

While cross-boundary collaboration needs to be flexible and responsive, some organisations can come under pressure to expand their missions and overpower others. Goal diversity and fragmentation might result in losing sight of overarching goals, and at the same time, interoperability through interlinking data has the potential to have one organisation's system and its fundamental values, creep in and overpower others. To avoid this, it is important to identify different goals and approaches and to build into the planning and implementation processes opportunities to notice and negotiate different perspectives but also to review and reaffirm the collaboration's overarching aims.

Guiding Questions

Acknowledging that different stakeholders might have diverging or even competing aims, do they all agree on the key overarching aim of the collaboration?

Does the collaborative information management system provide opportunities for the stakeholders to review and if necessary reaffirm the original overarching aims?

Is the system set up in ways that flags up actions which might divert from the agreed goals of the collaboration?

Examples

In a study of multi-agency collaboration in humanitarian aid, Maxwell and Parker (2012) interviewed a range of actors about their experience. Amongst the key issues they raised was the question of whether information sharing was really about 'Information sharing or strategic leadership?': A question arising from the interviews is the extent to which the global Food Security Cluster should push the envelope on coordination: while the formal mandate emphasises a traditional approach to coordination, there is a clear need to prioritise strategic leadership focusing on improving food security responses well beyond standard coordination approaches. ... Donors express a lot of fear about "mission creep;" many other respondents fear that doing a good job coordinating humanitarian response is impossible if longer-term, risk-management elements of food security are ruled out. No clear agreement exists on where a "humanitarian" mandate with regard to food security ends, and where some more "developmental" mandate takes over.

Resources

Lawrence, R. Z. (2007). International Organisations: The Challenge of Aligning Mission, Means and Legitimacy. *The World Economy*, 31(11): 1455-1470 [[DOI](#)]

Maxwell, D., and Parker, J. (2012). Coordination in food security crises: a stakeholder analysis of the challenges facing the global food security cluster. *Food Security*, 4(1): 25-40. [[DOI](#)]