Chapter 9. 
NGO Emergency Deployment and Response

NGOs participate in all facets of an emergency, from development and early warning activities before an emergency, immediate and relief-oriented activities during an emergency, and reconstruction efforts afterward. This chapter outlines briefly various elements of an NGO emergency deployment and activity throughout all stages of an emergency.

This manual uses the term emergency loosely, but it is valuable to define various stages of an emergency to better understand where NGOs fit in. Whether it is a natural disaster (such as an earthquake or tropical storm), ongoing civil war, new conflict, full-scale intrastate war, or major poverty, NGOs approach emergencies in various ways, and often depending on the stage of an emergency. This guidebook turns away from more technical literature concerning stages of an emergency, and emphasizes the clear periods of NGO involvement. The three phases, simplistically, that NGOs are involved in are the preemergency or onset, the emergency itself, and the aftermath. NGOs respond at each stage.

NGOs and the Preemergency Phase

International NGOs that respond to humanitarian emergencies are often already involved in development projects in the affected region or country. Whether the emergency is natural disaster or war, chances are good that at least a few international NGOs are familiar with its territory, populations, and problems.

Poverty-stricken regions tend to be more affected than others by large-scale disaster and conflict.\(^\text{125}\) Although a developing country may be able to manage and limit the loss of life or physical damage during an emergency effectively, population displacement, disease outbreak, crumbled infrastructure, high indirect death count, and slowed political and economic development are not uncommon.\(^\text{126}\)

Development activities beforehand play a key role in defining NGO responses to emergencies. Given that NGOs are particularly active in poorer countries and regions, and because these are (as noted)
often the hardest hit by natural disasters or conflicts, development NGOs are often the strongest agents of relief delivery and solid emergency response programming once conditions become acute.

A short list of development activities includes

- developing public health infrastructure, including rehabilitation or building clinics and hospitals, training doctors and medical personnel, upgrading equipment or fixing old equipment, and providing public health education;
- building educational infrastructure, often building or repairing schools, developing curriculum, and providing school materials;
- supporting or enhancing local infrastructure, including roads, water, sewage, and electrical systems; and
- developing legal infrastructure, human rights education, and political party capacity building.

Much of the work of international NGOs is only a portion of larger assistance packages. Development NGOs—often the same that respond to emergencies—develop capacity, tools, knowledge, trust, and a working fluency of ground-level conditions before the emergency ever emerges. These NGOs can easily transfer the knowledge and much of their capacity into a response mode. Large organizations such as CARE, CRS, World Vision, Relief International, and Church World Service can also readily turn their organization’s expertise to developing emergency responses and consolidating resources quickly. Their development programs may be managed by different departments, offices, or even country-level chapter organizations, but these all draw from the same best practices, personnel, equipment, and logistical expertise.

As well, trucks that may have been part of a rural farming development project or an intimate knowledge of the region’s border and importing procedures can greatly ease or facilitate incoming international relief responses. These NGOs also have relationships with donors that can easily be leveraged to expedite the funding process for new emergency programming. Foundations, government agencies, and UN departments often take months (or longer) to initiate an implementing partner agreement for any type of grant or contract award. If an NGO has a working relationship with a donor, it can easily assess, confer, and apply for funding much more quickly than otherwise.

Development NGOs and NGOs active in preemergency settings are also valuable for early-warning activities. NGOs operate at the ground level of a region or country, and often are the first organizations to witness or experience an activity or event that may lead to more serious conditions in the future. Whether ethnic or religious violence, storm conditions, food security, or drought, NGOs can relay information to coordinating agencies, the local government, the UN and donors as it arrives. Through NGO associations, early warning information can be collated, organized, and passed off to other pertinent entities as a comprehensive body of data.

Considerable attention is now being paid to early warning activities. Thanks to an extensive network of NGOs that feeding information into central databases, the international relief and development community has a fair idea of what problems currently exist, and where local problems might evolve.
into larger humanitarian emergencies. Many websites have been developed to monitor and publish information pertinent to early warning analysis and activity.127

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9.1 Early Warning and Disaster Alert Websites</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IASC Humanitarian Early Warning Service (HEWSweb)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>HEWSweb is an interagency partnership project aimed at establishing a common platform for humanitarian early warnings and forecasts for natural hazards. Its main objective is to bring together and make accessible in a simple format the most credible early warning information available at the global level from multiple specialized institutions. This website displays the latest forecasts, reports and alerts on drought, floods, tropical storms, locust infestation, El Nino, earthquakes, and volcanic activity. It has dedicated pages for each of these natural hazards and includes additional references and resources. In the near future, HEWSweb will also offer the opportunity to access and share information on sociopolitical crises.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System provides near real-time alerts about natural disasters around the world and tools to facilitate response coordination, including media monitoring, map catalogues, and its Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Humanitarian Information Centers and Partners</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A space where the humanitarian community can share and access information resources in order to improve the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance. A provider of information products and services that enable the humanitarian community to deliver assistance more effectively, following principles of good practice in information management. A focal point for data collection, analysis and dissemination in support of the provision of humanitarian assistance, developing and supporting data standards. A facilitator for initiatives and activities related to information management in the field, particularly in collaboration between other humanitarian actors in support of existing coordination structures. An advocate for a culture of information-sharing in the humanitarian community, generating awareness of good practice and making it possible for agencies to develop common standards and practices in the field.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>GIEWS is a major source of information for NGO personnel managing early warning activities and potential trouble-spot monitoring. It is supported by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Early Warning System for Major Animal Diseases, including Zoonoses (GLEWS)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>GLEWS is a joint system that builds on the added value of combining and coordinating the alert mechanisms of FAO, OIE and WHO for the international community and stakeholders to assist in prediction, prevention and control of animal disease threats, including zoonoses, through sharing of information, epidemiological analysis and contribute to joint field missions to assess and control the outbreak.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

127 See annex 2 for a more extensive list of selected humanitarian-oriented websites.
Surveys and assessments are also key elements during the preemergency phase. Many suggest that assessments come primarily after an emergency has been declared or is apparent, but just as many organizations include surveys and assessments in preemergency settings. Some emergencies are not predictable, but others are. Large-scale famines, food shortages, and often conflict or ethnic strife can
be predicted to some degree, and early warning activities often can alert the international community of the need for action.\textsuperscript{128} What happens then?

NGOs respond to many preemergency and emergency settings with assessment or exploration teams. If a country or region is thought to be slipping into a large-scale humanitarian emergency, many NGOs will send small groups of experts to identify the root causes of the emergency, specific infrastructural and technical data, population movements, food and water resources, roads, ports, airstrips and bridges to serve as relief supply hubs, and other factors that help identify need, capabilities, challenges and potential focus for the international community.

Although the assessment phase is complex and the focus of much professional consideration and debate, NGOs use assessments several ways:

- to identify types, numbers, and places of needy populations;
- to identify specific requirements for needy populations;
- to identify general political, economic, cultural, ethnic, religious, geographic, and climate factors that may be pertinent to an international response;
- to define areas of most need;
- to define relationships with national and local government entities, ministries of health and interior, local NGOs, civil society groups, and populations at risk; and
- to define appropriate resource levels, methods for implementation, and general requirements for NGO-specific or international community-wide deployment of aid programs.

USAID recently convened a technical working session for the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief Transition (SMART) group. Although it focused primarily on food security and nutritional surveys, it reveals a few important points. First, NGOs, government, and UN agencies are all striving aggressively for a series of standardizations for collecting data. This means that until now, NGOs and other agencies that have conducted initial surveys during humanitarian emergencies have been using different frameworks to report their findings. By attempting to create standards and by using central store-houses of data, NGOs and other agencies may also be able to cut down the redundancy, inaccuracy, and variations in the methods used to collect data during surveys or surveillance studies. When a disaster hits, displaced populations (DPs) need assistance. When multiple NGOs survey the same area or conditions but use different methods to collect data and report their findings, the results can be complicated and inefficient.

NGOs are effective at rapid assessments, coordinating information with donor and UN agencies, and turning information into implementation for specific humanitarian operations. Information-sharing

\textsuperscript{128} The digestion of early warning data is another story, and it is often difficult to estimate the success of various early warning programs. Rwanda is the perfect case for criticizing early warning capabilities. Many critics of the international community’s response to Rwanda suggest that early warning data can be clear and solid and still illicit no international response. Politics matter, and if the international community does not act on data obtained, does not make sense of the data obtained, or ignores the data obtained (for any specific reason), little use of the early warning system is had. With clear calls from NGOs, religious organizations, government, and military agencies, the UN, the United States, and many EU nations did little to prevent genocide in 1994 in which up to (and potentially more than) 800,000 people were killed.
between NGOs is often another story, and will be covered in more depth in later chapters. This is not always the case with larger bureaucratic systems. Information is digested and distributed to appropriate NGO staff members, and within a few days, an appropriate plan can be created. During the preemergency phase, assessments often are carried out to be prepared for subsequent emergency conditions in that country or region. NGO assessments are often used by USAID and other government agencies, and NGOs will often piggyback on OFDA/DART assessments.

When a country or region becomes an emergency setting, NGOs are often prepared and capable of acting immediately because of their activity in the preemergency phases. NGO activity within the emergency phase can also be well thought-out, practical, and effective.

### NGOs and the Emergency Phase

As military and government officials now know, NGOs will be found operating in humanitarian emergencies. Even when conditions are at their worst, civilian-led efforts to provide for EPs dominate the landscape of complex humanitarian emergencies (CHEs), disaster settings and generally bad places. NGOs have responded to almost every humanitarian emergency around the globe (including disasters within the United States), and very few CHEs are sever enough to keep out relief workers. Chechnya, parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), parts of Colombia, the Timors, and Sri Lanka are a few places known for their no-man’s land status for NGOs and are difficult to work in. This is not to say that NGOs do not work there, but only that one may be hard-pressed to see a Range Rover, chukka boots, a tan vest, or a generally expat-looking relief worker often, though they’re most likely nearby.

When an emergency strikes, whether natural or man-made, NGOs respond in various ways:

- deploying medical teams and basic medical supplies immediately to treat the most severely affected persons;
- deploying assessment teams to survey the damage, take count of potential needs, and promptly report the needs of the EPs;
- establishing communication systems for NGO personnel (often done by UN or IO agencies specializing in this field);
- delivering various relief supplies, including food, medical equipment, and medicines;
- initiating public information campaigns to raise money for and awareness about the crisis;
- coordinating efforts with other agencies and organizations within the emergency-affected area, granting other funding agreements, and so on;
- establishing territory or sectoral strongholds throughout the emergency-affected area for funding purposes and to spread out specific comparative advantages.

### Top NGO Reference Publications

- The Sphere Project. [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)
Larger NGOs often bring in their own supplies from nearby programs in neighboring regions. This can include trucks, generators, relief materials, tents, nets, cans, and sometimes food. Smaller NGOs often solicit for funds first to procure relief material within the region or from outside sources during the emergency.

Depending on whether the emergency is a rapid or emerging onset, NGOs will react in various ways.

**Rapid Onset**

If an emergency is an earthquake, tsunami, or hurricane, disaster effects are immediate. Populations are displaced, infrastructure is damaged and the means of meeting primary needs have often been removed as a result of the disaster. NGOs respond by arriving, quickly assessing humanitarian conditions (rapid assessments), and then distributing immediate services aimed at alleviating the most dire of affected areas and those primary needs that have been stripped away. Primary medical care, food rations, water, and temporary shelter are normally key focuses of an immediate emergency response while damage is surveyed and cleaned or repaired.

It has been suggested that any international humanitarian response to emergencies should aim at providing the local population with skills and capacity to rebuild their lives themselves—both during and after an emergency.\(^{129}\) Although international resources and some expertise may be required in many instances, that local NGO staff should be trained and equipped with the knowledge to continue the development process after the initial emergency response period ends.

Rapid onset emergencies are obviously more difficult to deal with. Humanitarian needs of the EPs are difficult to assess in tight time frames. NGOs are pressured to arrive, orient themselves, and then immediately figure out what needs to be done while somehow delivering services. This is not always the case, and when NGOs or humanitarian agencies are familiar with the lay of the land, there is less of a learning curve. Still, NGOs face difficult tasks. With help from government and donor agencies, NGOs can normally begin providing services that are of immediate concern even as they perform assessments and surveys for larger or more intricate projects.

**Gradual Onset**

If the emergency has a more gradual onset, NGOs have a harder time mustering resources for full-scale responses. The term *gradual onset emergencies* is often synonymous with *complex humanitarian emergencies*, noting a deterioration of humanitarian conditions over time. Crude mortality rates (CMRs) increase slowly, no major political or natural events occur to spark attention, and the deterioration of humanitarian conditions are often the result of complex conflicts, civil wars, or civil strife. This often makes it hard for NGOs to access all portions of the needy populations.

NGOs participate in gradual onset emergencies often by using a part-relief and part-development approach to delivering humanitarian services. This assistance is much different than that in rapid onset emergencies. In gradual onset emergencies, NGOs are faced with the challenge of needing to

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\(^{129}\) Frederick Cuny, Disasters and Development (Dallas, TX: Intertect Press, 1994).
provide for various EPs even as conflict or continuing emergency conditions make it impossible to establish any permanent relief or development structure.

More clearly, in gradual onset emergencies, NGOs must face the difficult task of working with a continuing emergency. A rapid onset emergency goes as quickly as it comes, though it may happen again or the effects may be felt for some time in various ways. Gradual onset emergencies continue to grind down humanitarian conditions without respite, however. NGOs face the challenge of providing for needy populations, staying politically neutral, and developing sustainable ways of maintaining programs. Donor fatigue often kicks in, and operation fatigue often chokes an NGO’s willingness to pay the high costs of operating in unsure or unsafe conditions. Chechnya is a good example. Because violence still has a grip on the entire region, relief agencies have had a difficult time providing emergency services to the populations within Chechnya, and in establishing solid networks and structures for continued humanitarian assistance. NGO employees often get burned, injured, demoralized, and often professionally frustrated in such conditions, which makes an operation that much harder.

Still, in most CHEs and gradual onset emergencies, NGOs have done anything but given up. With incredible stubbornness and display of dedication, NGOs have operated in places like Sudan, Angola, Chechnya, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Colombia, and others most people would think of as the last place to visit or work with diligence and persistence. In many instances, the NGO sector has developed a system of specialization in which many participating organizations work to delineate tasks depending on specialization, expertise, capacity, or size. For example, the continued and harsh working conditions of southern Sudan have forced NGOs to work closely together and with donors to establish AORs and methods to better distribute the capacity of the civilian sector.

In places like Somalia, Albania, Kosovo, and Iraq, NGOs have worked side by side with military units, have been directly engaged in the planning process, and have implemented humanitarian assistance amidst continuing violence. NGO personnel, in many places globally, are in danger every day, and often are victims of violence or the generally harsh conditions of an emergency setting.

NGOs that do focus on providing long-term emergency assistance are, as mentioned, challenged with keeping streams of project funding in the funding pipeline. Because longer-term emergencies are often forgotten in the wake of a new or more urgent emergency elsewhere, NGOs struggle to keep donors engaged and willing to expend funds. This is a substantial challenge.

NGOs have come up with various ways of getting around the seemingly insurmountable challenges:

- establishing strong NGO networks to share lessons, experiences, infrastructure, capacity, and security within an emergency-affected region;
- continually waging public relations campaigns on specific and often forgotten emergencies, both from the field and from headquarters;
- establishing regional capacity, often keeping staff, equipment, and relief supplies as near as possible to beneficiaries who may be in inaccessible areas, ready for delivery on a break in
violence or the conditions that normally prevent the immediate delivery of humanitarian assistance; and

• providing strong and unified lobbying efforts to the UN and other governments, often by giving reports or accounts of what is happening on the ground.

NGOs and the Postemergency Phase

After the most devastating and chaotic stages of an emergency are passed, conditions settle into a normal buzz of activity. NGOs focus on managing their displaced population assistance programs and begin to tailor specific programs for specific subgroups of the affected population. Women, children, the elderly, and minority groups are often given special attention. NGOs also begin to undertake more in-depth assessments and surveillance and continue to advocate for more international support for the emergency.

International response normally begins to taper off after the height of an emergency, and though the media may begin to look elsewhere for footage, NGOs normally stay the course. Although focusing at first on emergency programs, many NGOs specialize in providing services to EPs that extend into development-oriented programming. Local capacity building, specific training, education, and economic development are all potential positive externalities that stem from NGO activity during and immediately after an emergency.

NGOs that specialize only in emergency response will often leave the area after the crisis ends. MSF, for example, does so because its primary focus is immediate emergency medical services. Other NGOs may scale back their emergency teams and capacity and begin shifting to more development-oriented programs that will assist the community in the future. Albania is a good example: NGOs arrived to provide Kosovar Albanians assistance while they were refugees in Albania. Once they returned to Kosovo, many relief agencies remained in Albania and used their newly established capacity to help rehabilitate hospitals and clinics, schools, water systems, and roads. Many NGOs are multisectoral and deliver humanitarian assistance during emergencies while also providing development assistance to EPs in the same or similar settings.

Often NGOs are limited by the type of donations they receive. For those that operate on private donations only, the time and scope of activity is limited by the time the NGO can and wants to operate during and after a given emergency. NGOs that depend on grants may see funding dry up after the emergency is over, and thus have to pack up and go home. This is common. Many UN, US and EU grants are short term and provide funding only for emergency-response oriented programs. NGOs that want to remain in the region must establish new relations with new donors (often the same donor agency but in a different office or department) and get funding for postemergency or development programs. This transition is often difficult.
Sample Deployment Schedule

NGOs are often the first humanitarian organizations to arrive in an emergency scene. Once an emergency hits—should it be a new emergency and rapid onset—an NGO has any number of transportation options to move a small team of personnel inside the affected area. Government agencies and military units are hard pressed to meet this agility, and many times military or government personnel will find that on their arrival, they’re greeted with NGO staff members who have been in-country for some time. This is an obvious advantage to having a small organization, few rules or regulations governing deployment or travel, and flexible staff members devoted to a profession of responding to emergencies.

Should an emergency hit an unsuspecting population, or if a CHE gets dramatically worse, NGO deployment may look something the schematic presented in table 9.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>NGO Action</th>
<th>Day</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency onset or rapid deterioration of CHE announced/information made public</td>
<td>NGO obtains information about emergency from public or normal information channels (CNN, the Internet, e-mail discussion lists, newspapers, field reports) and convenes meeting of senior-level staff (directors, program-specific officers, regional officers and managers). Situation is analyzed, information briefings and discussion are held on what can and should be done. Working group established and key staff members assigned to steer NGO activity for the emergency. Maps and country data are compiled by lower program officers and contacts with donors, other NGOs, and field offices (if applicable) are made to get more information.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency onset or rapid deterioration of CHE</td>
<td>Assets in region or available generally if the NGO has nearby programs are reviewed. Contact made with program or country directors of NGO’s programs in area; initial assessments given over e-mail or telephone about what the NGO can do for this emergency and what assets can be used to deploy to new emergency.</td>
<td>1 and 2 (time differences often must be considered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset settles into humanitarian emergency, displaced populations, and substantial EPs; international community sets in motion assessment</td>
<td>NGO decides whether to send assessment and initial response teams from HQ or regional area; if yes, personnel on staff or contracting specialists are contacted and oriented and dispatched with various equipment (often a tote bag or container with medical equipment, a satellite phone, field guides and other general purpose equipment). Donor or other assessment reports may be released to the NGO community.</td>
<td>2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International community response</td>
<td>NGO personnel enter emergency-affected area and begin assessments. NGO personnel attempt to coordinate activities with HICs, other NGOs, and government or donor agencies. If military units are involved, interaction with CMOCs or liaisons is also a priority. Housing established for NGO personnel; drivers and translators hired; assessment teams hired; often local medical personnel hired or recruited for service with NGOs; NGO assessments for logistical access made and reported to HQ or regional office.</td>
<td>4, 5, and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More international response</td>
<td>NGO establishes AOR or sector specialty within emergency, often liaising with donor agencies (UNHCR, USAID, ECHO, etc) and writing proposals for funding. NGOs coordinate with HQ and private donors, often launching PR campaigns to raise awareness of cause and to raise funds from communities or the public. NGOs coordinate with local NGO partners, or establish new partnerships with local NGOs that deliver specific services.</td>
<td>7–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding and programs</td>
<td>NGOs begin to receive donor funding and begin implementing larger programs (and replace the smaller, emergency-response oriented programs with refugee camp design and management, large-scale public and primary health programs, water and sanitation, transportation, food and nutritional support, etc).*</td>
<td>7–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical challenges</td>
<td>International aid begins to flood into emergency-effect area; ports and airports are back-stocked with relief supplies, food, and material, and NGOs and UN agencies are hard- pressed to get relief material out of the ports and to distribution points. NGOs still soliciting for new programs and often still implementing relief.</td>
<td>7–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency management, rehabilitation</td>
<td>NGOs settle into program implementation and management, monitoring and assessing new needs or the change of conditions, often implementing smaller programs for smaller communities (minorities, women, children, disabled, elderly) and being selective with program targets. Main large-scale emergency now potentially under control, and population movement has been stabilized, as has been the logistical supply of relief supplies, food, security and information. International community working with military units (if applicable), national governments and with displaced population leadership or representative councils or committees. Emergency teams are often removed, and longer-term NGO personnel are contracted, hired or transferred to manage current emergency-oriented programs, and the development of new development or longer-term relief programs.</td>
<td>21–?</td>
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</table>
Rehabilitation and repatriation NGOs now assist with the facilitation of repatriation, and programs begin closing. Often NGOs will transfer capital assets or remaining material to new emergencies, or to development programs in postemergency settings.

* NGOs begin providing services almost immediately on arrival in an emergency-affected area. Often NGO personnel will take all they can when traveling to the region, and many times NGO personnel will come from other areas or regions with specific supplies. Most common are medical supplies and communications equipment.

There is no standard timeline or operational mechanism for NGOs that governs their responses to emergencies. In fact, every NGO is different in how it responds. For those NGOs with operations close to a region affected by an emergency, materials and personnel can be transferred with minimal thought. Regional know-how and connections make it easier for these NGOs to arrive and begin implementing programs immediately.

NGOs without programs close to or in an affected area need more time and effort to establish programs. Staff, materials, donor relations, and regional know-how must be mobilized. More money is needed for overhead, because an NGO new to an area must ship or procure locally everything for both implementing and supporting emergency programs. Still, many NGOs (often larger NGOs) have slush funds or emergency accounts designed expressly for emergencies. These funds are only a small portion of the NGO’s total annual expenditures, and are kept to be used as cash to establish new emergency response programs. Generally, the larger the NGO, the larger the cash account. Still, even small NGOs attempt to prepare for emergencies in the future, and getting themselves established in an emergency setting before requiring donor funds for operations gives credibility and operational freedom within an emergency-affected area. Larger NGOs traditionally have a solid donor foundation, whether primary support is from donor agencies or from private donations, and are often the most capable in delivering the primary phases of a humanitarian response.

A small NGO without regional capacity usually finds respond to new emergencies especially difficult; it must use limited resources to transport people to the new area while attempting to establish some relationship with donors. And, without knowing the region well, it depends heavily on immediate donor funds. This means that a small NGO must arrive in an emergency-affected area, establish its footings, and promptly start writing and submitting project proposals. Contracted experts often make up a large percentage of a small NGO’s operations and ideally bring to the NGO their experience as emergency managers or sectoral specialists. If a smaller NGO has positive relations with a donor from other regions, it may expedite the funding process in the new emergency.

### NGO Needs during Deployment

NGOs cannot do everything themselves. They may be on the ground first and they may have the technical capabilities, the freedom, and the regional knowledge to begin programs immediately, but they do not have major logistical capacities to move large levels of commodities, large water quantities, communications equipment or to keep EPs safe. NGOs have three major weaknesses that can be identified in the deployment phase:
• no large-scale transportation mechanisms, including cargo aircraft, seafaring vessels, large fuel stocks, or appropriate ground transport mechanisms;
• no capable communications equipment and access to international bandwidth, telecommunications infrastructure and maintenance requirements; and
• no independent means of establishing or maintaining operations in violent conditions, protecting its personnel and operations, EPs when operating emergency programs in war zones.\textsuperscript{130}

There are more, but these three seem to identify the critical curbs on an NGO’s ability to act independently of any UN, government, or military agency. Because NGOs are civilian entities, they must often use whatever commercial services are available for communications and transportation and other logistics, and must depend on military forces to provide safety and organization within conflict regions. Without the help of outside entities, then, NGOs would be able to provide only a fraction of their services, and possibly be unable to implement their programs or distribute their services.

In many emergencies, U.S. and European militaries provide important backbones of support for humanitarian emergencies. NGOs often depend on large-scale military intervention and support, which can turn around and provide EPs with faster, more thorough humanitarian services. The UN, too, provides its services in a number of cases when dealing with commodities and large-scale equipment movement.

Militaries have distinct advantages when responding to humanitarian emergencies. The U.S. military, in particular, is most likely the largest agency with the most capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies. Whether it be transportation, security, communications, or search and rescue, military units—when transformed into humanitarian response-oriented units—can be extremely effective when working with the NGO sector. The military provides NGOs support in several forms:

• operations in both conflictual and consensual atmospheres, often allowing NGOs to operate in safe zones or with protection; protection for EPs during large-scale emergencies and conflicts;
• major logistical transportation services, including large-scale airlifts, oceanic and maritime services, road and bridge repair, control of access points, facilitated border crossings, and access lines or safe zones for humanitarian supply transport; and
• communications infrastructure and maintenance, often established within short time-frames and available to civilian agencies for use.

Militaries and NGOs have now had ample time to understand the others’ weaknesses, and where military units often provide essential services for NGOs and EPs directly, NGOs have strong advantages in terms of rapid and longer-term relief programs.

\textsuperscript{130} This is not to suggest that NGOs are not active in war zones. NGOs do operate in war zones, but collectively and individually are not able to use force or defend from violence.
**Conclusion: NGOs Lead the Way**

NGOs, then, can deploy quickly and efficiently and can bypass major political, organizational or structural challenges with their small teams, independent nature, and specialties in sectors and regions. NGOs don’t have large-scale logistical capacities, but can often use commercial transport services, the UN, and militaries to move supplies into an emergency-affected region. Many NGOs have significant in-house logistical capacities and can manage the large-scale commitment of aid to DPs in the harshest conditions, but they still require the support of IOs and other entities.

NGOs are both relatively small and neutral. They focus on specific DP cohorts, sectors, and regions, and target their services according to the direct needs of the DPs in concern. NGOs often use off-the-shelf technologies to establish communications during the onset of an emergency, and do not require major support services or security for their personnel. When NGOs respond, they often have a good sense of what types of programs are required and will work, as well as experienced and professional staff members who can make quick decisions based on years of experience.

NGOs are without question invaluable during an emergency. Although they do not have unlimited cash reserves (and sometimes have no cash whatsoever), major logistical capacities, or protection capabilities, NGOs are the driving force in deploying humanitarian assistance programs. With more than 50 years of experience, NGOs now know what to do and how to farm out resources effectively to manage emergencies.