

# Improving Coordination for More Efficient and Effective Disaster Management Planning

Coordination is a critical factor in the successful planning for disaster risk reduction, preparedness, and response activities. Effective coordination requires all actors to understand the roles and responsibility of the institutions and actors involved, with clarity on how different elements and stakeholders within the system interact and communicate with each other and how decisions are made. Effective coordination saves resources, time and, most importantly, lives.

In Indonesia, with so many actors at national and sub-national levels involved in, and with financial responsibility for, disaster management, the lack of clear roles and responsibilities and the absence of formal coordination mechanisms for information sharing and decision making has undermined both the effectiveness and the impact of disaster management.

As a result, the inconsistency in coordination mechanisms, particularly during emergency response, whether within or between institutions, is one of the biggest barriers to effective disaster management planning and service delivery. It is usually difficult to divide work neatly and to define the function of each institution which results in gaps, service problems and inefficiencies.

## **Digging deeper: why is disaster management coordination inconsistent and ad hoc?**

In 2020, SIAP SIAGA undertook research to better understand the processes of and challenges for government communication and decision-making related to disaster management. The overall finding was there was unclear consensus (in law) on who should be responsible for what: Where does planning need to be coordinated? Where does implementation need to be coordinated? And for both questions, how does this happen and who is involved at all stages of the disaster management cycle: preparedness, response, and recovery. This issue demonstrated the continued challenges around the coherence of the disaster management system, lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities and ad hoc communications and decision making that continued to create bottlenecks to effective coordination of disaster management preparedness, response, and recovery.

Law No. 24/2007 grants the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) the authority to set the strategic direction for disaster management, however disaster management responsibilities are scattered across several ministries/agencies, including the Ministry of Finance. Without the overarching authority to coordinate the work of other ministries and agencies, in practice those actors often operate (plan, finance, implement and monitor their disaster management related work) independently of BNPB, risking

siloeed approaches that may overlap and contradict each other. Feedback from sectoral ministries during the consultations for the revision of the disaster management law (on hold) suggests that the absence of a clear line of authority between BNPB and sub-national governments means that national ministries and agencies do not need to coordinate their disaster management work at the sub-national level with BNPB. Further, as there is a lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities for mainstreaming disaster management at the national level (as opposed to coordinating national strategy), sectoral ministries can justify a business-as-usual approach. The onset of COVID-19 and its designation as a national disaster has put a spotlight on this uncoordinated, sector-based behaviour, including contradictory policies and public statements, which has admittedly undermined the effectiveness of the government's response and public trust in government.

As noted above, it is provinces, district, and cities that are ultimately responsible for implementing disaster management, with only the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) allowed supervision authority at the national level. Consequently, there is no line of management between BNPB and local disaster management offices (BPBD), nor any other ministry or agency towards their sectoral counterpart at the subnational level. BNPB can provide operational guidance and advice on national strategic initiatives, but the operationalisation (planning and budgeting) of any initiatives requires a MoHA regulation, instruction and/or circular letter. This is the same for all ministries and adds a level of incoherence to disaster management planning as different ministries issue sectoral advice or regulations, but which cannot be implemented without coordination with MoHA. Thus, the absence of a clear ministerial mechanism that meets regularly and guarantees that information is shared and coordinated between different institutions is a clear disincentive for coordination on disaster management.

## **The Impacts of Weak Coordination**

One of the biggest impacts resulting from a lack of coordination in the disaster management sector is on the timeliness in the designation of disaster status. While the regional autonomy law clearly lays out the responsibilities of provinces and districts in disaster response, there are often delays in designation of disaster status because there is no regulation on how to classify disasters (indicators on type, scale, number of victims, impact on economy, etc.), as required by Article 7 of Law No. 24/2007. Designation of disasters as district, provincial or national are critical, and confusion about disaster status results in unending debate between the sub-national and national authorities about who should be responsible to deliver the response. Moreover,

technical capacity, particularly at the district level, can be undermined by the constant rotation of civil servants through departments (and ministries) which undermines institutional knowledge and memory on how to implement emergency response. The rather chaotic state of the national preparedness system is also a contributing factor to technical capacity and confidence to implement an emergency response.

Interestingly, BNPB has the mandate to coordinate the first 14 days of an emergency response at any level of government. Beyond this period the role of BNPB becomes less clear as the regional autonomy law devolves decision-making responsibilities to provincial, district and city governments and resulted in BNPB issuing *Perka No. 24/2010* 'Guideline for Formulation of the Disaster Emergency Operation Plan'. This lack of clarity on coordination beyond the first 14-day period has also meant that for every disaster the coordination mechanism that emerges is different. While the regional autonomy law stipulates responsibilities, it is the prerogative of the governor, *Bupati* (head of the district) or mayor as to who will lead the coordination and who is involved. This means that sub-national authorities cannot guarantee from one disaster to the next what their role and responsibilities will be, and thus there are no real learning opportunities. There were even missteps in the set-up of the national task force to coordinate the government's response to COVID-19, the first national disaster since the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. The initial members of the COVID-19 National Task Force, led by BNPB, included the Ministry of Health, military and policy, none of whom had execution power at the sub-national level. This has since been resolved by changing the structure of the Task Force to include MoHA in the decision-making structure. Likewise, in the aftermath of the earthquake in West Sulawesi and floods in South Kalimantan in January 2021, both provincial governments were directly affected, negatively impacting on their capacity lead emergency response to provide emergency services to the affected population and perform emergency coordination. With no clear guidance on who should lead and on what, *ad hoc* sectoral coordination mechanisms were appearing, with the role of government in different mechanisms varying widely. Similarly, the coordination mechanisms that emerged in the aftermath of the earthquake on the island of Lombok and tsunami in Central Sulawesi in 2018 were very different, meaning that what could be learned from one response could not easily be applied to another, as different actors had different roles and decision-making authority.

### Assessing Current Coordination Models for Learning and Institutionalization

In terms of civil society engagement and coordination, the Indian Ocean tsunami recovery in 2004 helped to shift the paradigm among decision makers to recognise that civil society engagement could expand beyond disaster response towards disaster risk management (DRM), and this was recognized in Law No. 24/2007 which explicitly mentions the right for humanitarian organisations and private foundations, and national and international NGOs to engage in DRM. Since then, several civil society coordination forums have emerged with the intent to improve coordination among civil society actors and with the government, including the National Platform (*Planas PRB*), initially introduced to advocate for DRR issues, which operates at the national level, while at the sub-national level, DRR Forums (*Forum PRB*), exist to take on coordination functions. The effectiveness of these

coordination forums needs further investigation from the perspective of their advocacy agendas, as well as how they function as coordination mechanisms. Nonetheless the models exist and the presence of active forums at the sub-national level serve to demonstrate that they are necessary components of the disaster management system.

The National Cluster System (*Sistem Klaster Nasional*<sup>1</sup>) engages civil society actors from emergency response through to the recovery/reconstruction phases of a disaster. BNPB introduced the cluster system based on a modified concept of the UN cluster system and embedded it within a larger national government system. Whereas the clusters in the global humanitarian response are led by various UN agencies, in Indonesia they are led by different ministerial departments with UN agencies as co-leads.<sup>2</sup>

### Moving Forward: Improving Coordination in Disaster Management Planning

SIAP SIAGA's research resulted in several recommendations to address bottlenecks related to coordination for disaster management planning. Based on the recommendations, strategic coordination should pay attention to the following:

1. Who has overarching authority to coordinate the work of other ministries and agencies for planning and budgeting to avoid overlap and working at cross-purposes?
2. Assessing the cultural approach used for disaster preparedness and risk reduction. How do various stakeholders understand these concepts? Is there mismatch between the approaches taken by the government for risk analysis and preparedness versus the needs of other stakeholders?
3. How can non-state actors be more systematically involved in planning? For example, the cluster system is an important tool to leverage civil society inputs to policy making and strengthening resilience at the village and household level. This same mechanism needs to be systematically utilized to facilitate close coordination and synergy between government and non-state actors, not only during times of crisis.

Coherence in the disaster management system is heavily reliant on effective coordination – from policy development to planning, implementation and monitoring. Clarifying coordination mechanisms has several advantages, the most important being predictability in leadership with the designation of a coordinating organization(s) and responsibility for other key roles such as information management. This designation also allows better preparedness of cluster/sectoral coordination to familiarize themselves with their roles and responsibilities during an emergency response, and with non-government actors in preparedness and risk reduction, as well as emergency response and recovery.

### About SIAP SIAGA

SIAP SIAGA is a five-year partnership program between the Governments of Indonesia and Australia. The program aims to improve the management of disasters and increase community resilience in Indonesia and in the Indo-Pacific Region. Our approach is measured, reflective and forward-leaning which helps us to deliver the best results for DFAT and Indonesia's communities.

<sup>1</sup> See *Perka BNPB 173/2014 about Sistem Klaster Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana*.

<sup>2</sup> Kerrie Holloway, Lillian Fan; Collective approaches to communication and community engagement in the Central Sulawesi response; HPG Commissioned Report; June 2020; p.11



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