preferred to get information, what information they were requesting and whether they were aware of a feedback mechanism. It introduced the Radio Nebula programme and outlined common issues and frequent rumours as well as the main feedback collected by PMI (CEWG, 2018a). The second edition updated this information and focused primarily on the issue of temporary shelter, at the request of the Sekda (CEWG, 2018b). The third and final edition of *Suara komunitas*, published in March 2019, continued the focus on shelter, but broadened into other priorities, such as access to diverse and nutritious food and non-food items and protection concerns such as psychosocial issues, child protection, misinformation, violence and exploitation and abuse through analysing the results of the multi-sector needs assessment conducted by REACH. It also included the results of UNFPA's perception survey (CEWG, 2019).

The third component of CCE – feedback and complaints – is not always tailored to

5 Access to an anonymised and undetailed version of the dashboard is available here: <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/cewg-data-on-sector-based-feedback-central-sulawesi-response>.

fit the context in disaster response, as many organisations rely on traditional feedback and complaint mechanisms, such as hotlines and suggestion boxes, that may not be appropriate in all settings, particularly if there is no socialisation around how they are used. In Indonesia, many interviewees and FGD participants noted that feedback was best delivered face-to-face, through community meetings. According to *Suara komunitas*, however, only 15% of feedback was done face-to-face, whereas 57% came through complaints/feedback boxes (CEWG, 2019). In one FGD, participants remarked that in general they felt they did not know how to channel their complaints, that they only talked with one another ‘in the hope that there is somebody who can bring the critiques to “higher people” or decision-makers’, though they did note that some NGOs had organised suggestion boxes, which had resulted in changes around blanket aid instead of targeting. At the same time, those receiving aid did not always seem to feel comfortable using face-to-face complaint mechanisms. According to one INGO worker, who asked a female beneficiary whether she would have preferred to have an indoor rather than an outdoor latrine in the house they were rebuilding for her, the woman agreed that it would have been her preference, but because it was not her money she did not feel she could say anything, as it was not her right to ask.

2.3 Transition from response to recovery

At the end of October 2018 – only one month after the disaster – the government declared the emergency (immediate relief) phase over and handed control to the provincial- and district-level ministries to continue as the response moved into a transition and then an early recovery phase.⁶ For various reasons, the transition phase was extended several

times, to April 2019. In this phase, some of the provincial- and district-level ministries mapped neatly on to those at the national level, such as protection, which remained with MoSA, whereas others shifted. For instance, emergency WASH was under MoSA at the national level, but in the transition phase WASH shifted to the provincial-level Department of Public Works. ICCG meetings continued through the transition phase, though some agencies and NGOs stopped working when the emergency phase ended.

The start of the recovery phase at the end of April 2019 saw the gradual winding down of the operations of many international humanitarian organisations, who finished their work (whether on their initiative or as requested by the government) based on this phasing rather than on the level of need of affected communities. As one UN agency worker explained, ‘It’s harder for humanitarian organisations to operate in the early recovery phase. ... There’s been a recognition by humanitarian actors that there are still humanitarian needs, but as with many responses, there’s a point beyond which they need to let others come in and continue that work’. FGD respondents agreed, noting that, after the emergency phase ended, they have struggled to receive aid, as more agencies have terminated their programmes despite there still being need, and they do not yet have steady income nor have they been able to re-establish their previous livelihoods. Almost 18 months following the disaster, many FGD participants still relied on NGOs’ support and claimed that government programmes were either not working or not reaching everyone.

By contrast, staying and working in the early recovery stage is much easier for national and local organisations that often view humanitarian organisations as ‘hit-and-run’ because they leave when the emergency phase ends – though the decision to stop operations is not always left to their discretion, but rather also depends on decisions made by the government and donors. Yet, even though they know their work during the recovery phase may end abruptly and before

6 The Central Sulawesi disaster was a provincial-level disaster, meaning all of the affected areas lay within one province. Ordinarily, a provincial-level disaster would be led completely by the provincial government. However, in this case, the national government took over operational leadership in the early days because the province was heavily affected.

the needs of affected people have subsided, UN agencies and international organisations rarely take time to build the capacity of those who will be left behind once they're gone. According to a position paper put forth by local CSOs, when international and national actors departed, they were left with a capability gap, and their 'ability as a local partner has also not been enhanced', nor are they 'better equipped to face future disasters' (OMS, 2019: 7).⁷

In terms of CCE, the CEWG was still running as of February 2020, but other resources dedicated to the collective approach to CCE, such as *Suara komunitas*, ended in March 2019, at the end of the emergency phase. Nevertheless, the communication needs of those affected continue in the recovery phase, particularly due to the complexity of this disaster and the need to relocate and find permanent housing for many. Relocation sites have been identified by the government (though the spatial plan has still to be approved), but more socialisation is needed to communicate to affected communities where they will be moving and why, as well as to alleviate their concerns around everyday life, such as questions about water supply and facilities, where they will find work and where their children will attend school.

The initial response plan noted that the CCE 'programme's exit strategy is envisioned as in integration into existing response and recovery mechanisms including, where appropriate, humanitarian and/or development partners. As accountability and community resilience are core development themes, this work transfers seamlessly into recovery and reconstruction

phases if this was to become relevant' (Indonesia HCT, 2018b: 8). In practice, however, this has not been 'seamless'. There are ongoing discussions, particularly within IFRC, which leads the CEWG, about what to do with the CEWG – whether it should remain with IFRC until their operations finish in 2021 and then also come to an end, or whether it should be handed over to another organisation that could continue the work. As of February 2020, no decision had been made.

One way in which the collective approach to CCE continues, however, is through the Community of Practice (CoP) currently being established in Indonesia by the same key players who established the CEWG (UNICEF, OCHA and IFRC). The purpose of the CoP 'is to leverage the experience of a multi-sector platform that brings together diverse partners, providing technical support in improving the coordination, delivery and advocacy of more inclusive community engagement approaches in humanitarian action' (unpublished terms of reference). For the CoP, the lessons learned in Sulawesi by the CEWG and others would be institutionalised at a national level, and a national structure developed, so that it could be re-localised when the next disaster strikes. Because the CoP is still undergoing its consultation phase, it is difficult to assess whether this will be an effective way to continue the collective approach to CCE. Moreover, like the CEWG, the CoP is largely driven by the international humanitarian community. In order to be taken seriously, it should be integrated into the national emergency preparedness plan and the disaster response architecture by the BNPB.⁸

7 This paper does not specifically refer to CCE, but rather speaks to the response as a whole.

8 The emergence of Covid-19 has halted the consultation phase of the CoP, and it has since transitioned back into the CEWG for the active response. As the CoP was never validated or incorporated into the HCT or the government response architecture, the reactivated CEWG has struggled to be acknowledged by the existing humanitarian structure.

3 The impact of a collective approach to CCE on the humanitarian response

This section evaluates the benefits and limitations of the collective approach to CCE within the Central Sulawesi response. Though the collective approach added value to the overall response through improved coordination and collective advocacy based on collated feedback, this does not necessarily mean that CCE was done well. Affected people who participated in the FGDs for this study overwhelmingly felt there was a lack of clear information provided to them, and humanitarian workers interviewed for this study agreed. Communication was more often one-way than two-way, and there was little evidence of closing the feedback loop – either communicating decisions back to affected communities or improving the response based on their feedback – on a systematic basis, or at scale. Nevertheless, a response does not need to have got CCE right before it can attempt to do CCE collectively, and, indeed, a collective approach to CCE can often improve CCE within the response, as was the case in Indonesia.

3.1 How the collective approach to CCE benefited the humanitarian response

The introduction of a collective approach to CCE positively impacted the humanitarian response in Central Sulawesi through both the technical goal of streamlined engagement and the aim of making the response people-centred and amplifying the voices of affected communities. As a national staff member of an INGO remarked,

‘The CEWG ... was more than one organisation could do on its own’. Many interviewees pointed to the collective approach as a solution for an increasingly siloed response, where needs are divided into clusters. Instead, collective approaches to CCE should address collective cross-sectoral problems and advocate for collective cross-sectoral outcomes. The CEWG provided a space where the complex and multi-dimensional concerns of affected communities were shared and discussed, before being elevated to the appropriate clusters, organisations and government ministries. According to a national UN worker, she attended the CEWG to raise the issues and concerns she heard from her beneficiaries that fell outside of her agency’s mandate so that their voices could be heard.

Sharing feedback and the key issues faced by the community in one space also allowed for more analysis of big trends than would have been possible without the larger CEWG. Although there was more data than data analysis in this response (see section 4.2.5), the analysis that did occur most tangibly came in the form of *Suara komunitas*, the CEWG output that collected community feedback and presented it to organisations and government officials in decision-making positions. The second issue of the bulletin noted that the concerns raised in the first issue were presented

to government authorities in Central Sulawesi, through discussions with the provincial government directly and through the cluster coordinators who represent the national ministries.

The feedback was welcomed by the provincial government as an opportunity to better respond to the immediate needs of people displaced by the multiple disasters and the Provincial Secretary made a request for the next edition to focus more on the complex issues around temporary shelter (CEWG, 2018b: 2–3).

According to one of the leaders of the CEWG, the Sekda described it as a ‘good and useful product’.

The CEWG also shared feedback with other clusters and government line ministries verbally, and a benefit of the collective approach was that they could advocate as a unified voice. One example of this was when the shelter sub-cluster took the feedback gathered from the community about their dislike of the communal, barrack-style shelters that were planned to house people temporarily to the provincial government. Although there were competing pressures with the national government, the provincial government eventually agreed to allow NGOs to build individual temporary shelters alongside the government-built communal shelters as a small compromise, based on the collective feedback of community preference. This eased the behind-the-scenes advocacy work mentioned in section 4.1.3, as organisations that came together to approach the government were not, according to one respondent, ‘seen as only one organisation trying to do something, but it makes everyone feel safe because then you have the togetherness of working on some issues, and when you meet the government you are seen as one’.

Other benefits of the collective approach to CCE mentioned by respondents included maximising energy and resources by pouring them into collectively identified priorities and avoiding duplication and filling gaps through coordination. Without a collective approach, one respondent noted, it is ‘almost impossible for one organisation to reach the whole community ... [and] complex issues are difficult to address by only one institution’.

3.2 How the collective approach to CCE limited the humanitarian response

Conversely, however, the collective approach to CCE also limited the humanitarian response in Central Sulawesi. Whereas some respondents felt that the approach saved resources, others – mainly those from organisations that had already dedicated resources to CCE and the CEWG – noted that it took up time and resources, particularly in setting it up, though they agreed that it saved resources once underway. Others felt that the collective approach was worth it, but noted that it took extra time to come to a consensus: ‘Sometimes it takes a week or two, and that’s a long time in an emergency response’. This raises questions around whether or not collective approaches to CCE should be implemented in short-term emergency responses, due to the amount of time and resources that need to be invested to make it effective, particularly if it is not already included in preparedness plans.⁹ In the Central Sulawesi response, the time expended on building and implementing paid off in the long run. It created a streamlined approach that focused on and advocated for those issues that were considered the main priorities in the response, rather than in each individual sector, and allowed for more effective collective advocacy in a response where the humanitarian actors involved in the CEWG were not in the position to make decisions themselves.

This lack of decision-making power, however, led other respondents to believe that, though the collective approach had not hindered the response, it had not benefitted it either, as there was a lack of uptake by the government in response to most suggestions put forward. This, they said, was proof that the collective approach was ‘not effective because it was trying to make changes, but they didn’t really happen’. While outputs such as *Suara komunitas* were praised by some, others felt they ‘were not really part

9 This question will be explored further in the forthcoming final report for this project, which will draw from all five case studies (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Mozambique and Yemen).

of a collective approach. It's not getting bigger or influencing things'. Although the HCT was supportive of the CEWG, the HCT were not the key decision-makers in this response. Unless there is buy-in at the decision-making level (i.e. the government in this case), a collective approach to CCE is unlikely to have large-scale impact. Conversely, without a collective approach to advocate jointly on behalf of affected people, the response may have ignored the wishes of communities altogether, and the small gains that were won, particularly around shelter, may not have been otherwise.

Finally, several respondents held the view that we should not yet be talking about community engagement at all because

you cannot engage a community without empowering a community. They don't know they can engage, have a right to engage, that their voice should be heard. The fundamental work for community engagement is empowerment, understanding rights, what they can demand for, the mechanisms to ask for it and the organisations to go to

for this. If they knew this, they could organise themselves.

Others agreed and stated that part of the work of community engagement should be teaching the community to push for what they want without agitating the government. However, this perception that affected communities did not know their rights or were not willing to demand them did not match the FGDs for this research. In the FGDs, participants explained that they were aware of their rights and had been protesting to try and obtain what was due, but that their complaints and protests had not been answered. Indeed, they had stopped protesting because they saw it as a waste of time, having never received a sufficient response. In their words, 'The only thing we can do right now is surrender our fate to God'. The second edition of *Suara komunitas* reported that 73% of people surveyed were aware of feedback mechanisms, but if feedback does not lead to noticeable change, and the feedback loop is not closed in a way that explains to people why their complaints have not been addressed, affected communities are unlikely to continue to use them.

4 Factors that facilitated and limited collective approaches to CCE

This study unearthed several factors that both facilitated and limited a collective approach to CCE in the Central Sulawesi response in Indonesia. In terms of facilitating factors, the collective approach was aided by an underlying collaborative spirit and established relationships among humanitarian actors and government officials. There were agreed ways of working regarding the government-led modified cluster system, which involved behind-the-scenes advocacy by UN agencies and other international actors with government officials and regional, national and local organisations. In terms of CCE, technology, particularly WhatsApp, was used to communicate more broadly and with more stakeholders throughout the response, improving the collectivity of the response.

By contrast, there were several factors that limited the collective approach to CCE. On the part of the government, delays in decision-making and disrupted communication flows meant that the humanitarian sector did not always have information available to disseminate to affected communities. On the part of the humanitarian community, parallel and overlapping systems of coordination and communication inhibited and complicated the collective approach. Additionally, a lack of local capacity for CCE meant dedicated resources from some UN agencies and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement had to be brought in as surge capacity, and the use of confusing terminology and different languages made it difficult for local and national organisations to participate in the CEWG. Finally, while a large amount of data was collected, it remained

largely at the micro level and was not curated or organised in a way that lent itself to analysis at the macro level that could improve the response.

4.1 Facilitating factors

4.1.1 Collaborative spirit

One of the main factors that helped promote the collective approach is the prevalence of a collaborative spirit within Indonesia, or as one respondent described it: ‘Collective ideas were what was really driving this collective system’. Through various interviews and conversations, it became apparent that humanitarian actors and government officials would choose to work together to deliver the humanitarian response – this was in large part due to the sense of community and appreciation of the mutual benefit that comes from collaborating. As one respondent noted, ‘There’s a culture of volunteering in Indonesia, a culture of helping out, a communal culture, a caring culture’.

Limited resources also required actors to work together to ensure maximum efficiency with no gaps and no duplication. As a UN worker put it, ‘Different organisations were trying as much as they could to coordinate with others because each understood that they have only very limited resources unless they can collaborate with others’. Many humanitarian actors who went to Sulawesi had learned this lesson in Lombok only months before, and they implemented it again in Sulawesi even though resources were not as scarce due to the acceptance of international assistance.

4.1.2 Pre-established relationships and ways of working in a nationally led response

A key factor driving this collaborative spirit, and thus the collective approach to CCE, were the pre-established ways of working and the relationships among humanitarian workers and between them and the government. Indonesia has a national legacy of disaster management, and the high percentage of national staff within UN agencies and INGOs means that most of those who responded to the Sulawesi disaster had also responded to every disaster in Indonesia dating back to Aceh during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami; several respondents labelled the Central Sulawesi response as ‘an Aceh reunion’. Those working in the response also had personal relationships with government officials – and UN agencies had bilateral partnerships with government ministries – that they could leverage, unlike in other countries where such relationships and networks must first be built before they can be used. For example, in addition to the work of the HCT, OCHA Indonesia convenes bi-monthly coordination meetings with the government, donors, national and international NGOs, UN agencies, the private sector and universities. This helped to maintain these relationships and keep everyone informed prior to the disaster.

Another type of pre-existing relationship that assisted collective approaches involved INGOs and their local partners on the ground in Sulawesi. Because of the government’s decree that INGOs work through local implementing partners, the first few months of the response saw many INGOs scrambling to identify appropriate partners; however, those with pre-existing relationships were able to begin implementing programming much quicker. In the rush to find partners, many INGOs identified what turned out to be inappropriate partners. For example, some contracted small NGOs to handle large sums of money, which their administrative systems could not handle, or to do jobs like reconstruction in which they had no experience.

Pre-established ways of working also contributed to the collective approach. The buy-in to the cluster and sub-cluster system evident in all levels of government as well as in UN agencies and NGOs is also representative of this

collective spirit, and one UN worker noted that having clusters supported by the government made collective action easier. Although one local organisation noted that they did not yet share complaints with other agencies due to concerns about confidentiality, they did raise the issues within cluster, sub-cluster and working-group meetings. Because they knew each other, several respondents emphasised that it was easier to approach actors in other clusters when needs outside of their own programme or mandate arose.

4.1.3 Behind-the-scenes advocacy with the government

These pre-existing relationships and ways of working also created space and opportunity for UN agencies and INGOs to work behind the scenes with the government and advocate for change. The shift towards a more supportive role was described by a UN worker as a ‘difficult role to play because to do something without getting the credit and to allow others to be visible required a different set of skills other than the usual skills – diplomatic skills, interpersonal skills, working behind the scenes, collaboratively with others and supporting colleagues’.

One example of this is how NGOs and the shelter sub-cluster were able to work with the Office of Public Relations to ensure that the most vulnerable in the communities, such as widows and those with disabilities, were prioritised and given access to appropriate shelter. Based on community feedback around temporary shelters, which was collected and disseminated through the second edition of *Suara komunitas*, the shelter cluster fed into the guidelines on temporary shelters that were passed by the provincial government, allowing NGOs to build individual temporary shelters to complement the collective shelters built by the government.

Most international staff remained in Jakarta where they could assist the government in a technical capacity, while national staff were deployed to Sulawesi, as UN agencies and INGOs were cognisant that the response should be seen as a national response, headed by the Government of Indonesia. This also extended to the CCE capacity that supported the CEWG and the publication of *Suara komunitas*.

Whereas the CEWG was led in Sulawesi by a national staff member, most surge capacity and international staff stayed in Jakarta. According to one global expert brought in to help with CCE, by remaining in Jakarta international staff could ‘make sure that community engagement and AAP remained on the agenda’. Thus, though the response was locally led by the national- and provincial-level governments, and involved many local and national organisations on the ground, the push for CCE came from the international level, based in Jakarta. This two-pronged approach to CCE – emphasised both on the ground and in the capital – ensured CCE remained a concern throughout the response.

4.1.4 Use of technology to communicate

Finally, the use of technology to communicate also helped facilitate the collective approach to CCE. National staff noted WhatsApp as a key driver of easy communication. One national staff member of a UN organisation explained that even camp coordination was being conducted remotely via WhatsApp, with camp managers able to check in with IOM in Jakarta via their smartphones. A national staff member for IFRC also noted that WhatsApp was useful in keeping the CEWG going when there were not enough items to discuss to justify calling a meeting. Others felt that WhatsApp solved the problem of local organisations not having enough human resource capacity to be involved in all cluster meetings (see 3.2.2) because they could still be included in the cluster WhatsApp groups (see also Humanitarian Advisory Group and Pujiono Centre, 2019).

WhatsApp was also cited in an FGD in Palu as a way for affected people to communicate with humanitarian organisations. One FGD explained that they used WhatsApp to ‘contact other humanitarian agencies directly to deliver food and other basic needs immediately on site rather than using the government scheme’. This resulted in a distribution of goods from Jakarta only three days following the disaster. Nevertheless, the group agreed that they preferred face-to-face communication because not everyone is literate or has a mobile phone. Another FGD, by contrast, did not have any contact details for

humanitarian organisations, so were unable to send messages via WhatsApp. They would have preferred WhatsApp in order to communicate with humanitarian workers directly rather than gathering in a crowd in NGO offices.

For international staff, however, WhatsApp was seen as both a facilitating and a limiting factor. As one global expert explained,

The other unique thing about this response is that everyone uses WhatsApp. It was a tsunami of WhatsApp messages. This 100% changes everything. It totally and utterly changed the entire disaster response. Normally we would set up a website to share documents and have a mailing list that was open to whoever wanted to join. Now, you have to find someone who’s a member of a WhatsApp group. There’s no list of WhatsApp groups, no record of the WhatsApp groups. Every group was averaging 200–300 messages an hour, and then you have to scan them all, and a lot also had attachments and PDFs. Compare this to previously when we got six emails a day.

There were WhatsApp groups for every cluster, which ‘worked in Indonesia’, according to an INGO worker, ‘because everything in Indonesia is done over WhatsApp’. However, for him and other cluster leads this was often a frustrating experience as they were receiving updates every few minutes (usually in Bahasa), and these messages were not organised into topics or themes, which would usually be the case if communication was done via email or DropBox. According to the Humanitarian Advisory Group and Pujiono Centre (2019: 11), ‘there were some 45 WhatsApp groups operating during the emergency phase of the response’. If this is to be the trend moving forward, humanitarian organisations will need to think critically about how to best use WhatsApp between themselves and with affected communities, keeping in mind that variations in literacy levels, socioeconomic status, age and access to technology will inevitably exclude sections of the population.

4.2 Limiting factors

4.2.1 Delays in decision-making and disrupted communication flows

Even the best-laid plan for a collective approach to CCE will fail if, as happened in this disaster according to one respondent, there is ‘no good information to provide to communities’. According to another interviewee, ‘Most of the requests for information or feedback to the community that cannot be addressed is related to government policy, such as permanent housing, living allowances, allowances to rebuild’. Thus, the main factors that limited the efficiency and impact of the collective approach to CCE in Central Sulawesi were delays in decision-making and communication flows between the government and humanitarian actors, as well as between different organisations.

In terms of decision-making, Indonesia has a relatively decentralised government structure, but during a national emergency, decision-making remains with the national government. Delays often occurred when decisions are not made in a timely manner or are not communicated to the lower levels of government. In the Central Sulawesi response, communication flows were designed to work vertically, with decisions being made by the national government and relayed to the provincial government, the district government, the sub-district government and the municipal or village leaders before finally reaching the communities. Once it arrived at the municipal or village level, however, information often remained in the municipal or village administrative office, where few people went. Conversely, feedback was designed to be raised by communities to the municipal or village leaders, who raised it to the sub-district government, and so on to the district government, to the provincial government before finally reaching the national government. In an emergency response, the cluster and sub-cluster system help ensure this feedback is channelled

to the appropriate ministry by the feedback collectors – whether they be NGOs, UN agencies, local organisations or community representatives – raising issues to the appropriate government co-leads at the cluster and sub-cluster meetings.¹⁰

If, however, the communication between any of these levels breaks down or is misunderstood, whether in passing down information or in passing up community needs, the entire communication flow is disrupted – or, in the words of one FGD participant: ‘I suppose there is information related to aid and assistance, but it doesn’t reach us’. One example of decision-making breaking down is the provincial government awaiting a decision on funding by the national government, which is in turn waiting on the provincial government to provide a plan for reconstruction, which they cannot accurately budget for until they know how much funding they will receive from the national government. Indeed, as noted in the real-time review conducted by the Disasters Emergency Committee and Swiss Solidarity, ‘According to key informants, the first 30 days of the response was confused by ambiguity about respective national and provincial responsibilities, a proliferation of both government and non-government actors, and coordination structures which took time to become functional’ (Lawry-White et al., 2019: 6–7; see also 3.2.2).

Misunderstanding also occurred when the provincial government instructed municipal and village governments not to be strict when asking to see ID cards of people receiving aid, but by the time the decision arrived at that level, it was misunderstood to mean that they should be strict and require everyone to show ID cards, leading to confusion and frustration among communities in need. As explained in one of the FGDs in Palu, IDPs were required to have an ID card or another document, stamped by the village leader, but the village leader was difficult to find as he was dealing with casualties within his own family and was also displaced from his home.

¹⁰ During the emergency phase, these co-leads are national-level ministries. During the transition and recovery phases this is devolved to provincial- and district-level ministries, though decision-making power still largely remains with the national government.

Without these documents, however, they said they were unable to access government aid.¹¹

Affected people who participated in the FGDs for this study overwhelmingly felt that there was a lack of clear information from the government and humanitarian organisations and that when information was received it was often inaccurate. One group noted they had ‘no information at all about who should be contacted to get donations, whether from the government or NGOs and INGOs’. Another group said they were still confused about whether they would be relocated or given the government stimulus package to rebuild their houses. A third group claimed that the list of prospective recipients for aid was unclear because it was always changing. While the government had set criteria about who would receive the stimulus package, this eligibility criteria was not clearly communicated to affected populations, nor was it strictly adhered to. Many respondents in the FGDs for this study complained they had only received part of what they were due.

As the emergency phase ended, the primary type of information requested by affected people was regarding temporary shelter (CEWG, 2018b). Yet, the lack of communication on this issue stemmed not from a breakdown in communication, but rather from delays in decision-making around what types of shelters would be delivered and by whom, and where they would be located, particularly for those who had to be relocated from areas destroyed or deemed high risk for future tsunamis and liquefaction. Although it was clear early on that some areas would be unsuitable for reconstruction, an official map determining precisely where the boundaries of these red zones lie is yet to be finalised by the government. According to the 28 February 2020 update published by the Shelter Sub Cluster, one in five temporary shelters were yet to be planned. In Palu district, which contains Balaroa and Petobo (two of the liquefaction sites), this number is one in two (Shelter Sub Cluster, 2020).

Another issue around communicating information about temporary shelters was that it was generally one-way, rather than two-

way. The lack of consultation with affected communities about what types of shelters they felt were desirable, or even appropriate, was attributed in several interviews to the need of the government to decide about temporary shelters quickly. Rather than taking time to discuss the options with the communities who would be living in them, the government employed the same technical person who had been tasked with building temporary shelters in Aceh 14 years earlier, without taking on board any of the lessons learned from that disaster, namely that most affected people do not wish to live in shelters that house multiple families due to a lack of privacy. To remedy this, the second edition of *Suara komunitas* focused on temporary shelters and was used to modify the government’s plans so that both individual and communal shelters were built.

Humanitarian workers interviewed for this study agreed that affected populations did not receive enough information in this response – a perception mirrored by a 2019 CDAC status update on national and subnational platforms. In Indonesia, this update stated, ‘Partners in the Central Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami response identified a lack of life-saving and life-enhancing information sharing with affected communities, as well as systematically collecting and acting on feedback’ (Sattler et al., 2019: 14). CCE failed to become an overall approach that allowed systematic two-way communication because it did not have the buy-in of the government, on whom it relied as an information source.

4.2.2 Parallel (and overlapping) systems of coordination and communication

Another factor that limited the collective approach to CCE was alternative, and often competing or overlapping, systems of coordination and communication, without a mandate for CCE, which weakened the effectiveness of the CEWG. The official clusters, sub-clusters and working groups were the main system of coordination, alongside separate ICCG meetings, but other organisations, especially

11 This difficulty was compounded by the fact there were few other options, particularly for the first three months of the response, as the government centralised all the aid arriving in Central Sulawesi.

though not solely international organisations, developed parallel systems to discuss the needs of affected communities and how to do community engagement. For example, some coordination structures developed among international organisations were funded by the same donor, while other collaborations between international and national organisations had pre-existing coordination mechanisms, such as the Emergency Capacity Building Network. Finally, national mass organisations¹² and their partners often coordinated on their own and did not necessarily see the value of contributing to the cluster system or the working groups, leaving a gap in the CEWG. Rather than being excluded by those running the CEWG, national and local organisations often chose not to include themselves.

As one respondent noted, ‘Coordination largely works for the big NGOs: Save the Children, World Vision and UN agencies, but it was mostly coordinated through structures that they were more familiar with’, such as the UN cluster system. Local organisations, on the other hand, found it impossible to join all of the cluster meetings that pertained to their programming because they had fewer staff available to do so. As a national staff member of an INGO explained,

The way coordination was done might overwhelm local organisations. For INGOs, usually there was a dedicated person to be sent to these meetings, but for local NGOs, they will be overburdened with all of these meetings. The whole day you can have meetings – from nine to five. If local organisations only have one dedicated person, then they will not do their job because they will be in meetings all day.

Other interviewees noted that the cluster system works well for the way the UN is structured, with agencies leading clusters that relate to their

mandate, but it works much less well for small local organisations that often have programming across multiple clusters but with fewer resources to stretch between them. Indeed, this sentiment was strongly expressed in the position paper of local CSOs: ‘There have been so many various cluster meetings, all the time and everywhere. CSOs like us who had limited members and staff had to run from one meeting to the other. After running out of breath and not getting clear results, we gave up’ (OMS, 2019: 8).

4.2.3 Lack of local capacity for collective CCE

UN agencies such as OCHA and UNICEF as well as the IFRC dedicated financial and human resources to CCE, but a lack of dedicated local capacity and expertise necessitated bringing in expert secondments and surge capacity to establish the CEWG and publish *Suara komunitas*. This happened particularly at the beginning of the response, until these roles could be taken over by national staff. The elimination of dedicated human and financial resources to CCE and the end of the transition period are the main reasons that *Suara komunitas* ended after the third edition, not that the need for it had ended.

One of the limitations of relying on surge capacity is that consultants tend to be on short-term contracts, which result in high turnover – a problem that was particularly true for the CEWG. No fewer than five people were in charge of the CEWG during the first year, and with every new leader, the objectives and mandate of the working group changed slightly, as each put their own stamp on things. Rather than employ five people on two- to six-month contracts, a single person on a year-long, or even rolling, contract would have provided more continuity on the ground and offered more opportunities for networking and consensus-building. Since then, however, the CEWG has been led with much more stability, and the leadership of the collective approach has been taken over and promoted by national staff who now have experience in CCE and

12 In Indonesia, mass organisations have a separate legal determination and guidelines from other NGOs. Mass organisations are defined by law as ‘voluntary groups established with shared interests and aspirations and that uphold the unity of the country based on the state ideology of Pancasila’ – or the five principles of belief in one God, just and civilised humanity, Indonesian unity, democracy under the wise guidance or representative consultations and social justice for all people in Indonesia (Johnson, 2013).

will be able to lead technical delivery from the beginning of the next response. While the HCT has advocated with the government at a strategic level for more integration of CCE into the national framework to cement capacity and national buy-in for future disasters, these discussions remain ongoing.

4.2.4 Confusing terminology and different languages

Within the first month of the response, the HCT had produced a roadmap for collective accountability and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in the Central Sulawesi earthquake response. This roadmap laid out what the collective approach to CCE should look like and what its aims should be (Indonesia HCT, 2018b). Despite this, there was still confusion and limited local understanding of what collective approaches to CCE entail. Most respondents did not understand the term ‘collective approach to CCE’, or even CCE. One interviewee who was involved in the CEWG admitted that there was ‘no understanding within [his organisation] around what the collective approach meant’, and that even he did not really understand it, even though that was what he had been doing in the response. This lack of local understanding in Sulawesi (and Indonesia more broadly) mirrors the global level.¹³

However, this does not mean that national and local organisations did not already do community engagement. Many local organisations claimed ‘community engagement is in us’ – inherent in their nature as a community organisation. At the national level, mass organisations often did community engagement in the Central Sulawesi response better than internationals who had dedicated CCE positions. One mass organisation, for example, places a representative in each community to live for a year, in order to get to know the people and the needs of the community. The idea

that the principles of community engagement are inherently part of local organisations was cited as one of the reasons local organisations did not see the value of participating in the CEWG or other parts of the collective approach. International organisations, by contrast, often adhered to the practices of CCE without buying into the principles in order to ‘tick the box’ required by donors to have feedback mechanisms and community engagement strategies before going on to ‘business as usual’.

Language was also an issue for many and created a divide between locals and internationals that limited the collective approach to CCE. Bahasa was often spoken in cluster meetings and used in WhatsApp groups, which many international staff did not understand; whereas when English was used many of the local organisations did not understand. Moreover, beyond Bahasa and English, many internationals spoke a ‘humanitarian language’ of the CHS, Sphere Standards and Grand Bargain, which was not easily understood by many national and local staff (see also Barbelet, 2019). Thus, even though Bahasa was prioritised at cluster meetings, local organisations still felt excluded because they did not speak the language of the humanitarian sector. According to a group of local CSOs: ‘Coordination between CSOs and with local governments and communities used to be harmonious and at par. After the disaster occurred, it turned into multi-level coordination, compartmentalized, and led by those coming from the outside. We did not fully understand the way of working, the standards and the language’ (OMS, 2019: 8). Coming to a consensus around a single term and acronym and finding ways to speak each other’s language would help reduce confusion in a collective approach by bringing everyone – national governments, UN agencies, INGOs, national and local organisations – to a common understanding and help move the agenda forward.

13 When the emphasis on communication and accountability first emerged, the two most prominent terms were AAP and CwC. In the first working paper published by the CDAC Network, CwC was seen as less formalised than accountability, which was viewed as both a strength and a weakness, as it was more able to adapt to different contexts and emphasised communication, but it lacked the defined standards and quality frameworks of accountability (CDAC Network, 2014). Since then, other terms and acronyms have emerged, such as C4D, CEA and CCE. The various and competing acronyms have minimal differences, yet they succeed in creating ‘misunderstanding and confusion within and between agencies and with affected populations’ (Austin, 2017: 15).

4.2.5 Little analysis of data

The sheer number of coordination systems, community meetings and WhatsApp groups in this response led to an abundance of data from assessments and feedback, but there was little curation of the data or analysis to improve the response. According to one respondent, ‘There was not a systematic effort to collect and manage data to understand where the population was and how to effectively serve them’. A similar perception was noted in a real-time review when ‘some survey respondents questioned whether this feedback was being used systematically for decision-making’ (Lawry-White et al., 2019: 8). Without using feedback in a systematic way to improve the response, it is difficult to close the feedback loop as there is no opportunity to explain to affected communities how their feedback has impacted outcomes.

The emphasis from the local government remained on obtaining and verifying micro-

level data – names and addresses of victims and beneficiaries and the location and severity of damage to individual houses and structures – rather than using the micro-level data to inform macro-level analysis. Even FGD participants believed that the repeated verification of micro data was one of the main reasons why programmes, particularly around relocation and reconstruction, were slow to be implemented. ‘What we need to do’, according to someone from the shelter sub-cluster, ‘is overlay various forms of data’. This could be done by overlaying the micro-level data collected with existing data on vulnerability or risk in order to understand better the issues that face each affected community. A collective approach to CCE can help by analysing the broad trends that come out of community feedback. These trends were clearly outlined in the *Suara komunitas*, but this type of feedback trend analysis needs to continue into the transition and early recovery periods.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 What does Indonesia tell us about collective approaches to CCE?

The response to the Central Sulawesi earthquake, tsunami and liquefaction that struck at the end of September 2018 demonstrates that a collective approach is possible, but it does not guarantee good CCE. Likewise, CCE can happen without a collective approach, but it did benefit from it. In this response, the communication of important information to affected communities did not really improve, nor was the response modified significantly based on their feedback, though likely more than if there had not been a collective approach. Thus, the collective approach to Indonesia teaches us four main lessons:

1. Collective approaches to CCE are possible, but they require a collaborative spirit and healthy coordination practices.
2. The collective approach to CCE was undermined by a lack of clear national-level leadership and prioritisation. This is partly because it was not fully integrated into the overall architecture, which led to a focus on on-the-ground delivery, rather than prioritising CCE at the strategic decision-making level. The lack of local CCE capacity necessitated international surge capacity but, since international humanitarian actors were not in a decision-making position, it did not lead to a top-down approach. It also does not represent affected communities, which is needed for a bottom-up approach. This lack of understanding and clarity around CCE, both on local and global levels, undermines the impact of collective approaches to CCE.
3. Collective approaches are supposed to better present a unified voice around the concerns of affected communities, supporting collective advocacy on their behalf, to encourage decision-makers to take their feedback into account. However, in the Central Sulawesi response communities did not feel more empowered, were not able to participate more in their own response and were not engaged systematically in two-way communication.
4. Collective approaches need to involve all actors in the response. In Indonesia, this would include the national, provincial and local governments; the AHA Centre; UN agencies; INGOs; national mass organisations; local CSOs and faith-based organisations and affected communities. Yet, there is likely to be a trade-off: including more organisations and different stakeholders will inevitably increase the amount of time and discussion required to come to a consensus, but it will be a stronger consensus that all stakeholders can buy into.

The response in Indonesia cannot tell us how to design and deliver effective CCE in a sudden-onset emergency, how to ensure sustainability of the collective approach nor how to integrate and ensure prioritisation of CCE in a national response when CCE is the priority of internationals, as the response did not deliver these things. The following section offers recommendations for how a future response might do so.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on interviews with key stakeholders and FGDs with affected communities, this report offers the following recommendations for the Government of Indonesia; the international humanitarian community; regional, national and local organisations; and the CEWG and CoP.

5.2.1 Recommendations for the Government of Indonesia

First, the Government of Indonesia should make **clear and timely decisions**, following the pre-defined chain of command and roles and responsibilities laid out in national disaster management law and contingency plans, when possible. These decisions should then be communicated to relevant stakeholders so they can disseminate them further. These decisions should be linked to action. When no decision can yet be taken due to extenuating circumstances, it is also important to communicate that the government is working on the issues that are of concern to affected people, and to issue regular updates via several mediums and channels to ensure messages will reach as many people as possible, rather than relying on vertical communication flows.

Second, the government should have **feedback mechanisms** at the national, provincial, district and even village level. At the national level, a feedback mechanism already exists – Lapor (Citizens' Aspiration and Complaint Online System/*Layan Aspirasi dan Pengaduan Online Rakyat*), which means 'to report' in Bahasa. According to several interviewees and a 2017 evaluation of Lapor (Siregar et al., 2017), the uptake has been somewhat erratic and Lapor works better near Jakarta than in other provinces. Rather than build a new system, Lapor should be extended geographically, to cover all provinces equally, and in mandate, it should be used during disasters to channel feedback and complaints directly to the correct line ministries, and more work should be done to increase its uptake. Moreover, alternative feedback mechanisms should exist at the provincial, district and village levels and should be contextualised appropriately. For example, the provincial level may have a system similar

to Lapor, whereas the village level may employ a simpler feedback mechanism due to the lower volume of complaints; these systems should be able to work together so concerns from the village level can be escalated to the district and provincial levels. At present, not all areas are equipped for a technology-based mechanism.

Finally, the government should **incorporate CCE into the government-led cluster system**, whether through a separate sub-cluster with a dedicated government representative to coordinate among the other clusters at the inter-cluster level, or with guidelines that can be mainstreamed throughout all clusters and sub-clusters. If it becomes a separate sub-cluster, it is best placed under MoSA, whose role as a co-lead for other clusters (such as displacement and protection) would ensure its incorporation throughout most of the response. As the government evaluates its response to Central Sulawesi and any modifications needed for the disaster response architecture, now is the time to **embed the principles of CCE into the national disaster management system and emergency preparedness planning** so that they can be applied to any location that experiences a disaster in the future.

5.2.2 Recommendations for the international humanitarian community (UN agencies and INGOs)

First, the international humanitarian community, including UN agencies and INGOs, should **strengthen partnerships with government officials and local organisations across Indonesia now**, in the preparedness phase, so that when the next disaster happens, implementation through local partners can begin immediately. This was one of the main reasons some organisations were able to begin implementing their programmes quickly in the Central Sulawesi response. Moreover, if the concept of CCE is introduced in partnerships during the preparedness phase, it can be included from the beginning of the response and integrated into all programmes and projects.

Second, the international humanitarian community should **continue to engage the government, take an enabling role and support the structures that are in place**, through advocating on a strategic level and adding value on a technical level. The way Indonesia handled the Central

Sulawesi disaster is likely to be a roadmap for other governments in the region going forward: those countries with the capacity to handle the response internally are likely to do so, and when extra capacity is needed, they are likely to turn to the regional structure ASEAN, coordinated through the AHA Centre, before engaging the UN system. The international humanitarian community, then, needs to learn to work efficiently within this type of structure and look for areas where they can advocate for prioritising CCE, add technical expertise and continue to build the local capacity of the government and the regional structures in this area, both during disaster response and in the preparedness and recovery phases.

Third, once the response moves out of the emergency phase, **an area-based approach to the response may be more effective and help facilitate collective approaches to CCE**. Rather than continue the cluster system across the entire province, an area-based approach would see clusters rearranged so that actors who are working in particular villages or small regions would meet together to discuss issues that are important in those areas. People's lives are not lived in silos, and the coordination and communication between clusters in a village is likely more important, as the response moves from the emergency to the recovery phase, than the coordination and communication between the same cluster in different villages. In other words, communication and coordination between WASH and health in Sigi is more important than the communication and coordination between the WASH clusters in Sigi and in Donggala once the response moves from delivering emergency provisions to rebuilding communities. By shrinking the clusters' regions of responsibility, communities' feedback in each region would have more uptake within an area-based approach rather than getting lost among all feedback within the response. An area-based approach would also reduce the number of meetings and likely create more opportunities for smaller organisations to be involved in the coordination system.

Finally, the international humanitarian community should **focus on a more comprehensive exit strategy for CCE** when they are engaged in a response. One of the main

gaps noted in this response occurred in the transition phase between the emergency response phase and the early recovery phase. When the international community enters a response, they should already be thinking about an exit strategy regarding CCE, including building capacity for CCE at a local level, as they do not always know when the government will declare an end to the emergency phase. Then, when the international community leaves, they should maintain a strong focus on CCE – communicating to communities why they are leaving, to whom they are handing over their responsibilities and what the next steps will be for that community and the key stakeholders they should contact in order to receive information and give feedback. If a collective approach to CCE has been established from the beginning of the response, this transition is eased as the international community would be handing over to other groups who had been involved in the collective approach and who are already aware of the main concerns of the affected communities in each region.

5.2.3 Recommendations for regional, national and local organisations (intergovernmental, non-governmental, civil society and mass organisations)

For regional intergovernmental organisational structures such as the AHA Centre, if they are to continue to play a coordinating role in disaster response in the region, they should **build their coordination capacity** by learning from others who have experience, **support the coordination framework** that is in place and **emphasise the importance of effective CCE**. In the Central Sulawesi response, there were several extenuating circumstances that hindered the efforts of the AHA Centre to coordinate international humanitarian assistance. However, at the same time, if they are to be the main coordinating body in the region going forward, they should embrace their new role and build their capacity, so that they can coordinate future responses effectively.

For national and local organisations – NGOs, CSOs and mass organisations – a key way to facilitate better CCE is to start **documenting ways of working** so organisations coming into the area can learn from them. This case

study unearthed many stories of successful approaches to CCE, even if they are not labelled as ‘community engagement’. Sharing this knowledge and experience with other organisations (national and international) who are not as familiar with the culture and context would shorten the learning curve and allow better CCE programming from the start.

Second, national and local organisations should **participate in the CEWG**, and other established mechanisms like the cluster system and working groups. These mechanisms could be used to share knowledge and experience to benefit the entire response. Although it is understandable that smaller organisations may struggle to participate in all meetings during a response, participation in ways that can have the greatest impact – by sharing knowledge with other organisations – should be prioritised.

Finally, in pre-crisis preparedness plans, more could be done to **incorporate CCE into national and local organisations’ training programmes** so that staff and volunteers are better prepared and more knowledgeable on this topic when a disaster happens. Several organisations interviewed for this study acknowledged that their volunteers varied in terms of their experience and training in communicating with affected populations, and that there was a lack of training specifically focused on CCE. By introducing those concepts into staff and volunteer training programmes now, they will be better prepared when the next disaster strikes.

5.2.4 Recommendations for the Community Engagement Working Group and the Community of Practice

For the CEWG specifically, the best role of the working group during a response is as a **place of exchange for ideas and good practice** on: community engagement between international, national and local organisations; information and common messaging that can be shared with affected communities; and identifying and collating feedback in a way that can be brought

to decision-makers to influence a response. Local organisations often have readily available knowledge of communities’ preferred ways of communication; organisations could build on these, rather than conducting further assessments or figuring it out through trial and error, while being mindful that the inclusion of local organisations does not guarantee that all sectors of society will be equally represented. Moreover, **alternative ways of knowledge sharing should be explored**, so that local organisations with less human-resource capacity can be involved without this being a burden.

Second, during the transition period, consider **handing over the CEWG’s role on two levels**. First, hand over to the government, via the Office of Public Relations and government feedback mechanisms, and second, to a CSO, preferably one that is a consortia or forum and representative of several local organisations. This two-pronged approach would ensure the sustainability and neutrality of the CEWG’s work, offering the balance of an independent CSO while retaining the relationship with the existing governmental framework.

Third, in future disasters, **continue to use the mechanisms set up during this disaster** to build habits among the humanitarian community and establish regular ways of working, rather than building new mechanisms each time a disaster happens. This includes the format of *Suara komunitas* and the online dashboard hosted on HDX, both of which are likely to have greater impact during the next response when responders and decision-makers are already aware of them and their potential.

Finally, the CoP should be used not only to share knowledge, but also to **develop guidelines of good principles of CCE** in the Indonesian context. These guidelines should be more than a checklist of required items, and include theories and approaches to CCE, why it is important and the various ways it can be implemented in different contexts and by different stakeholders.

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Cover photo: Petobo village,
Palu city, Sulawesi island:
destruction left by the
earthquake and tsunami.
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