

Professionalism and Commitment: The Key to Cooperation?

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Introduction

The Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent has been going strong for over 80 years now. It was originally formed as a self-help network, after the First World War, to combat the Asian flu epidemic then sweeping Europe. An epidemic that ended up killing over two million people.

We are now a Federation of 177 national organizations, and we really are a Federation, in that membership is voluntary and all rules are self policed. We, in the Secretariat of our Federation, cannot make any one of our members do anything, we can facilitate, persuade and brow-beat, but at the end of the day it is done to how committed that national society is to balancing its personal ambitions and needs against the common good of the whole Federation.

Yet still, 83 year on, we manage to run coordinated disaster response programmes. I think there are essentially three reasons why we are able to work in a coordinated and cooperative way. Structure, standards and commitment.

Structure matters

Very early on we realized that disaster relief, particularly international disaster relief, could create its own disaster if not coordinated. Imagine the chaos that would have ensued if 15 foreign Red Cross Societies had all tried to send their assistance independently to the Japanese Red Cross after the 1921 Tokyo fire.

So, we have put in place a system which basically says that when a member society needs to make a call for international assistance, it does it through the Federations Secretariat and that all sister societies willing to respond to that call, send their assistance via the Secretariat. The job of the Secretariat is to ensure

the original request is clear, appropriate and doable and then to ensure that the response is coherent. With a bit of internal discipline and good will this works. Our international disaster response is, for the most part, well coordinated.

At the national level, a different approach has been taken. The Red Cross and Red Crescent is a unique organization. It is not an NGO. It is not a government body. It sits somewhere between the two, pre-dating in many ways the concept of the NGO. It is regarded as an independent assistant to the state. Each society is created partly through an act of legislation in that country, laying down the role of the Society - particularly in times of war - and affirming its independent nature and its duty to act as an "auxiliary" to the government.

In practice this means that every society seeks to find ways of working with state authorities to meet the society's aims. In the field of disaster response, we would expect every national society to be part of the country's national disaster preparedness and response plan. If the country doesn't have one then the society would be expected to lobby hard for one to be created. The plan should, amongst many other things, define clearly the role expected of the national Red Cross or Red Crescent in times of local disaster.

In the Philippines the local Red Cross is a member of the National Disaster Coordinating Council. In Cambodia the local Red Cross is a member of the National committee for Disaster Management, and so on.

Lesson one: Pre-defined and agreed structures for cooperation and coordination, which spell out roles and responsibilities, matter.

Standards can bind

Many fields of human endeavor seem to coordinate very well without structure. There is no governing structure for the PC software industry yet most software today can work in a coordinated way. There is no international governing council deciding on hospital equipment design, yet machines and installations in hospitals work.

The key here is agreed standards. Again this is something we in the Red Cross have used, although I admit we have always seen it as secondary to structure – a mistake I think. In the past ten years the realization that standards can enormously aid coordination has led to a whole host of developments. The most prominent is the development of the standards for humanitarian assistance negotiated under the Sphere project, which define the quality and nature of the most essential assistance a disaster victim has a right to expect, in food, water, health and shelter.

The very act of negotiating the Sphere standards and then participating in joint training on their use has aided coordination. Agencies and their staff get to know and trust each other better. But the real value comes from a common understanding of what humanitarian assistance is trying to achieve. Having the standards puts our business on a more professional footing. If you have six agencies on the ground all committed to delivering to the same standards and with the same concern for disaster victims, the probability of them taking the time to coordinate is so much higher.

Agreed standards can go much further than technical specifications. The Code of Conduct for NGOs seeks to define how foreign NGOs should behave when in someone else's country. The Humanitarian Accountability Project, another joint venture of international NGOs, seeks to develop an independent ombudsman like system for monitoring the quality of humanitarian assistance.

The highest-level standard of all, international law, is also being brought to bear on humanitarian assistance. Work is underway to explore the possibility of developing International Disaster Response Law (IDRL).

There are four key problem issues at present in international disaster response which international law might be able to address.

- Undefined donor state obligations
- Undefined recipient state obligations
- Encumbered flow of relief goods, personnel, and money

- Lack of neutrality in determining the recipients of aid

There are many international laws and treaties, and much national law that touch on these issues. Maritime and aviation law, bilateral treaties, the Tampere Convention on the use of telecommunications, customary international law, all speak to it. The issue is that there is no single definitive broadly accepted source of International Law that spells out legal standards, procedures, rights, and duties pertaining to disaster response and assistance. The tantalizing possibility exists, not to create new law - an almost impossible task these days - but to repackage old law in a way that makes the responsibilities and obligations of states and disaster response agencies much clearer and more open to public critique.

Lesson two: Agreed and practiced standards reduce many of the problems caused by lack of coordination and increase the probability that agencies will want to cooperate.

Commitment is all

Let me move on now to the third, the most critical element, and ironically the most fragile: the element of commitment.

If standards are about what we do, commitment is about why we do it. And it is here that I think the humanitarian community has major problems.

The basic premise of humanitarian assistance is that:

It aims to alleviate the most acute suffering of disaster victims in an impartial and neutral manner, but one which will lead in the longer term to sustainable livelihoods for victims.

It acts out of a spirit of solidarity with disaster victims, not out of concern for either narrow political or religious agendas or out of concern for issues of organizational survival.

It seeks to advocate on behalf of disaster victims to bare witness to the cause of

their suffering.

In the 1990s the international community engaged with humanitarian action on an unprecedented scale. Two developments occurred as a result.

First, humanitarian agencies realized that, given their high public profile, rapidly increasing workload and apparent long-term nature of their work, they had a responsibility to improve the standards and consistency of professionalism in their "global business". This coincided with a rapid increase in international interest in globalization and particularly globalization of economies and businesses. At the same time the international system is edging towards some new form of civil order

Second, State donors significantly increased the proportion of ODA going into humanitarian action. Whilst this relative increase has been dramatic, in absolute terms the flow of resources into the developing world via humanitarian assistance is still very small and is still dominated by one or two major operations in any year – Goma, Kosovo now Afghanistan.

Today we have a greatly expanded, more professional, humanitarian community. Efforts like the Code of Conduct and the Sphere project have created a change in the way agencies and individuals view their responsibilities. Competence and professionalism join integrity to form the humanitarian agenda.

But, in striving for professionalism in what we do, have we lost sight of the real driving force of humanitarianism?

Professionalism – doing a good job – has two faces to it: how one acts and why one acts. The "how" is dominated by concerns for efficiency, effectiveness, competence. The "why" is about motivation, practiced values and commitment. Both the why and the how are important – they need to exist in balance.

This balance is particularly important, and particularly unstable, in

"affinity-based organizations" and their staff populations, who are attracted to the passion of the cause and often very cynical about authority and institutional power.

Today we in the humanitarian business seem to have lost this balance. Organizational imperatives, which make useful "servants", seem to have taken over as "masters", with concern for organizational survival and cultivation of donor relations being more important than doing the right thing. Humanitarian advocacy seems to have fallen by the wayside – a fellow traveler too hot to handle.

In short, the sense of commitment to humanitarianism has gradually seeped away and what is left is an international system that delivers relief, linking the donor-supplier with the lucky few chosen recipients. The corrosive influence of cynicism seems to pervade much of our business.

Ultimately such a system is self-defeating. We will never deliver enough assistance to make a real global impact on suffering. Assistance delivery is a moral necessity – but never sufficient. Without action to address the cause of suffering – through advocacy, political change or what ever – humanitarian assistance becomes a palliative.

And without this sense of commitment, concerns for coordination sink down to their lowest common denominator. They become mere concerns over the effectiveness and efficiency of the aid machine, not concerns over the alleviation of suffering, or the addressing of its root causes, or solidarity with the dignity of disaster victims.

So our third lesson is simple. If we want to get beyond being a cheap alternative to a commercial delivery firm and coordinate to change things, not just patch them up, and then we have to have commitment.

The challenge for the NGO community is how to get a sense of commitment, of solidarity, of ideology, back into the business and get it balanced against a

concern for effective structures of aid coordination and adherence to professional standards.

Our business is a three-legged stool – structures, standards and commitment – and it will not stand up if you take any one of those legs away.

The Role of NGOs in Disaster Reduction and Response:

A Singapore Example

Dr. Tan Chi Chu

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NGOs: definition and roles

Today the term NGO has become synonymous with the image of non-governmental agencies working to serve the public on a national and/or international scale. These thousands of non-governmental organizations (*NGOs*) are fast becoming an essential dimension of public life at all levels and in all parts of the world.

The formal definition of an NGO as *any non-profit citizens' voluntary entity organized locally, nationally or internationally, whose activities are determined by the collective will of its members* belies the fact that, in reality, NGOs are often outspoken advocates and activists, the pressure groups that catalyse change on such vital issues as environmental pollution, well being of children, disabled and the poor, and humanitarian assistance. Today, whether international or localized, NGOs address every conceivable issue and they operate in virtually every part of the world.

A 1992 report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) set the total contributions of developed country NGOs to developing countries at \$8.3 billion, equal to 13 percent of all development assistance in that year. It has since increased.

In addition, the UN channels ever more funds through NGOs. For example, according to a UN Joint Inspection Unit report, around 30% of UNHCR's budget (\$347,800,000) was disbursed through NGOs for emergency response in 1994 alone.

In fact, according to a recent report published by the International Federation of

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as governments reduce their welfare and foreign aid budgets, NGOs "have changed from being the gap fillers of the 1970s to major forces for welfare provision in the 1990s".

NGOs and humanitarian assistance

Providing humanitarian aid to people who have been struck by disaster, either natural or social (e.g. war), is one of the long established activities of NGOs. They have played, and continue to play, a critical role in all aspects of humanitarian assistance work. Raising funds for the relief of victims, rushing emergency relief by providing food, clothing and health care and helping to build local capacity to withstand future disasters, are some of the activities of NGOs.

For some NGOs, their beginnings came about when they saw a need and moved quickly to fill a gap or were driven to act by a disastrous event or evidence of severe suffering. Others grew local roots from international organizations, and still others emerged slowly from faith-based groups whose code placed emphasis on service to humanity.

Whatever the genesis, each NGO has made a valuable and essential contribution towards humanitarian assistance.

Roles of NGOs in humanitarian assistance

As NGOs, we can help bring attention to low profile emergencies, or people who do not fall within the limits set in international instruments or protocols. This can be particularly important for what some call 'silent' emergencies, which do not receive sufficient media exposure, and thus often receive very little assistance.

NGOs can also make a critical difference by working in situations where UN and governmental agencies have not been able to function. Through their local contacts and grassroots links, they can also help empower groups of people, enabling them to better deal with their own problems by giving them the strength to address those problems in a coherent way, without having to put all of their energy into simply maintaining themselves. Commonly called local capacity building, NGOs can play a significant role in disaster risk prevention and reduction.

NGOs often also have the ability to respond more quickly than government forces can, or, in the case of local NGOs, respond even more quickly than international NGOs. With local knowledge and expertise, they have the advantage in being able to carry out disaster reduction and relief projects that fit the needs of the people and often with far more reaching and sustainable impact.

NGOs can also act as important channels for raising awareness and education. In particular with smaller disasters, where they can play a role in the early warning system, local and grassroots oriented NGOs are uniquely placed to recognise the early signs of conflict, the deteriorating social conditions or the beginnings of a natural disaster.

Asian NGOs

In Asia, the need for NGOs to play a role in disaster relief work is particularly important. Asia is the most disaster prone region in the world and coupled

with the fact that it also has the largest population in the world, disasters that occur in this region often have a devastating impact on the people.

Our esteemed friends from ADRC and UN-OCHA Kobe office have shared with us the challenges that lie ahead for Asia in the realm of natural disasters. It is thus perhaps most timely that we have gathered for this first regional workshop on networking and collaboration for NGOs in Asia those who are involved in disaster related activities.

Asia is an extremely complex region not just because of its size or the myriad nations governed by different political systems, but more because it is made up of so many diverse cultures and religions. And it is this richness and diversity that often baffles the non-Asians.

For quite some time, humanitarian assistance came largely from the West. NGOs from developed countries were responsible for the bulk of humanitarian aid and in particular disaster relief activities. But that has changed over the last few decades with many Asian NGOs becoming involved in disaster related activities.

And I venture to say that with this came the realization that Asian NGOs could often work with more effectiveness with fellow Asians as they had the local and grassroots links and an understanding of the local cultures and customs.

I have been asked today to share the experiences of my organization, the Singapore International Foundation (SIF), and how we are attempting to help co-ordinate the efforts of various civil groups and NGOs in Singapore so that an organised and more effective approach is adopted towards disaster response and reduction. I would like to stress that each NGO's experience is unique and the SIF considers itself a relatively new comer to the field of disaster reduction and response. But I hope by sharing the SIF experience with you, it will contribute towards the ultimate aim of this forum --- to share views and experiences, and, in so doing, to promote better understanding and co-operation among us.

The Singapore International Foundation

The SIF was established as a non-profit organisation in August 1991 to promote Singapore's internationalisation efforts. While it has been around for some time, its main focus for most of its ten years of existence has been towards community development projects and networking programmes.

Since 1991, the SIF has been enabling Singaporeans to volunteer for technical assistance and community development projects abroad. Under the Singapore Volunteer Overseas Programme and the Youth Expedition Project, Singaporean groups and individuals have been involved in numerous development projects in this region and even beyond such as Africa. Some of these development projects have also been in the area of disaster reduction through training programmes that help build the capacity of professionals involved in disaster relief work, such as medical personnel.

It was only recently that a growing awareness developed among Singaporeans of the need to offer assistance to communities in the region affected by disasters. Increasingly, there have been Singaporeans as individuals and groups who have taken the initiative to come forward to offer their help during disasters. Whether as groups or individuals, they are willing to volunteer their time, skills and commitment and play a role in disaster relief efforts.

Oftentimes though, in such chaotic and complex situations when the affected country is overwhelmed by the destruction wrought by a disaster and the resultant multiple offers of international assistance, it is difficult for these civil groups or individuals to ensure that their help is utilized and maximized. Disaster relief is a complex process and groups keen on providing assistance must have the necessary infrastructure and support when they venture into a disaster area in order to provide effective relief.

It was also recognized that a coordinated Singapore approach towards offering humanitarian assistance would achieve better results.

Launch of the humanitarian relief programme

In this regard, the SIF launched a new programme in 2001. Called the Humanitarian Relief Programme (HRP), it was to provide such support to Singaporean individuals and groups keen to volunteer their professional skills for international disaster relief. This includes doctors, healthcare workers, logisticians, sanitation and public health experts and others interested in humanitarian work to aid communities overseas that are stricken by natural disasters.

SIF's role was to act as a coordinator and supporter to other civil groups and NGOs in Singapore keen to provide disaster related assistance. Singapore is a small country with limited resources. By combining resources and sharing information, it was possible to provide a support structure for Singapore groups to venture forth and maximize their contribution to international disaster relief efforts.

Through this programme we have helped to support relief missions to Cambodia, Mongolia, Gujarat and Orissa, India, Vietnam in the space of a year and soon we hope to mount a combined Singapore relief mission to Afghanistan.

Role of the humanitarian relief programme

Unique in its formation, the HRP is not a relief agency and seeks instead to help build up a civilian response towards humanitarian assistance at a national level. To do this, the HRP has leveraged upon its strong links with various government and private organisations to develop a support system and structure. By co-ordinating the efforts of different groups, NGOs, local authorities and civil groups the HRP is able to provide vital support to Singapore volunteers.

The support system consists of the following components:

Organised training to prepare Singaporeans for disaster relief work. Disaster relief work is extremely demanding and complex. The HRP provides training for volunteers to prepare them in terms of the environment they will be working in and equips them with basic skills and essential knowledge needed when working in disaster situations. Later this year, SIF is planning to develop a comprehensive training course for the volunteers of various civil groups & NGOs in Singapore.

Assistance in logistics equipping and administrative support. The SIF sources for sponsorship and assistance from the private and public sector in the form of insurance, essential equipment for relief operations, personal kits, food and water rations, communications support and so on. SIF assists in the co-ordination of these resources for its own volunteers as well other civil groups and NGOs in Singapore. In fact since the first relief mission was launched late last year, SIF has received strong support from the private and public sector. Private companies have come forward to contribute financially or offer services for free. We have had airlines and airfreight companies waiving airfreight and handling charges for relief supplies and even assistance from the government sector in the form of logistics equipping for the relief teams.

Pre and post relief mission follow-up. With staff trained in disaster relief work, the HRP can help civil groups plan and co-ordinate relief missions. This includes conducting advanced needs assessment surveys, developing operational plans and emergency procedures for the safety and security of the teams. The HRP can also help to provide constant monitoring and information updates on disasters and will establish communications links with the families of volunteers. The extent of this follow-up support includes psychological follow-up sessions when required.

Financial support for volunteers. Recognising that at times, groups may not have the ability to finance their relief operations, the HRP also funds the costs of relief missions such as transport, supplies, accommodation and so on. These funds are in turn sourced for by SIF from the public and private sector.

Liaison with local and international relief agencies and authorities. By linking up with local NGOs or authorities in the affected country, the HRP partners with suitable host agencies in the affected country that will provide the Singapore groups with the necessary logistical support. This also allows the team to tap the experiences and contacts of the local NGOs and ensure that the volunteers' skills are utilised where the need is greatest and most urgent and at the right time. Among the various local NGOs and authorities that SIF has worked with are: the Indian Medical Association, the Tata Relief Committee from the Tata Group in India, the Cambodian Methodist Services, the Mongolian Ministry of Health, and the Vietnam YMCA.

Skills matching for groups and individuals assembling relief missions through a volunteer database established by SIF. Because SIF focuses on sending out relief teams with specialist skills, having an organised and large pool of dedicated specialist volunteers is the cornerstone of the HRP. In this regard, apart from a volunteer database of our own, SIF also has links to the volunteer databases of other Singapore NGOs and organisations such as the two largest medical clusters in Singapore, namely, the National Health Group and SingHealth Services. This allows SIF to assist in matching groups and individuals in terms of appropriate skills so that a relief mission is staffed with the relevant skilled volunteers. In this way, the HRP also helps to ensure that the professional assistance rendered matches the needs of the affected community.

Structured volunteer system: Humanitarian Assistance & Relief Teams (HART). Recognising that response is a key factor in effective disaster relief, the HRP is currently developing a unique structured volunteer roster system linked to other Singapore NGOs. Organised teams of volunteers, the Humanitarian Assistance & Relief Teams or HART, can opt to join this system where they are put on a standby rotational basis ready to respond quickly when major disasters strike. The HRP assists with administrative support such as providing training, putting in place recall and activation networks, brokering agreements with the employers of volunteers for urgent leave grants should a team be activated, standby store of supplies and equipment, vaccinations and so on.

Benefits. The key benefit to be derived from a HRP structured system of support is the ability to effectively harness the vast potential of professional skills available in the community. Volunteers may belong to different NGOs and civil groups but linked databases enable effective sourcing of volunteers needed for specific skills. In particular, the medical community in Singapore has been particularly supportive. There is a large pool of medical professionals in Singapore, and SIF has had very strong support from the National Health Group and SingHealth. Both organisations have generously given their staff time off to volunteer for such relief work at no cost. In addition to this, they have also provided key support in the procuring of and packaging of medical supplies to accompany medical relief missions.

By utilizing volunteers, SIF is also able to extend its reach and respond to disasters that might not be of great significance politically or otherwise to governments or warrant much attention from the larger humanitarian aid organisations. For example, the recent flood disaster in Orissa, India was termed a 'silent' disaster in the sense that it did not generate a deal of media attention. SIF was able to help support a relief team that treated 3500 flood victims in two weeks.

There is also tremendous amount of goodwill generated from such voluntary relief missions amongst the affected community. The fact that the relief team members are volunteers and not paid staff contracted to provide assistance means much to the disaster-affected community. Many of our volunteers in turn have also benefited from such voluntary relief work. Many have personal accounts of how their voluntary experience has touched them in positive ways and many are keen to return for another mission.

Another important benefit of having such a system is the partnerships and collaborations forged with various private and public organisations and civil groups. Like-minded organisations can network and benefit from shared information and resources such as manpower. Last year, SIF organized the First Humanitarian Relief Conference in Singapore. More than 200 participants attended the conference and had the opportunity to interact and share with each other, build stronger links and also learn from international disaster relief

experts from organisations such as UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre, NSET-Nepal and World Vision. We also had overseas participants from Malaysia and the US. The benefits from such networking have been most encouraging. In March, five different organisations in Singapore from the private and public sector come together to mount a combined Singapore relief mission to Afghanistan.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to say that Singapore's efforts in the area of humanitarian assistance is just a small contribution towards the overall efforts of NGOs in Asia towards disaster reduction and response. However, we hope to continue to establish links with more NGOs, locally, regionally and internationally through networking opportunities such as this workshop. And in so doing learn from each other and perhaps even share resources as we try to tackle the challenges that lie ahead for Asia in the realm of disasters. Thank you.

**Best Practice in Networking and Collaboration for YMCAs
in Disaster-Prone Countries**
Mr. Yukio Miyazaki
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Introduction

Activities of Japan YMCA. The YMCA seeks to support the activities of countries affected by disasters. I am going to talk about the activity of the Japan YMCA, which is collaborating for disaster response activities with YMCAs in twenty-nine Asian countries. I will also speak about the relief and support activities of the YMCA in Asian countries over the last three years. Our first activity was working for the flood hazard in Peru, and our latest activity has been to work for Afghan Refugees. Further, we are collaborating in tie-ups with Asian countries for reconstruction, support and relief activities in Afghanistan, because of our proximity in Asia. Thus, the YMCA has been lending support in Asian countries affected by disasters. Our main thrust is to give support to the YMCAs in the affected countries, and to look for ways we can cooperate with them.

Principles followed by the Japan YMCA. Our policy is to look for ways we can cooperate in countries with YMCAs. I would like to explain the three principals we have formulated for collaboration with Asian YMCAs.

First, our most basic policy is to cooperate with the activities of the YMCAs of the affected countries. Priority is given to the people who are not getting support from the local government, any other government organization, any other agency, or assistance from overseas. We try to select areas where access is difficult and where no assistance has been received from any overseas agency. This is our first principle.

In conducting these activities, the most important thing is the volunteer organizations. We ourselves are a volunteer organization, and we have to have

agreement among all involved in making decisions. This is very important, because it will have an impact on what course of action we follow, so we must have agreement on who makes decisions. Initial funds, what we call "seed money," come from funds raised throughout the region. Later on, I will discuss the actual relief activities, that is, the cycle we follow in relief, reconstruction and development. National NGOs play an important role in their respective areas of this cycle.

Current situation among NGOs in Japan

When we use the term NGO here, we are not speaking about semi-governmental or non-governmental organizations. Nevertheless, we have 27,000 NGOs in Japan. The *Sasakawa Foundation*, the *Toyota Foundation* and many others cooperate in emergency relief activities. I will not be talking about this kind of large NGO, but rather about the grass-roots level, citizen-based NGOs that provide emergency and development assistance. Within the context of the history of these activities in Japan, we currently find ourselves in a troubled stage of confusion. There is a need to establish reliability and to build up a repertoire of experiences in order to establish precedents. Some groups survive and some disappear. Those who do survive are very helpful in times of emergency.

During the past three decades as a professional, I have been engaged in such activities as refugee relief, like the work I did in Vietnam in 1969. In those days, Japan did not use the term "refugee", but rather expressions like "people seeking asylum". The term "refugee" did not become established here until after we signed the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which was 20 years ago. Then, in the middle of the 1970s, we started to talk about development and development education. The term "refugee" in those days was used in connection with development education or education for development, as Japan became familiar with problems of discrimination against refugees among the overseas development issues of the latter half of the 1970s. From the 1970s to the 1980s, Japan's overseas assistance amounted to giving money without making any comments. Finally, in the latter half of the 1980s, an NGO

Federation (JANIC) was established. NGO Disaster Relief was translated into active assistance in a disaster only as recently as seven years ago, with the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Over the past twenty years, we have gone through a learning process based on the experiences of these NGOs and their track records. And they have learned a lot. Here I would like to point out the issues.

NGOs with this kind of background publish internet sites, and of course, the focus is the mandate for relief activities in natural disasters. We have become more active in the Internet society. What is most important at this point is linking. Disaster relief, rehabilitation and development, and disaster relief networking: these three are fully linked. The obstacles to linking are discontinuity and compartmentalization. We have to identify the causes of disasters and prevent them. And, of course, education is important. We have to prevent disasters, we have to equip ourselves with knowledge and we need networking. Without these efforts, when a disaster happens suddenly, it is difficult to respond to it. What is also necessary is that following the first response, we need to follow up with reconstruction, rehabilitation and sustainable development. That is to say, the governmental agencies, UN agencies and international agencies -- each one has a tenor and a mandate to tackle this mission. I think the role of NGOs is to network them. So, we have to have a common objective that we can share. We should be on the side of the victims. We should be on the side of the inhabitants. We should locate ourselves downstream. And from that perspective, we should get involved in emergency relief that should be a link to rehabilitation and reconstruction. That is where empowerment becomes very important. We have to facilitate this process for further development. And, at the level of pre-states, we have to become more professional. Indeed, professionalism is also called for in medical assistance or logistics and communications surveys. All of these should be more professional. As for the grassroots NGOs, we should look at the whole picture, not just filling in where there are gaps, but facilitating the networking of the different professional groups, too, I believe. That is a practical issue in the area of relief assistance and natural disaster relief.

Many NGOs have great interest, and the key to success is, of course, money. The Japanese, as a people, feel great sympathy in earthquakes. They want to help other people who are affected by earthquakes, a strong motivation that we have felt in the past few decades. When a disaster occurs, the mass media focuses on it, and we have a state-first effort for fund raising. When a disaster occurs, many, many people donate money for everything from rehabilitation to social development. This is a steady process. When it is a natural disaster, NGOs focus their attention and efforts on disaster relief, and we now have the *Japan Platform*. As for funds, grassroots NGO organizations have not yet become fully established, and we do not yet have financial and manpower support. We are in the process of developing this.

In Asia, these NGOs must share their past experiences and learn from each other's processes. We had a wonderful presentation earlier from Singapore. That was a success story, and we NGOs in Asia should cooperate with each other. And, in this area, we should lend a hand to the professionals, and we should be put into the hands of the government. We should identify the roles to be played by NGOs, professionals and government. I think a significant mission that falls to the NGOs is to identify these roles, so we do not duplicate our work. There is a lot of information, and we have to have a network so that we can share the information. We also must have networking among the people, and this is about to take off in Asia.

Last week, I went to Cambodia. This visit was about monitoring the removal of anti-personnel land mines. Of course, the local people have a great deal of knowledge about these land mines, such that NGOs should occupy a position between the inhabitants and the government. This is what is actually happening in the land mine removal in Cambodia. So, we must stress networking among the inhabitants, and we need to empower the people in the local communities. I think that Japanese NGOs should be putting forth strong efforts along these lines.