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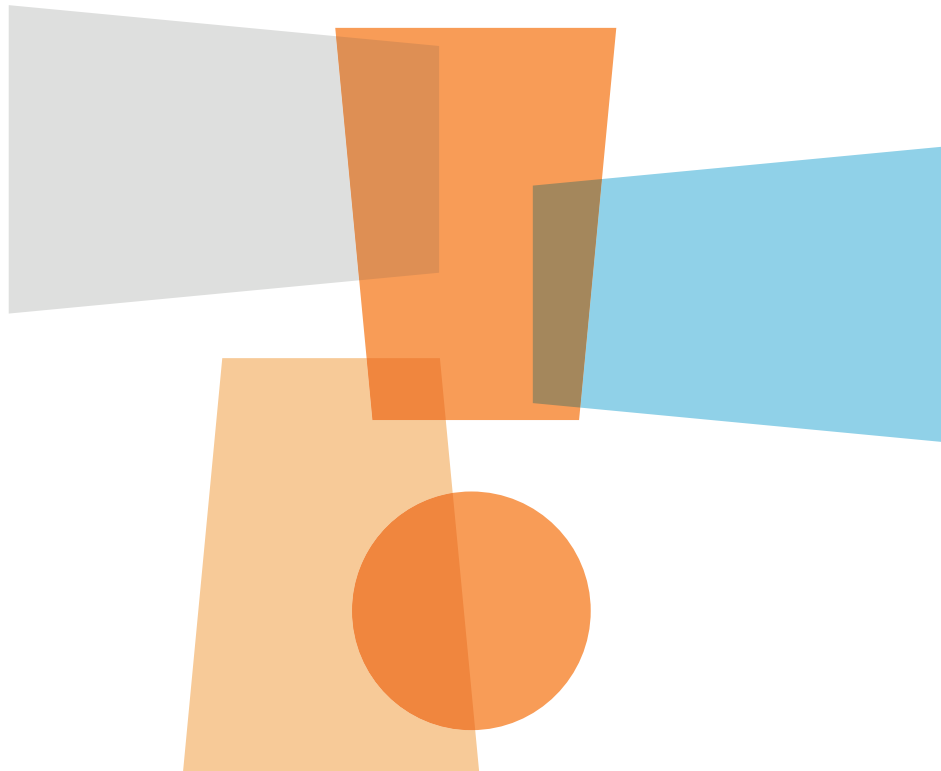## OF THE
HUMANITARIAN
SYSTEM

2012 EDITION

ALNAP

The State of the Humanitarian System

ALNAP is a unique sector-wide network in the international humanitarian system, made up of key humanitarian organisations and leading experts in the field. The broad range of experience and expertise from across the membership is at the heart of ALNAP's efforts to improve humanitarian performance through learning and accountability.

ALNAP Full Members include agencies and individuals from five key constituencies that make up the international humanitarian sector. These are:

- *Bilateral and multilateral donors*
- *UN agencies*
- *The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*
- *International and national NGOs and NGO networks/ umbrella bodies*
- *Academic establishments, research institutions and independent consultants*

The ALNAP membership works together to identify common approaches to improved performance; to explore new ways to improve learning and accountability; and to share ideas, lessons and innovations. ALNAP's overall aim is to make an active contribution to solving longstanding challenges facing the sector.

The State of the System report is the latest output of a multi-year programme of research and development focusing on humanitarian performance.
To download the report and additional resources, visit the ALNAP website at:
www.alnap.org

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THANK YOU.

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PREFACE

This report represents the first attempt by the international humanitarian system to systematically monitor and report on its progress and performance. On the best available evidence, the report shows where progress is being made as well as identifying shortcomings so that practical and creative solutions can be put forward. The very existence of this report demonstrates that the system is mature enough to look at itself critically and move forward in a more informed way.

The report appraises how well the system performed between 2010-2012. During this time we saw major international emergencies such as Haiti, Pakistan and Somalia which changed the growing demands on the humanitarian system and expectations of what can be achieved. There are now more actors, especially NGOs, in the system; more money available; more technological innovation; increased individual giving; and evidence that elements of the reform process (including clusters, the CERF and pooled funding) have improved the timeliness of the response in many instances. Agencies are getting humanitarian aid to people in very difficult operating conditions.

But the report also identifies areas where the system has to improve. There is a lack of inclusion of non- traditional actors such as National Disaster Management Authorities and southern NGOS, weak accountability to beneficiaries and lack of strong leadership which undermines the effectiveness of many operations. This underlies the importance of the transformative agenda which was recently agreed by the IASC Principals. The agenda focuses on strengthening the areas of leadership, co-ordination, and accountability in the system.

If we are going to improve international humanitarian response we all need to pay attention to the areas of action highlighted in the report. We also need to improve needs assessment, and support the strengthening of the national systems and response architecture.

I commend this report to all those responsible for planning and delivering life saving aid around the world.

Valerie Amos

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
And Emergency Relief Coordinator

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACE — Assessment and Classification of Emergencies

ACF — Action Contre La Faim (Action Against Hunger)

ADRA — Adventist Development and Relief Agency

AIDS — Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

ALNAP — Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action

ASEAN — Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CaLP — Cash and Learning Partnership

CAP — Consolidated Appeals Process

CBO — Community-Based Organisation

CDAC — Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities

CEPREDENAC — Centro de Coordinacion para la Prevencion de Desastres naturales en America Central (Coordination of Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America)

CERF — UN Central Emergency Response Fund

CERP — Commander's Emergency Response Programme

CHF — Common Humanitarian Fund

CRS — Catholic Relief Services

DAC — Development Assistance Committee

DARA — Development Assistance Research Associates

DFID — UK Department for International Development

DRC — Democratic Republic of the Congo

DRMU — Disaster Relief Monitoring Unit

DRR — Disaster Risk Reduction

EC — European Commission

ECB — Emergency Capacity Building

ECHO — European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office

EMMA — Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis

ERC — UN Emergency Relief Coordinator

ERD — ALNAP's Evaluation Reports Database

EU — European Union

FAO — Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations

FTS — OCHA Financial Tracking Service

GenCap — Gender Capacity Project

GHA — Global Humanitarian Assistance

GHD — Good Humanitarian Donorship

Groupe URD — Urgence, Réhabilitation, Développement

HAP — Humanitarian Accountability Partnership

HC — Humanitarian Coordinator

HIV — Human Immunodeficiency Virus

IASC — Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Response

ICRC — International Committee of the Red Cross

ICT — Information and Communication Technology

ICVA — International Council of Voluntary Agencies

IDP — Internally Displaced Person

IDRL — International Disaster Response Law

IFRC — International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IOM — International Organization for Migration

IRC — International Rescue Committee

INGO — International NGO

LNGO — National/Local NGO

MSF — Médecins Sans Frontières

NGO — Non-Governmental Organisation

NRC — Norwegian Refugee Council

OCHA — UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OECD — Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAF — Performance and Accountability Framework

PAHO — Pan American Health Organization

RTE — Real-Time Evaluation

SCHR — Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response

Sida — Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

UK — United Kingdom

UN — United Nations

UNDP — UN Development Program

UNHCR — United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF — UN Children's Fund

UNRWA — UN Relief and Works Agency

US — United States

USAID — US Agency for International Development

WASH — Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WFP — World Food Programme

WHO — World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a system-level mapping and analysis of the performance of international humanitarian assistance. The pilot report on the State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) was published in 2010 and focused on the years 2007 and 2008. This report includes descriptive statistics from the following two years, 2009 and 2010, and reviews performance assessments from 2009 to the end of 2011, comparing findings from the two periods. The 'international humanitarian system' is defined here as the network of national and international provider agencies, donors and host-government authorities that are functionally connected to each other in the humanitarian endeavour and that share common overarching goals, norms and principles. The system also includes actors that do not have humanitarian assistance as their central mission but play important humanitarian roles, such as military and private-sector entities.

This report covers recent developments with those actors as well, and for the first time includes the perceptions and perspectives of some humanitarian aid recipients, through field-based surveys in four countries.

This first full SOHS report takes a more comprehensive look at the actors, activities, and issues that characterise the international humanitarian system today.

It reviews the considerable amount of work undertaken by the humanitarian system since the pilot, against a backdrop of heightened stress caused by rising fuel and food prices, the growing challenges of urbanisation and climate change and a charged geopolitical environment. Although the massive impact of the disasters in Haiti, Pakistan and Somalia over this period may stand out in the headlines, the humanitarian system also engaged on an enormous scale across a range of chronic conflict-related contexts such as Afghanistan, Sudan and South Sudan and DRC. Other crises, such as the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire, received much less attention and only a fraction of the resources. [1]

Graffiti on the side of a shelter in Saclepea, Liberia, 2011

[1] The 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami response falls outside the timeframe of the quantitative analysis for this study and there were no major evaluations of that response available for inclusion in the evaluation

COMPLEX PICTURE OF PROGRESS

After only two years, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are few dramatic changes in the humanitarian system. It is possible, however, to track significant movement along longer trajectories of change in key areas of performance, technical advancement and debates on principles and practice. On many measures used for this evaluation, progress is mixed, with examples of innovation and improvement coexisting with examples of inertia and longstanding deficits. After looking briefly at the evolving context of humanitarian action, and then at the composition and resources of the system, this report assesses progress and performance in six areas: coverage/sufficiency, relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness, connectedness, efficiency, and coherence.

Slowed but continued growth in human and financial resources

An expanded mapping of the operational agencies of the humanitarian system revealed more, and more diverse, agencies than expected. There are some 4,400 NGOs worldwide undertaking humanitarian action on an ongoing basis. Yet the system is still dominated, in terms of operational presence and resource share, by the same small group of global giants: the UN humanitarian agencies, the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and five international 'mega' NGOs, whose combined humanitarian expenditure in 2010 exceeded $2.7 billion.

The population of humanitarian workers continued to grow in the past two years, although not as fast as previously. After some shrinkage in NGO humanitarian personnel in 2009, growth was back in 2010. Added to the uninterrupted growth of UN humanitarian staff, this amounted to a combined growth rate of 4% in 2009-2010 (down from 6% for the pilot study years of 2007-2008). In 2010 there was an estimated total of 274,000 humanitarian workers worldwide. Similarly, financial flows for humanitarian assistance slowed down during the peak of the global financial crisis, but still continued to grow. Controlling for the surge in funds for Haiti in 2010 and adjusting for inflation, the long-term upward trend in humanitarian funding still holds, though at just 1% on average for 2009-2010.

SOHS survey respondent

"I think it's great that we keep wanting to improve. But let's actually improve."

Continued insufficiency of funding and gaps in coverage

In the area of 'coverage/sufficiency' – mobilising resources sufficient to meet needs and cover all affected populations – the system shows no measurable improvement. Although humanitarian funding continues on a 10-year rising trend, the majority of actors surveyed perceived funding in their setting to be 'insufficient', especially for the sectors of protection and early recovery. Perceptions of insufficiency were slightly stronger than in the pilot study (with the notable exception of Haiti). On average, funding coverage against needs (as stated in appeals) stayed effectively static in 2009-2010 compared to 2007-2008 (the period covered by the SOHS pilot study) rising to 54% from 53%*, with unequal growth across sectors.

Most funding continues to go to a small number of protracted crises: Sudan, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, DR Congo, Afghanistan and the occupied Palestinian Territories, and to high-profile natural disasters such as Haiti. In surveys, most respondents indicated that operational access to populations in need had neither improved nor declined in their setting. In terms of physical coverage, surveys and interviews found that certain access problems continued and that these were primarily political or security-related. Most respondents indicated that overall the level of access in their setting had neither improved nor declined from two years ago.

The system's poor showing in coverage/sufficiency is largely a consequence of financial, human and material resources not growing fast enough to keep pace with rising needs. The growth in needs is due to a combination of factors including increases in climate-related natural disasters, agency efforts to account for the true total of affected populations, and appeals for the humanitarian system to take on more activities in recovery, preparedness and development.

Modest improvements in relevance/appropriateness, yet persistent weakness in consultation

In the area of relevance/appropriateness – addressing appropriate needs according to host-country priorities – the system improved on certain measures. Evaluations mostly indicated that community or local government priorities had been met, and most survey respondents from the international system saw moderate improvement in the quality of needs assessments in the past two years. The pilot study showed similar moderate improvement for 2007-2008.

Where operations were found to be less relevant, reviews cited the inability to meet the full spectrum of need and a weak understanding of local context as key reasons. This is borne out by the views of the small sample of aid recipients surveyed. The surveys clearly found that humanitarian organisations had failed to consult with recipients in their setting or to use their input in programming. Aid recipients also expressed the opinion that the aid they received did not address their 'most important needs at the time'. The surveys of international aid practitioners, local NGOs and host government representatives likewise pinpointed local consultation as an area much in need of improvement.

"Joint needs assessment by humanitarian actors would go a long way in preventing duplication of interventions and sustainability of the on-going ones."

SOHS survey respondent

*These figures refer to average coverage against appeals for specific operational sectors. This should not be confused with total funding coverage against total stated needs, which fell overall in 2009-2010 compared to 2007-2008, from 72% to 68% (see page 43)

This deficit could be addressed in the near future by technical advances in methods of needs assessment. Humanitarian organisations are increasingly focused on more comprehensive, inclusive and participatory needs assessments, and this reporting period saw a serious drive from the centre of the humanitarian system in this regard. Examples include the IASC's Needs Assessment Taskforce (NATF), resulting in a new set of tools, now ready for field testing. The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), an NGO consortium and NATF member has shown significant progress, especially through collaboration with NGO Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) consortia in several field contexts. There is growing recognition that cyclical and slow-onset crises require a focus on the assessment of risk as well as need.

A mixed picture of effectiveness: objectives largely met, but leadership and timeliness lacking

Effectiveness was measured by how well humanitarian responses met their objectives, how quickly the system was able to respond to emergencies, how well it monitored and evaluated its work, the quality of leadership and the competence of coordination efforts. Most interventions were found to be effective or partially effective in terms of achievement against projected goals or international standards, the avoidance of negative outcomes and/or the receipt of positive feedback from aid recipients. Where overall effectiveness has been questioned, the key reasons were time delays and poorly defined goals. Each major emergency during the reporting period had a mixed review in terms of effectiveness. In particular, the response in the Horn of Africa was found to be abjectly slow at a systemic level, with significant disconnects between early warning systems and response, and between technical assessments and decision-makers.

The key elements of humanitarian reform effectively came of age during this reporting period, as the cluster system, the CERF and country-level pooled funding all underwent five-year evaluations. Each evaluation revealed that these instruments have become accepted as the new – and generally improved – means of operation. The end of this reporting period also saw the birth of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator's 'Transformative Agenda'. This represents a reinvigorated effort to tackle the more challenging areas of reform and new impetus to improve the overall effectiveness of the humanitarian system. In terms of quality and expertise of aid personnel, the system benefitted from a growth in new initiatives for training and certification. Most practitioners surveyed felt that staff quality was unchanged, but a greater number than last time thought it had improved and fewer saw a decline.

The lynchpin role of the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator continues to be a focus of attention. Identified as a key challenge in the pilot study, failures of leadership dominated early evaluations in Haiti and Pakistan. Despite having received significant attention, the HC-strengthening agenda has made progress only in details. Larger questions remain about skills prioritisation and merit-based selection. Survey responses suggest the somewhat more nuanced finding that the greatest dissatisfaction within the system is with lack of overall coordination at the country level, rather than with the individual RC/HC. This supports the notion that the problem is one of structural, not necessarily personal, leadership. Clearly however, both aspects are found to be wanting by different actors in the system.

Most of the aid recipients surveyed felt that the foremost way in which humanitarian organisations could improve would be to: 'be faster to start delivering aid'. At global level, the CERF gets high marks for timeliness in funding disbursements, but the timeliness of donor contributions overall declined between 2007-2008 and 2009-2010. Regarding the other key element of timeliness, the findings show that response rosters have improved the capacity of agencies in operations and coordination to fill key posts in timely fashion. High staff turnover,

however, and the ongoing challenge for humanitarian agencies in preparing staff to understand the political and cultural context into which they are arriving, often at short notice, greatly undermine success in this area.

The issue of monitoring, identified as a key weakness in the pilot study, has received relatively little attention and is still noted as a significant shortcoming in the system. Evaluations have made mixed progress, but affected states are still notably absent from evaluating their own responses or participating in joint evaluations with counterparts.

Some advances in connectedness, increasingly driven by recipient states

Connectedness is defined in this study as how well the system works to connect its short-term activity to longer-term host-country objectives, and how well it partners with host-country stakeholders. Overall, the system has shown some modest improvement in connectedness at the host-government level, though not all of its own making and not without some points of friction. A significant rise in capacity of National Disaster Management Authorities (NDMAs) has reinforced the system's engagement with governments of affected states and heightened recognition of the need to support their priorities more effectively in natural disasters.

Beyond recognition, however, much practical work remains to be done to help strengthen host-country coordination structures and response capacities. The relationship between donors, non-government actors and recipient states can often be strained. For instance, the focus of some governments on sovereignty and self-reliance in the face of disasters has seen increasing refusals to issue the 'standard emergency' appeals that have traditionally triggered the international system's response. For their part, host-government representatives are frustrated by the 'artificial' division between relief and development aid in the international aid architecture.

Despite the increasing importance of local partnerships in highly insecure settings, there remains an underinvestment in the capacities of local operational partners. Interviews and evaluations noted that national organisations are often working at or beyond their maximum operational capacity and find the additional pressure to meet a variety of international standards challenging, if not impossible, given available resources and time. Yet local capacity-building remains one the hardest areas to raise funds for in non-emergency periods, when it is needed the most. While there are increased opportunities for local organisations to apply for pooled funding, there is very little bilateral funding being directed towards them.

The last two years saw continued efforts to improve accountability to, and communication with, aid recipients. Initiatives by CDAC and its members, such as Internews, Frontline SMS, BBC Media Action and others, have greatly increased engagement with the views of affected populations, as well providing information as a vital form of aid in emergencies. To date, there is less evidence to suggest that this new resource of ground-level information is being used strategically to improve humanitarian interventions.

Efficiency and innovation: no marked progress

Efficiency in the humanitarian system can be measured in terms of both money and time. Views of the relative efficiency of the system since the pilot are largely unchanged. Clusters and country-level pooled funds are credited with bringing larger volumes of funding and contributing to stronger coordination, but at times can sacrifice speed for inclusiveness.
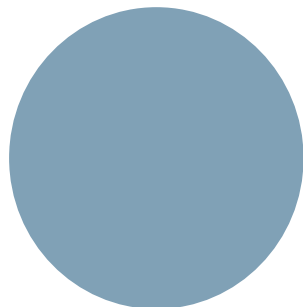
Survey respondents again affirmed that the benefits of coordination were worth the costs (e.g. time spent in meetings), but by weaker majorities than last time. Some major donors, facing budget pressures, became increasingly concerned with cost efficiency, or 'value for money'. Challenges remain, however, in clarifying the concept and making meaningful comparisons between contexts.

The 2007-2008 pilot period saw key innovations in humanitarian action, including the use of cash and mobile communications technology. These methods have reached a transformative scale, their use having become significantly more widespread, indeed mainstream, during 2009-2010. The subject of innovation itself became a major area for action in the system, with new funds and mechanisms designed to study and support innovation in humanitarian programming.

Coherence: increasing strain on the principles of aid

In terms of coherence – the extent to which actors converge around shared principles and goals – the humanitarian system seems to have weakened. The pilot study noted aid practitioners' serious concern about political actors' lack of respect for humanitarian principles as a consequence of 'stabilisation' efforts in fragile states. By 2010 and 2011, the research shows no substantive improvements in this area. Moreover, many humanitarian organisations have willingly compromised a principled approach in their own conduct through close alignment with political and military activities and actors. The internal coherence of the humanitarian system has increasingly been tested, as a gulf widens between strict 'traditionalist' humanitarian actors such as ICRC and MSF, and the rest of the system, which is populated by multi-mandated organisations. The study found deepening dissatisfaction and lack of measurable progress in this area.

Looking at broader coherence between the humanitarian and other parts of the aid system, research indicated that, in cyclical and slow-onset disasters, the long-acknowledged disconnect between development and humanitarian programming has failed populations at risk. In these circumstances, the concept of resilience may offer a basis for increasing coherence. Above all, in each different 'type' of disaster, there is a sense of increasing distance between the humanitarian system and its counterparts, which suggests the need for a new conversation about the practical application of humanitarian principles.

Conclusions and areas for further action

The first full State of the Humanitarian System review concludes on page 83 with a series of suggested 'areas for action' within several of the performance criteria. These target the particularly persistent challenges that have eluded major improvement by the humanitarian system to date, and that warrant renewed efforts and new approaches.

"Coordination efforts have improved response, but there is a fine balance between engaging in sectoral coordination and having time to also run a programme."

SOHS survey respondent

INTRODUCTION

1.1 GOALS OF THIS REPORT

The State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) study is an ambitious attempt to synthesise the actions and perspectives of a multitude of disparate, independent actors into one holistic assessment. This report examines the past two years of data since the pilot study was published in 2010 in order to gauge recent progress and to continue to advance our understanding of the 'humanitarian system'. Using the pilot-study findings as a partial baseline, this report tracks the latest developments and progress on performance criteria and provides an updated set of descriptive statistics. In this first full study the research team has also refined the methodology and expanded the scope, placing greater emphasis on the national and regional actors who are indisputably essential to the functioning of the system, but too often undercounted and overlooked in the global discourse.

Hope for change

Views from the SOHS survey

30 disaster affected refugees in Uganda responded in interviews by saying that refugees are now considered 'business' for NGOs. They believe the problem is not that there is not enough aid, but that it's not equally shared

1.2 SOHS PILOT STUDY

The pilot SOHS report, published by ALNAP in 2010 (Harvey et al., 2010), was the first of its kind. It attempted to define and assess the entirety of the international humanitarian system, mapping the overall size and reach of humanitarian activities and resources, and evaluating operational performance and progress. The data used in the study covered humanitarian activities, surveys and evaluations for 2007 and 2008.

That first study found that the international system had grown considerably in recent years. Global staffing had increased at an average rate of 6% per year over the decade, and monetary contributions to international emergency response efforts rose nearly three-fold. In terms of performance, the study found that the system had made positive progress in internal mechanics, such as coordination mechanisms, funding vehicles and assessment tools. At the same time, some fundamental performance measures remained weak, such as leadership and the system's engagement with and accountability to its recipients. On the whole, the findings depicted a system doing a fairly good job of getting aid to people in difficult and dangerous places despite some persistent – and serious – shortcomings.

1.3 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN 'SYSTEM'? DEFINITIONS REVISITED

An undertaking as large as this study must with due modesty acknowledge two things at the outset. The first is that the 'humanitarian system' is conceived and defined in numerous different ways by different actors and observers (with some indeed denying its very existence), and whatever definition the study chooses to employ for the purpose of analysis will be but one lens for observation and not the final word. Second, it would be impossible to measure accurately and comprehensively every component of the system, even when narrowly defined. Any definition is necessarily selective, but can aim to improve its accuracy and comprehensiveness with successive iterations. As the SOHS pilot report noted, "humanitarian action", broadly defined, could encompass any actions to save lives and alleviate suffering in the face of disasters', natural or conflict-related. It can be performed by a wide range of actors, including local populations themselves, national governments, the private sector, national and foreign militaries, civil society organisations, UN agencies and international organisations, among others. What this study is concerned with, however, is the means by which international humanitarian assistance is provided to populations whose governments are unable adequately to meet their needs, and the interconnected institutional and operational entities that undertake it. In other words, while any number of actors can be said to be engaged in humanitarian action, not all of them can be said to be acting within a 'system', defined as 'a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent elements forming a complex whole' directed at broadly shared objectives.

To include any and all providers of aid would be to define the system so broadly as to render it meaningless as a subject of analysis. In order to be reasonably assessed and measured as a system, the actors must be linked in some functional way to each other and ultimately to

the global-level humanitarian architecture. The research team has formulated this definition, emphasising the formal linkages between the entities, because it is both conceptually useful for delineation and practically useful in terms of mapping; the linkages can be traced through measurable elements such as contracts, grants and memoranda of understanding (MoUs).

At the same time, important elements should not be excluded from the definition simply because they are difficult to track and measure. Rather, it is important to keep in mind the more organic conception of 'a system, with multiple interacting layers – rather than as a hierarchy reaching from global headquarters down into "the field" (Currion, 2012). Seeking a balance, this review assesses and measures the formal or core components of the international humanitarian system, while at the same time taking stock of the important actors that have occasional engagement with the humanitarian system. For instance, militaries and corporations do not have humanitarian assistance as their principal goal, but can make a large impact with their relief activities.

The system's core entities are operationally or financially related to each other and share common overarching goals, norms and principles in humanitarian action. They include:

- *international NGOs (both specifically humanitarian organisations, and multi-mandated organisations that work in humanitarian assistance) that through partnership and sub-granting arrangements often act as a bridge between local organisations and international funding and coordination structures*

- *UN agencies, offices, funds and programmes that work in humanitarian assistance (including all IASC member agencies, OCHA, UNRWA and IOM)*

- *the International Movement of the Red Cross/Red Crescent (ICRC, IFRC and National Societies)*

- *national NGOs (that partner with and/or receive funding from international humanitarian entities for humanitarian operations)*

- *host-government entities (such as interior ministries and National Disaster Management Authorities), with formal roles in overseeing the receipt and implementation of international humanitarian assistance*

- *regional, intergovernmental agencies engaged in humanitarian activities*

- *donor-government agencies/offices that provide financing for international humanitarian operations and institutions.*

The non-core humanitarian actors that work in parallel and often in coordination with the rest of the humanitarian system – but which have different ultimate goals and approaches – include:

- *militaries*

- *private-sector entities, including commercial contractors*

- *religious institutions (differentiated from faith-based operational aid organisations)*

- *diaspora groups and formal and informal private givers.*

The mapping and financial analysis of the review encompasses the roles of these actors in humanitarian response (although data on their humanitarian work tends to be thinner and harder to find). This report also touches on some trends in their engagement with the 'traditional' international humanitarians.

Another aspect of defining the 'humanitarian system' involves not what the system is, but what it is expected to do. The range of actions considered 'humanitarian' varies and seems to have expanded over time. This is particularly true in contexts where challenges of chronic poverty and underdevelopment coexist with acute humanitarian need and which may or may not also be affected by armed conflict.

In addition to acute crisis response, the humanitarian system is also increasingly engaged in

- *preparedness and local capacity-building for response*

- *recovery and transition (which can lead to seemingly perpetual humanitarian assistance programmes in cases such as Sudan, South Sudan and DRC, awaiting durable political solutions)*

- *extension of or substitution for national government safety nets*

- *alleviation of large-scale chronic hunger and food insecurity*

1.3.2 LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

The evaluative component of this study measures the 'performance and progress' of the humanitarian system. Therefore it focuses more on process and outputs of the system, than on outcomes or impact. Impact evaluation – the measurement of long-term changes in conditions attributable to interventions – is a deservedly prevalent topic in humanitarian evaluation discourse today (Stoddard, 2011). However, impact evaluation is difficult, not least because it can be very hard to attribute particular changes to particular interventions, and there are very few examples of true outcome/impact evaluation of humanitarian assistance (see section 4.3.9 below, Monitoring and evaluation).

Because SOHS synthesises findings over two years of smaller-scale humanitarian evaluations, it is necessarily limited in this regard as well. This study cannot attempt to gauge impacts on a global level, with any rigour, when this has yet to be widely accomplished at field level. Nonetheless, this report does attempt to draw some qualitative conclusions on the overall value and direction of the system against the goals it continues to strive for.

1.3.3 RESEARCH COMPONENTS AND APPROACH

The research programme consisted of the following components:

- *an evaluation synthesis, analysing the findings from recent analytical literature*

- *a series of interviews with key informants among humanitarian practitioners and policy-makers*

- *field studies in Kenya and South Sudan*

- *a compilation of descriptive statistics, mapping the system's organisational components*

- *analysis of humanitarian financial flows*

- *a series of global surveys on humanitarian performance indicators that solicited views of humanitarian actors and stakeholders across a range of field settings*

- *a review of data on affected populations to estimate global humanitarian need.*

EVALUATION SYNTHESIS – The evaluation synthesis reviewed 200 evaluation reports published between January 2009 and January 2012. The majority of the evaluations were taken from the ALNAP Evaluation Reports Database (ERD), supplemented by other public sources, including agency websites. The reports came from international and local NGOs, UN entities, international consortiums, consultancy groups, educational institutions and donors. They included single-agency, final project evaluations (10), as well as 'system-wide' evaluations (30), real-time evaluations (20), multi-year evaluations (20), mid-term evaluations (10), joint evaluations (10) and cluster reviews (10). The evaluations were analysed using a matrix to assess the content of the reports against the six assessment criteria used in this report: coverage/sufficiency, relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness, connectedness, efficiency and coherence. (See the SOHS Inception Report, available at www.alnap.org/ourwork/current/sohs.aspx, for a detailed explanation of the criteria and related research questions.)

The researchers also undertook a broader review of industry literature published or distributed between 2009 and 2012. This included: a range of global-level synthesis reports (e.g. Development Initiatives' Global Humanitarian Assistance reports, IFRC's World Disasters Reports, the UN Secretary-General's Reports); agency and sectoral literature; donor-related reports (e.g. donor-specific evaluations and OECD DAC peer reviews); reports from NGOs, coordinating bodies and networks; and academic literature.

INTERVIEWS – The study team interviewed a total of 148 informants, using a semi-structured format. Informants were selected to be broadly representative of the major actors and sectors of the international and national systems, reflecting their proportional share of resources (human and financial) and operational presence in humanitarian response. Fifty interviews were conducted in the field (South Sudan and Kenya) as part of the case study research and the rest in various locations in person and by telephone. The interviewees represent: INGOs or INGO consortia (41), local NGOs (19), UN secretariat and agencies (25), the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement (6), host governments (24), donor governments (21) and regional organisations (3), as well as academia, the media and the private sector(9). The annex provides the full list of interviewees.

FIELD STUDIES – The two field studies were designed to enable the study team to access and consult with national stakeholders and local government representatives and to offer first-hand observations on the nature of the partnerships between international and national actors, including levels of investment in capacity building and participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation. The two contexts examined were Kenya (primarily the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs)) and South Sudan. Approximately 25 stakeholders were interviewed in each, including government officials and international and national aid agency staff. The studies offered an opportunity to place global issues in current, concrete context and to offer a more complete insight into issues at the national level. While illuminating a range of relevant issues, the studies were not designed to be representative of the humanitarian system as a whole.

ORGANISATIONAL MAPPING – The organisational mapping exercise aimed to advance understanding the scope of the international system and take stock of changes since the pilot study, in terms of the system's size and scope. The mapping methodology expanded on the one used by the first study, casting a wider net and including more organisations. This makes it more comprehensive, but also somewhat difficult to compare findings. The second approach differs because it:

- *includes national NGOs participating in the international humanitarian system*

- *takes an expanded and more systematic approach, leading to more international NGOs being included in the count*

- *collects additional data on each organisation: in addition to budget/staff size and country and year founded, it now also includes their primary sector of work, religious or secular orientation of mission and number of countries of operation*

Because the system and the organisations that comprise it are not static, the organisational mapping database was designed as a living information resource. As part of the SOHS 2012 project, the database is being made publicly available online, to allow for periodic updates and to enable organisations to correct and share their data. The full methodology for the organisational mapping, including a discussion of the limitations of the exercise, can be found by visiting www.alnap.org/ourwork/current/sohs.aspx.

FINANCIAL AND CASELOAD ANALYSIS [2] – To measure the level of financial resources supporting the system and to assess its ability to meet global humanitarian needs, the study team analysed humanitarian financial flows from public- and private-sector sources against the caseload of humanitarian emergencies and estimated needs during the time period. As in the pilot study, the financial review in Section 3.2 below contains a number of separate components or approaches to the data. To build a picture of funding flows for specific emergency cases, the study team undertook an analysis of data compiled by the UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS), which records contributions by governments, international organisations, provider agencies and private-sector actors to specific humanitarian aid activities annually.

For the purposes of identifying global humanitarian funding trends, FTS remains the most comprehensive and useful dataset available. It does not, however, capture the entirety of humanitarian resources within the international system in a given year. It omits, for example, the substantial core budget support provided by governments to organisations like the ICRC, unearmarked funds raised by humanitarian organisations from the public, or military spending on humanitarian activities. For this reason, in addition to the FTS analysis, the study team also considered resources for humanitarian action through these additional channels. The organisational mapping exercise compiled budget information on overseas humanitarian expenditure by all the UN humanitarian agencies (plus IOM), the ICRC and IFRC and INGOs. Wherever possible, figures were drawn from annual reports and audited financial statements. Where data were lacking, figures were imputed using a formula based on averages for the organisational type and tier level.

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2   A leading resource in humanitarian funding analysis has been the Global Humanitarian Assistance Reports published by Development Initiatives (Development Initiatives, 2011), which arrives at its global estimates by combining analysis of humanitarian expenditures as reported to the OECD DAC by its 24 member nations with an analysis of the FTS figures for non-DAC governments. It calculates the humanitarian resources of provider agencies using a sample set of five UN agencies, 48 INGOs, and the ICRC and IFRC. The methodological approaches between the SOHS study and GHA differ on some aspects of overall funding estimates as outlined above. This report also draws heavily on the GHA for estimates on military spending on humanitarian activities and other humanitarian resource flows such as remittances where data are scarce and GHA has made pioneering research efforts.

WEB-BASED SURVEYS OF HUMANITARIAN ACTORS – Three different online survey instruments were designed to target country- and regional-level personnel of: international humanitarian organisations and agencies, national NGOs and regional organisations, and host-government authorities. The surveys were made available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic versions. In total, the online surveys garnered 631 responses from 183 (named) organisations/entities in 75 countries. The survey component of the research did not aim for a statistically random sample of actors from across the vast humanitarian system, which would be unrealistic. Rather, it was designed to capture as many perspectives from as many different field settings as possible, in order to complement and balance the interviews (in which global-level perspectives are heavily represented).

Because the sample was non-random and respondents self-selected, the risk of bias is unavoidable and results should not be read as necessarily representative of the total population. However, in disseminating and promoting the survey across the system, the study team did strive for a roughly proportional representation of responses from the different institutional affiliations. Disaggregating the responses by affiliation and context can illuminate differing perspectives. INGOs made up the majority of respondents (55%), followed by UN agencies, national and regional NGOs, the International Movement of the Red Cross/Red Crescent and host- government representatives (Figure 1). The survey questions (available on the ALNAP website by visiting www.alnap.org/ourwork/current/sohs. aspx) mirrored the evaluation criteria and lines of inquiry for the study, and findings from the analysis of responses are woven throughout the report. The survey questions were mostly the same as those used in the pilot study, for the sake of comparability, but some adjustments and refinements were made following consultations with members of the Advisory Group and in light of experience with the pilot.

Within the report, the online survey findings are usually summarised for respondents as a whole. The exception to this is where findings differ markedly between the target survey groups, in which case they are qualified (for instance where national NGOs or host governments have quite different perspectives from the international organisations).

Figure 1: Online survey respondents, by affiliation

Online survey: humanitarian actors

Host govt 2%

National/regional orgs 13%

ICRC/IFRC 8%

UN agency 22%

INGO 55%
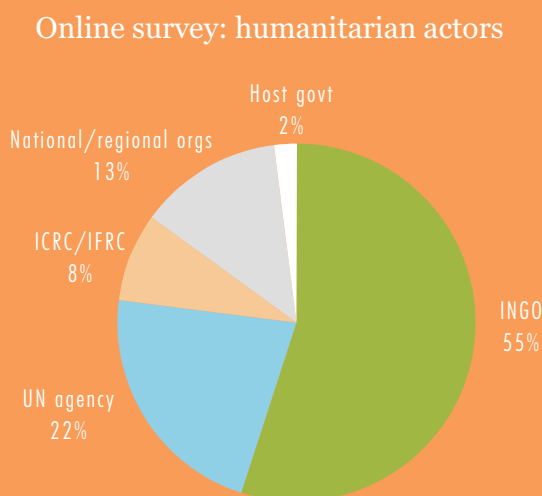
FIELD-BASED SURVEYS OF AID RECIPIENTS - In addition to the online surveys for aid

practitioners, SOHS research for the first time also incorporated a survey for aid recipients in field settings. This was accomplished through partnership with organisations who had means of accessing aid recipient populations and who expressed interest in contributing to the research. These included Catholic Relief Services in Haiti, Church World Service Pakistan, People for Peace and Defence of Rights (PPDR) in Uganda (refugees from Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan), and Mobile Accord, which ran a pro bono SMS survey for this study in Eastern DRC. Altogether these efforts yielded 1104 usable responses from four aid settings in three regions (Figure 2). These findings are also incorporated throughout the report to illuminate the beneficiary perspective on the various aspects and issues of aid.

Figure 2: Respondents to the survey of aid recipients, by country

As the study had only a limited field component, it was not possible to do a broader based

Field survey: aid recipients

DRC, 325

Uganda (East African refugees), 500

Pakistan, 100

Haiti, 179
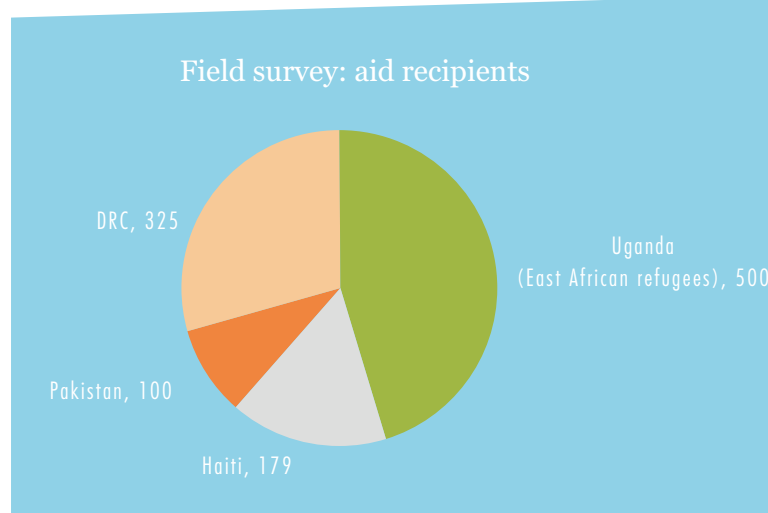
survey of recipients. The results, of course, are therefore also non-random and cannot be treated as statistically representative of recipient views. They nevertheless have value as anecdotal evidence, particularly given the lack of beneficiary perspective in humanitarian evaluation in general. The more that this component can be expanded and strengthened in future years, the more robust the findings will be in subsequent SOHS reports.

1.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

Section 2 below describes some of the significant political and socioeconomic factors shaping and challenging the work of the international humanitarian system and provides an overview of global humanitarian needs during 2009-2010. Section 3 maps the international system with updated descriptive statistics on the system's major actors and its human and financial resources. Section 4 analyses research findings to assess the system's performance against the criteria of coverage/sufficiency, relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness, connectedness, efficiency and coherence. Section 5 concludes the study with an overall assessment and key areas for action or further study.

THE EVOLVING CONTEXT OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND NEED

In 2009-2010 the international humanitarian system responded to 103 natural disasters and 43 complex emergencies/recoveries in developing countries (FTS data). This represents an average increase of 10% in the number of emergencies from 2007-2008. The number of natural disasters increased by the larger share (Figure 3). This section describes the operating environment in which the humanitarian system has engaged, and the key challenges it faces.

Figure 3: Emergencies requiring international humanitarian response, 2007-2010
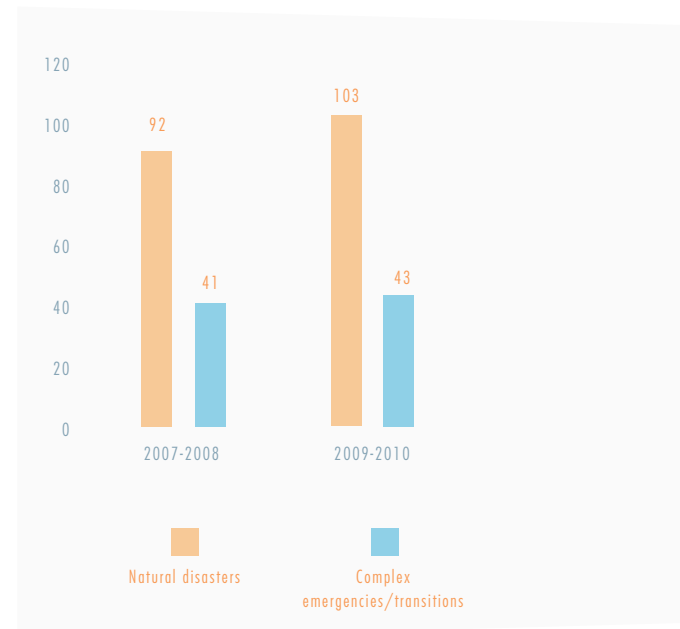
Source: OCHA FTS.

2.1 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Since the pilot report was published in 2010, the global financial crisis and recession that began in 2008 has spread and deepened. Austerity measures and shrinking foreign aid budgets in the developed world have yet to reduce overall humanitarian resources. However, warning signs are visible, with some important humanitarian donors like the Netherlands signalling looming budget cuts to foreign aid. Budget considerations have also spurred re-examination of the humanitarian system and performance, resulting in a new policy emphasis among some donors on improving cost- efficiencies in humanitarian assistance.

The accompanying rises in food and fuel prices further threatened the tenuous position of many vulnerable groups in developing countries. As noted in the Global Humanitarian Assistance report 2011, 'The cost of food increased by more than 40% between 2007 and 2011 [and] oil prices increased by 36% in real terms' (Development Initiatives, 2011: 7). This can only mean additional stressors for populations already in chronic need or at high risk of humanitarian crises. A growing discourse on high levels of chronic hunger (IFRC, 2011) has underscored the need to re-examine the relationship between long-term development goals and acute humanitarian need.

Also during the past few years, concern has focused on urbanisation and its implications for humanitarian relief. The IFRC highlighted the issue of humanitarian emergencies in urban settings in their 2010 World Disasters Report. As the global population becomes increasingly urbanised, certain types of emergencies (such as earthquakes) in urban settings have a greater human impact. Although urbanisation brings with it certain mitigating or coping factors that can help inhabitants during a disaster, it also creates significant vulnerabilities and challenges. Not least of these is the humanitarian system's relative inexperience in operating in urban environments.

Politically, the humanitarian context remains in the shadow of Western geostrategic counter-terror and 'stabilisation' efforts, and corresponding anti-Western movements in various parts of the developing world. For much of the past decade, several humanitarian responses have taken place in contested settings in which the major donors to the humanitarian system are also parties to conflict and seek to advance political and strategic aims, which often unavoidably overlap or conflict with humanitarian objectives. Continued suspicion of or outright hostility to humanitarian actors perceived as aligned with Western agendas exacerbates access and security constraints to aid operations. This is particularly acute in Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sudan.

Donors, for both ideological and domestic political reasons, have increasingly framed the role of humanitarian assistance within a broader policy framework of interventions which include defence, international security and stabilisation of failed or failing states to prevent further conflict or support for terrorist movements (Stoddard, 2010). The events of the 'Arab Spring' add a new element of uncertainty and politicisation to humanitarian responses for civilians affected by conflict. By contrast, in the humanitarian contexts that are outside the Western focus on terrorism – such as the Central African Republic and Cote d'Ivoire – where the problem is one of limited geostrategic relevance and consequent neglect.

Against this backdrop of global economic turmoil, rising food insecurity and concerns about meeting humanitarian needs within a new urban reality, three massive-scale disasters

occurred: the Haiti earthquake in 2010, floods in Pakistan in both 2010 and 2011, and a famine, brought on by drought and conflict, in Somalia in 2011. These came on top of major cyclical crises in places such as the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, plus a roughly average number of smaller-scale natural disasters in the developing world. Further, there are ongoing 'chronic emergency' contexts of cyclical conflict such as Afghanistan, South Sudan, Sudan and DRC, where humanitarian programming is a default setting and continues to play a substantial role beyond its mandate and expertise, while awaiting long-term solutions.

Finally, climate change is cited as a primary factor in the increasing occurrence of small-to-medium-scale natural disasters, many of which do not receive international attention. Data from EM-DAT show particularly large rises in climate-related emergencies such as droughts, floods and extremes of temperature. [3]

2.2 OPERATIONAL SECURITY AND ACCESS

Approximately 540 humanitarian aid workers were killed, kidnapped or seriously wounded in 2009 and 2010, and the number of attacks continues to increase (Figure 4). Afghanistan, Sudan (and now South Sudan) and Somalia top the list of the most violent environments for aid workers, together accounting for over 60% of all major incidents worldwide. After a brief dip in 2010, attributable to a withdrawal of much of the aid presence in Somalia and, to a lesser extent, Darfur, 2011 has seen a resurgence of attacks.

Figure 4: Violence against aid operations, 2006-2011

Source:
Aid Worker Security Database
(www.aidworkersecurity.org).
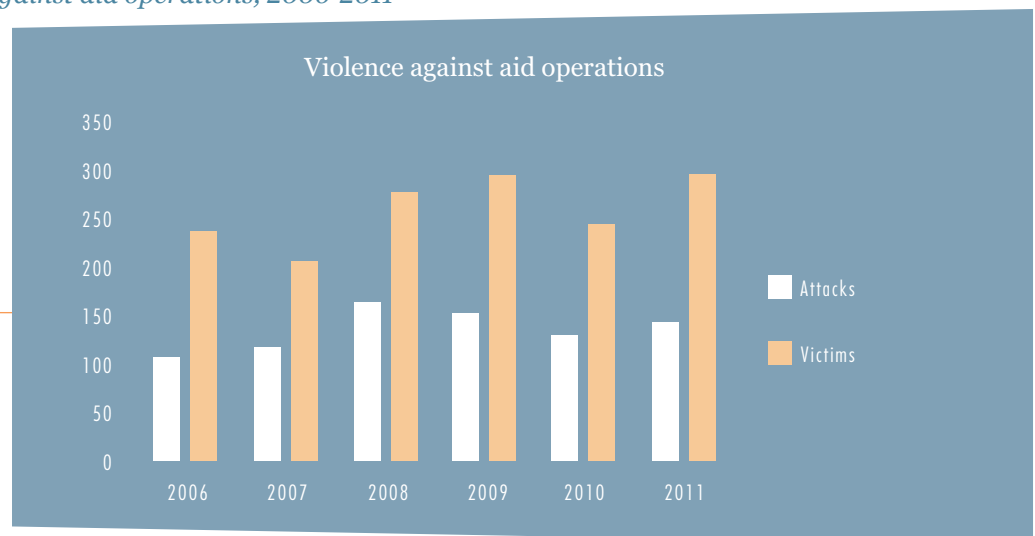
Recent research has shown that the humanitarian operations most successful at maintaining operations in insecure settings have been those of the ICRC, in partnership with local Red Cross/Red Crescent societies, which are driven by intense outreach and humanitarian negotiation (Egeland et al., 2011). The same research indicates that, in certain conflict-ridden environments, direct attacks are not the only impediment to operational access for humanitarian workers. Host and donor governments have impeded humanitarian action in some cases by: restricting movements and activities of aid workers (e.g. in Pakistan); requiring them to use armed protection, which many aid workers perceive can create more danger than it deters (e.g. Kenya, Pakistan); partiality of funding flows away from opposition-

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3   See: http://www.emdat.be

held areas (e.g. Somalia); and by legally prohibiting formal contact with groups designated as 'terrorist', thus seriously hindering humanitarian negotiation (e.g. Israel and the 'Quartet' nations) (Egeland et al., 2011). A recent US Supreme Court decision (Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project) so broadly defines 'support' to designated terrorist groups that many INGOs are worried their work providing aid to civilians in some areas will be effectively criminalised under US law.

2.3 ESTIMATING NEED

Although the annual numbers and the scale of natural disasters fluctuate, the long-term trend in numbers of people affected has been generally upward since the mid-20th century. [4] Whether this is due to overall population growth, population concentrations, climate change, or any combination of these and other factors, the higher numbers of affected people in the least developed countries result in greater needs for humanitarian response. However, the average number of people requiring aid over the past few years has not shifted much for humanitarian responders. According to EM-DAT's figures, there were slightly fewer people affected by natural disasters in 2009-10 than in the two years previous, even with the Haiti and Pakistan disasters (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Human impact of natural disasters, 2006-2010

Source: Data from EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, www.emdat.be
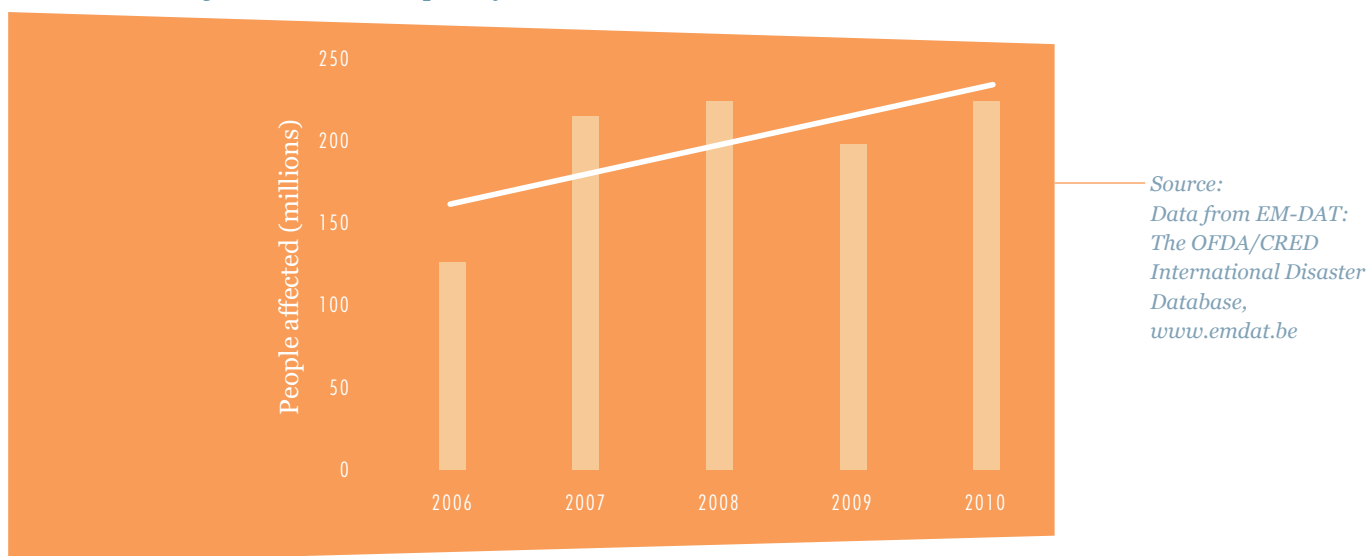
Because the dataset covers the entire world, not all of the emergencies captured by EM-DAT can be considered part of the caseload of the international humanitarian system. For instance, many of the 400 natural disasters that EM-DAT records for 2010 occurred in countries where external humanitarian aid was not requested or needed. A better indicator may be the number of declared emergencies for which international relief aid was requested by the affected government (which can be found in FTS). In addition, there is the monetary value of the stated requirements and consolidated humanitarian appeals. These are often criticised as being less a measure of actual needs of affected populations than of the operational interests and capacities of the appealing organisations, or what it is assumed the that the 'system' including the donors will respond to (Darcy and Hoffman, 2003). Even if this is the case, these figures can still be useful as a proxy – their overall levels roughly reflective of the scale of the emergency.

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4   Data from EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database (http://www.emdat.be/natural-disasters-trends).

MAPPING THE SYSTEM: COMPOSITION AND RESOURCES

The humanitarian system continued to grow in human and monetary resources during 2009-2010, although this growth was slower than in past years due to economic pressures. Humanitarian financial flows to specific emergencies totalled $16 billion in 2010 (OCHA FTS), including a surge of private funding in response to the Haiti earthquake. The number of total combined field staff of the operational humanitarian organisations is estimated at just over 274,000 (Table 1). This section describes the functional components of the international humanitarian system: the range of operational actors that implement and coordinate assistance, and the human and financial resources that they bring to bear.

Table 1: Summary of budgets and staffing of humanitarian organisations, 2010

	Humanitarian expenditure	Humanitarian field staff
NGOs	$7.4 b	141,400
UN	$9.3 b	85,681
Red Cross/Crescent Movement	$1.2 b	47,157

Note: The expenditure figures cannot be totalled without double counting, as large portions of the UN humanitarian expenditure flow through NGOs as grants.

Sources: Agency personnel, annual reports, audited financial statements, and internal agency documents.

3.1 HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

3.1.1 HOST GOVERNMENTS AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS: GROWING CAPACITIES AND ASSERTIVENESS

A growing number of aid-recipient states, particularly in Asia and Latin America, are establishing or strengthening national systems to manage response to natural disasters, and increasingly insist on engaging with international aid actors on their own terms. This institutional growth in disaster management in recent years has included: new national legislation, operational and donorship guidelines, a proliferation of National Disaster Management Authorities (NDMAs), and increased staffing and financial capacity in governments. In tandem with improved independent capacity has come a sense of frustration on the part of some host governments regarding the international agencies' lack of deference to national authority and sovereignty, and tensions around conflicting cultures and guiding principles (Harvey, 2009).

Regional cooperation for humanitarian response has also grown in capacity and importance. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region have highly effective regional mechanisms for collaborative emergency preparedness, prevention and response, such as the Centre for the Coordination of Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America (CEPREDENAC) and PAHO (the Pan American Health Organization). Asian governments and civil society have also been making significant advances in regionally based humanitarian action (IRIN, 2011). Asia-Pacific regional intergovernmental bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with its AHA Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), have been playing increasingly prominent roles as coordinators and resource mobilisers, as well as centres for knowledge and information exchange. Africa is currently less advanced in terms of regional humanitarian mechanisms, and requires additional capacity within the key regional mechanisms, such as the South African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

3.1.2 INGOS: A LARGE AND DIVERSE SECTOR, STILL DOMINATED BY THE OLD GUARD

The large number and variety of NGOs responding to the Haiti earthquake took many by surprise, as did the numerous Islamic charitable organisations responding to the famine in Somalia. But other recent crises, such as the political turmoil in Cote d'Ivoire or the Pakistan floods in 2011, seem to have drawn a much smaller and less diverse contingent of international actors. This has led some humanitarian practitioners to wonder about the 'true' size of the 'humanitarian system' and who can be expected show up at the next disaster.

"I am hoping that there will be more innovation and ingenuity [from] many local actors, [which will help to] find new ways to solve their own problems."

SOHS survey respondent

The SOHS mapping shows that the international humanitarian system – even narrowly defined as it was for the purposes of this exercise – is larger and more diverse than many realise. The current database includes some 4,400 NGOs.[5] Of these, 18% are international NGOs, 64% are national NGOs and the remaining 19% are, for the present, unknown. Although the field may be more crowded than once thought, the mapping exercise also makes clear that the same 'core group' still predominates in terms of reach and resources. This core group consists of the few largest international NGOs along with UN agencies[6] and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. Evidence from other sources suggests that many of the hundreds of small organisations captured by this exercise tend to have low overall humanitarian expenditures, or engage in only a few settings and/or are more likely to respond to large or high-profile crises (particularly natural disasters) than long-running, lower-profile complex emergencies.

Table 2: Combined humanitarian expenditure of international NGOs grouped by budget size, 2008-2010 (billion US dollars)

	Number of organisations/ federations	2008 combined estimated humanitarian expediture *	2009 combined estimated humanitarian expediture *	2010 combined estimated humanitarian expediture *
TIER 1: top5 organisations / federations	5	2,623	2,534	2,753
TIER 2: >$100 m/yr+ (excl. top 5)	28	2,266	2,118	2,486
TIER 3: US $50-99 m/yr	21	647	587	670
TIER 4: US $10-49 m/yr	89	932	897	1,034
TIER 5: < US $10 m/yr	118	445	418	470
TOTALS	261	$6.913 billion	$6.554 billion	$7.433 billion

USD, in millions unless otherwise noted, adjusted for inflation

"Many staff [don't have] the experience expected to roll out complex methodologies. [There is] a brain drain of competent national staff … to high-paying bilateral organisations."
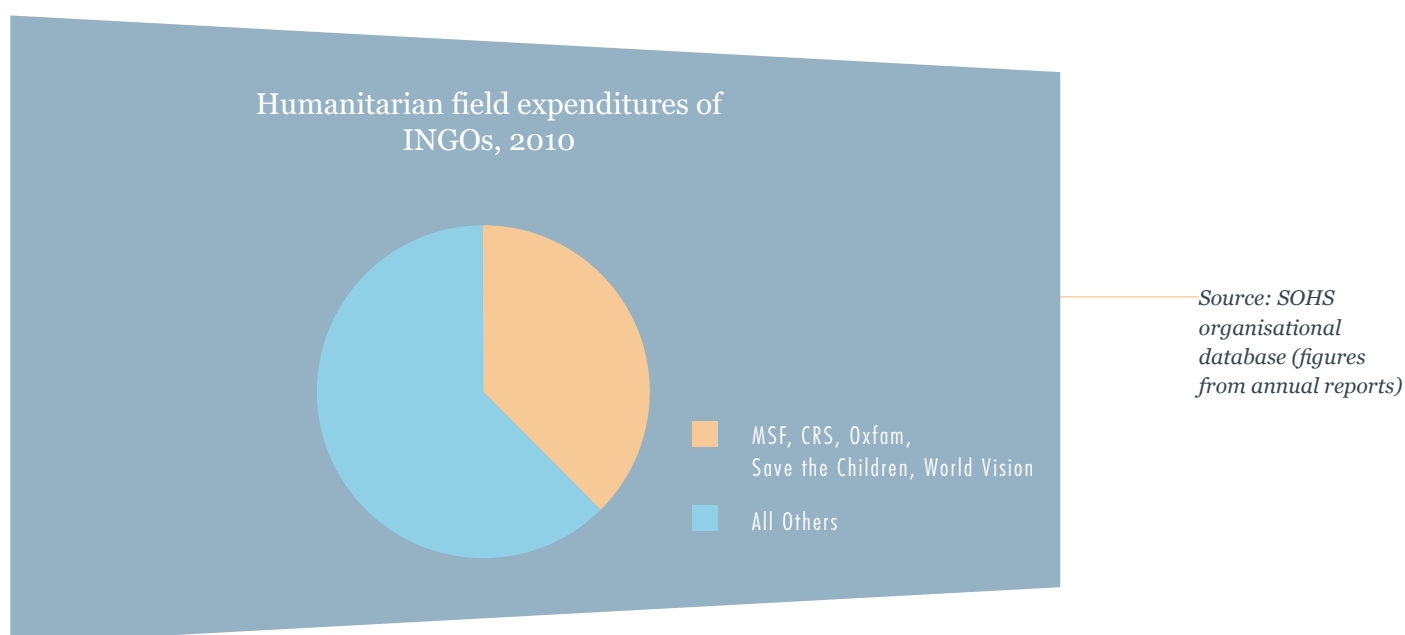
SOHS survey respondent

5   It is likely that this list includes some duplicates, perhaps up to 5%

6   Although IOM not technically a UN agency, for the purposes of aggregation and comparison it will be included in figures for 'UN agencies' throughout the report.

As noted in the pilot report, a small group of INGOs account for a large percentage of overall humanitarian spending. In 2010, five INGO federations / organisations (Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) [7], Oxfam International, the International Save the Children alliance, and World Vision International) spent approximately $2.8 billion on humanitarian programming (Table 2). This amounts to 38% of the total humanitarian expenditure by INGOs captured by the mapping for that year (Figure 6). In 2009, these five organisations spent approximately $2.5 billion, which was again 38% of the total. CARE International is no longer included in the top group as in past years, due in part to reduced humanitarian spending after a decision to phase out monetised food aid in 2009 [8]

Figure 6: Comparative market shares of humanitarian INGOs, 2010

Humanitarian field expenditures of INGOs, 2010

MSF, CRS, Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision

All Others

Source: SOHS organisational database (figures from annual reports)

In looking at the largest organisations according to the size of their humanitarian expenditure, a few characteristics stand out: nearly all are based in the US and Western Europe and they have an average organisational age of 57 years. A few of the largest, including Save the Children and the International Rescue Committee, were founded before World War II, but many others were founded just afterwards. The youngest of the group, Solidarités International, was established in 1980. Although most are secular in orientation, a sizeable minority (e.g. 25% of the top 20) have an explicit Christian mission. Roughly 45% of INGOs in the humanitarian system are based in the US, 18% are from Western Europe (excluding the UK and France), 11% are from the UK, 6% are from Asia, 5% are from France and 3% are from Africa, with the remaining regions comprising very small percentages.

7   Caritas International is a confederation of 165 Catholic relief, development and social service organisations operating in over 200 countries and territories worldwide, of which CRS is a member. In order to capture the major operational organisations, the humanitarian spending of the following Caritas members was counted separately: CAFOD, CRS, Secours Catholique, and Trocaire.

8   The methodology employed may have under-counted small international NGOs that appear on only a few registry sources (i.e. they have few government donors and are not members of major consortia, etc.). The analysis also excludes a handful of INGOs whose humanitarian activities consist primarily of providing in-kind donations after disasters, e.g. of food, medicine, clothing. The database records 22 such organisations, all based in the US, many of them faith based (Christian), and many of them with quite large budgets, but few or no operational staff in the field. The exclusion was made primarily because their staff-to-budget ratios and operating modalities are so different than other organisations, making estimations difficult; it would be interesting to examine their role in greater detail through separate research.

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 7, overall staff figures have not fluctuated a great deal in the past five years, remaining between a narrow range overall (between around 102,000 and 110,000, for this sample). On the other hand, there was a noticeable downturn in the humanitarian staff population of the tier-1 NGOs in 2009. Staffing numbers then increased in 2010, likely in response to large emergencies in Haiti and Pakistan. As in past years, nearly 95% of global INGO field staffers were nationals of the host country.

As shown in the table and graph below, overall staff figures have not fluctuated a great deal in the past five years, remaining between a narrow range overall (i.e. between around 102,000 and 110,000, for this sample). On the other hand, there was a noticeable downturn in the humanitarian staff population of the tier 1 NGOs in 2009. Staffing numbers then increased in 2010, likely in response to large emergencies in Haiti and Pakistan. As in past years, nearly 95% of global INGO field staffers were nationals of the host country.

Table 3: Field staff dedicated to humanitarian response of INGOs, grouped by budget size, 2006-2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
TIER 1: top5 organisations / federations	49,400	51,000	52,400	48,900	54,800
TIER 2: > US $100 m/yr (excl. top 5)	40,200	38,100	35,700	37,200	37,700
TIER 3: US $50-99 m/yr	17,400	17,500	16,700	16,400	17,600
TIER 4: US $10-49 m/yr	22,200	21,300	20,200	18,800	21,000
TIER 5: < US $10 m/yr	11,100	10,700	10,100	9,400	10,500
TOTAL	140,200	138,400	135,100	130,600	141,400

Column totals do not tally exactly, due to rounding

Figure 7: Field staff dedicated to humanitarian response from INGOs, 2006-2010
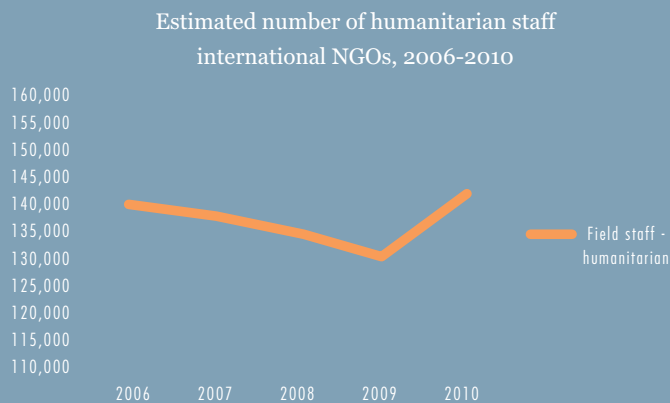
3.1.3 THE RISE OF THE SINGOS: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL NGOS AND THEIR GROWING ROLE

In South Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, the increasing strength of 'SINGOs' (Southern International NGOs) is evident, with organisations such as BRAC (among the world's largest development NGOs), Mercy Malaysia and SEEDS Asia, to name just three, whose programming extends beyond national to regional and international presence. Multiple coordination platforms and consortia exist across Asia for national NGOs to come together for resource mobilisation, information sharing and advocacy purposes and are seeking to strengthen their remit. The Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN) has 38 members from 18 Asian nations who have used the network as a catalyst and coordination hub to strengthen and complement each other's emergency preparedness and response efforts in the region. (The national humanitarian sector is discussed further in Section 4.4.3 below.)

The mapping exercise set out to estimate the size and scale of national and local NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) engaged in humanitarian response. For practical reasons, this involved identifying national NGOs with tangible links to the rest of the international humanitarian system. This meant collecting the names of national NGOs with a written partnership agreement with, and/or receiving funds from, a government donor, one of the UN humanitarian agencies, or an international NGO, or that are registered with a major consortium or registry of international aid organisations. Although the resulting list of national NGOs is limited by the number of international agencies which were able to provide lists of national NGO partners (organisational mapping and methodology available to view at www.alnap.org/ourwork/current/sohs.aspx), the number generated is substantial: around 2,800, albeit with some possible duplications. These NGOs are active in some 140 countries, with 41% of them based in sub-Saharan Africa, 27% from Latin America and the Caribbean, 20% from Asia and 4% from countries in the Middle East. [9]

3.1.4 UN AGENCIES

The review compiled budget and staffing information from the nine key UN agencies and offices engaged in humanitarian response [10] plus IOM. These actors have continued a steady growth in both overall spending and in spending on humanitarian response, as documented by the pilot study (Figure 8). [11]

SOHS survey respondent

"NGOs coordination network established in each country is a very good mechanism for local NGOs to voice their concerns and to access to resource information."

[9] There are potentially a large number of Islamic charitable organisations from the Middle East that are not reflected in this figure because they likely act as conduits of, for example, bilateral funding from one of the Gulf States and don't engage in partnerships with INGOs. They also have no/little incentive to report their activities to FTS. See Cotterrell and Harmer, (2005); and Al-Yahya and Fustier, (2011).

[10] View the footnote in the organisational mapping methodology document at http://www.alnap.org/ourwork/current/sohs.aspx for a full list

[11] Total expenditures for these actors for 2006-2008 are slightly higher than reported in the pilot study, due to the compilation of more accurate, comparable figures.

Figure 8: Approximate total non-HQ spending by UN humanitarian actors*, 2006-2010

UN agencies total programme and humanitarian spending, 2006-2010

20,000,000,000	
18,000,000,000	
16,000,000,000	
14,000,000,000	
12,000,000,000	
10,000,000,000	
8,000,000,000	
6,000,000,000	
4,000,000,000	
2,000,000,000	

2006　2007　2008　2009　2010

Total (non-HQ) expenditures

Humanitarian expenditures

∗ Includes IOM
Figures in USD, adjusted for inflation
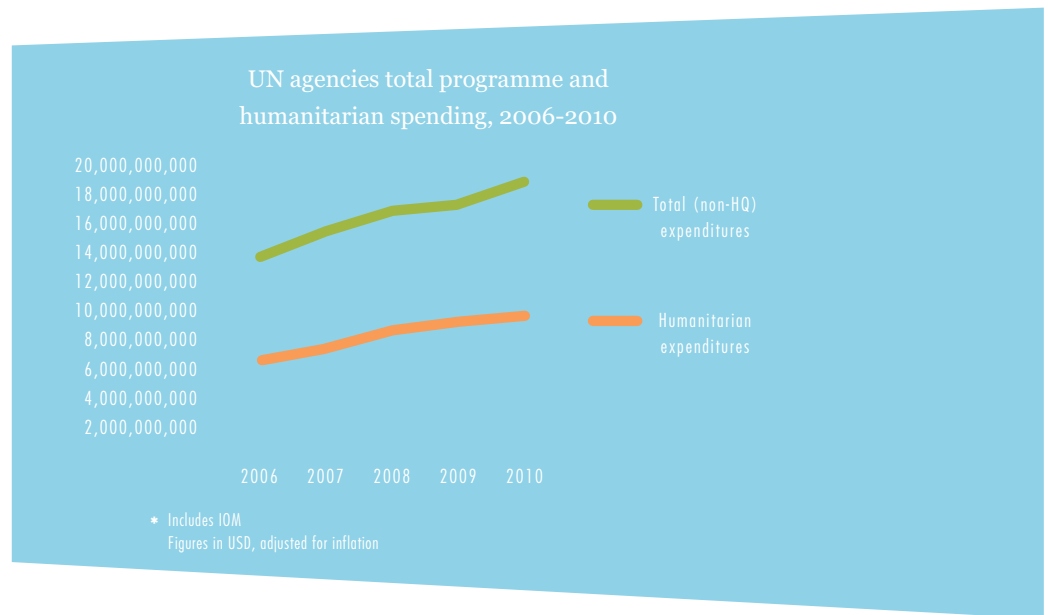
UN agencies and IOM saw increases in their total number of field staff in 2009 and again slightly in 2010 (Table 4 and Figure 9). The percentage of international staff employed in the field remained steady, at just over 11%.

Table 4 : Approximate total aid non-HQ staff of UN humanitarian actors*, 2006-2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
National staff	63,590	65,808	65,518	73,079	75,984
International staff	7,893	8,138	8,344	9,098	9,696
Total field staff	71,483	73,947	73,862	82,177	85,681

* Includes IOM　　　　Column totals do not tally exactly, because of rounding

Figure 9: Field staff and staff dedicated to humanitarian response, from UN humanitarian actors*, 2006-2010

Total field-based staff of UN humanitarian actors and IOM, 2006-2010

90,000	
80,000	
70,000	
60,000	
50,000	
40,000	
30,000	
20,000	
10,000	

2006　2007　2008　2009　2010

Total field staff

Humanitarian field staff

∗ Includes IOM
Figures in USD, adjusted for inflation
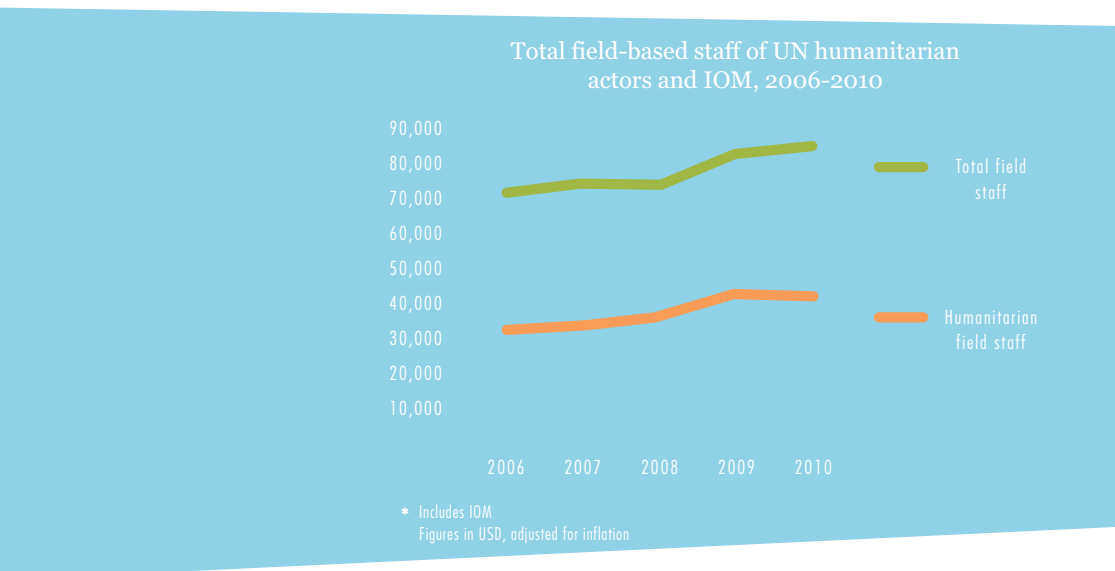
3.1.5 INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent is comprised of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Secretariat of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the 187 member National Societies of the IFRC. The ICRC, whose historical and legally mandated mission is to protect victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance, has a more strictly 'humanitarian' remit. It made a total expenditure of $963 million [12] and brought 12,157 workers to the humanitarian staff count in 2010.

It is less straightforward to calculate the humanitarian staffing numbers of the Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, whose employees engage not only in relief situations but also emergency preparedness and non-emergency public health provision, along with other social activities. They are also supported by large numbers of unpaid volunteers. A recent report on the economic and social value of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers estimated the number of volunteers worldwide at 13.1 million, around 26% of whom are engaged in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.[13] The IFRC is currently putting in place a Federation-Wide Databank and Reporting System (FDRS) to collect data on key indicators, including number of paid staff and volunteers from the national societies. Meantime, it estimated that, worldwide, national societies employ an estimated 300,000 people, with around 35,000 of these engaged in emergency response.[14] IFRC's spending on disaster response (excluding non-emergency forms of assistance) was $257 million in 2010[15] (a 49% increase over 2009, due largely to contributions and spending on the Haiti emergency).

3.1.6 PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS

The three principal ways in which private-sector entities engage in humanitarian response efforts are as:

- *contributors of cash and/or material assistance to relief efforts*

- *contractors of governments or IGOs for delivery of services related to humanitarian response*

- *recipients of grants from other private or public sources for direct implementation or onward sub-granting*

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12   http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/annual-report/current/icrc-annual-report-2010-financial-overview.pdf

13   IFRC (2011) The value of volunteers: Imagine how many needs would go unanswered without volunteers, Geneva, January.

14   ICRC and IFRC (undated), The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement at a glance, Geneva, accessed March 2012 from http://ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/the-movement/.

15   http://www.ifrc.org/annual-report

As with military engagement in humanitarian assistance, private-sector engagement has also continued to grow in recent years, but it remains a small portion of overall resources and limited to certain contexts. For instance, the Haiti earthquake saw over $1 billion in private-sector response, a full 30% of the total for that emergency, whereas the average share of private-sector resources (counting both corporate and foundation entities) was just under 6% for all other recorded responses in 2009-2010.

FTS is not be a complete reflection of these flows, in part because not all donors report their contracts with commercial firms in the same way that they report their contributions to humanitarian agencies. However, the data indicate direct significant growth in the private sector's involvement in humanitarian response, even when discounting the Haiti response (Table 5).

Table 5: Private-sector contributions to humanitarian action

	Private sector contributions	Percent of total flows	Excluding Haiti	
Avg 2007-08	$114 m	1%	$114 m	1%
Avg 2009-10	$813 M	6%	$278 M	2%

There is evidence also of considerable growth in donor-government contracting of commercial entities for development assistance and, increasingly, for reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. The US Agency for International Development (USAID), by far the largest individual government donor agency, has increased its private contracting over the past several years. Although the bulk of USAID's contributions still goes to traditional grantees, the percentage channelled through private-sector contracts since 2000 has increased by an average of 15% per year (Stoddard, 2008).

Beyond reconstruction contracts, there have been limited instances of for-profit organisations contracted for direct service delivery within the standard humanitarian sectors. However, this does happen in particular cases, including 'large-scale and sudden onset natural disasters lacking prior operational presence of aid organisations; [and] high profile post-conflict situations where political objectives demanded quick and highly visible measures of aid efforts and results, namely, the unique occupation/reconstruction contexts of Iraq and Afghanistan' (Stoddard, 2008).

"Support partnerships with private sector, but highlight agencies' competitive advantage (field experience, community participatory approach, impact measurement)."

SOHS survey respondent

3.2 HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FLOWS TO EMERGENCIES

According to FTS data, the growth rate of humanitarian funding has slowed over the past two years, but still continues upward. In 2009 and 2010, despite the global recession and austerity measures taken within many donor nations, humanitarian funding as yet shows no downturn and indeed continues to increase – in real and inflation-adjusted dollars and as a percentage of global GDP.[16] The DAC governments remain the largest contributors to the system, with non-DAC, 'emerging donor' governments falling off a bit from the rise they showed during the prior period. Private-sector contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations surged in response to Haiti as they have to other mega-disasters in the past, but remain a small piece of the overall total funding for the chronic and less visible humanitarian crises. The conflict-related or 'complex' emergencies continue to receive the majority of humanitarian funding overall.

3.2.1 VOLUME OF HUMANITARIAN AID

Humanitarian aid flows have been on an upward trend for over a decade and saw a particular surge after 2005, partly due to innovations in humanitarian funding mechanisms such as the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF). This allowed governments to channel ever-larger amounts of their foreign humanitarian budget through a credible, established mechanism irrespective of whether they had field presence and capacity to monitor the grants. The multilateral option also attracted a large number of small, first-time contributions from governments that had not participated in humanitarian financing before.

Total contributions to emergency response efforts and other specific humanitarian activities, as reported to FTS, were $12 billion in 2009 and $16 billion in 2010, including funds for Haiti, which proved to be a major outlier in terms of the private funding it generated. We cannot set too much store by the year-by-year amounts because they fluctuate widely when there are massive, outlier emergencies (such as the Indian Ocean tsunami) that create unusual spikes in giving. In 2010 such a spike was created by the Haiti earthquake response, which accounted for 22% of total contributions reported to FTS that year. Controlling for Haiti in 2010 and adjusting for inflation going back to 2006, the trend in growth still holds, although it slowed to 1% for the average of 2009 over the previous period.

Sharing Aid

Views from the SOHS survey

30 disaster affected refugees in Uganda responded in interviews by saying that refugees are now considered 'business' for NGOs. They believe the problem is not that there is not enough aid, but that it's not equally shared

16 Current FTS reports from 2011 show a dip in total contributions, but it is too early for a final analysis on 2011 funding. FTS figures for a given year typically rise considerably over the subsequent year as reports come in, explaining why 2008 totals have changed from the previous SoHS Report. For this reason, 2011 figures were excluded from this analysis.

Figure 10: Growth in humanitarian funding

Humanitarian funding has also continued to rise as a percentage of global income, on a 10-year trend. Figure 11 shows total humanitarian contributions, adjusted for inflation and controlling for the mega-emergencies, trending upward as a share of global wealth.

Figure 11: Humanitarian funding as percentage of global GDP, 2001-2010
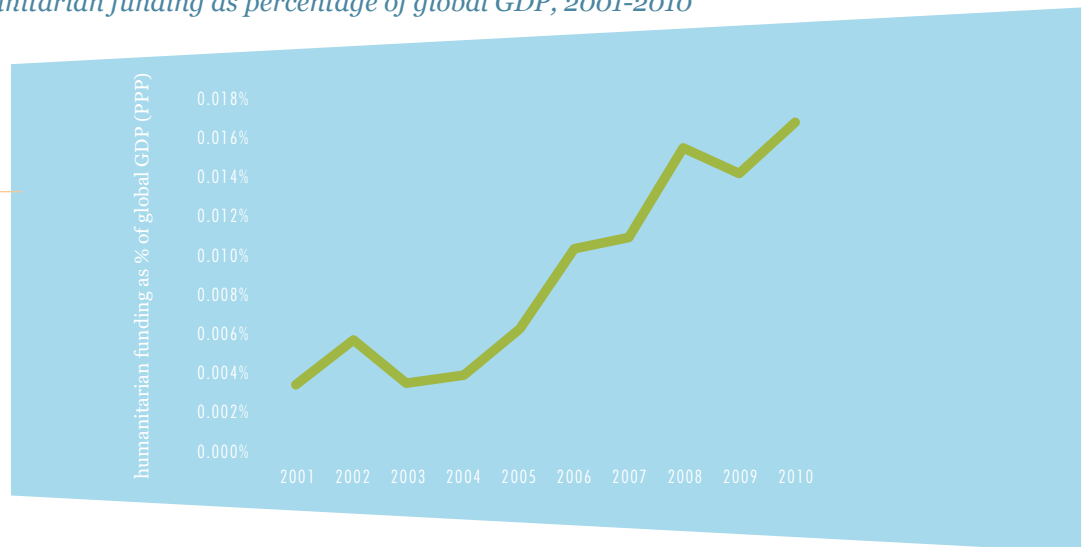
3.2.2 TARGETS OF HUMANITARIAN FUNDING: DISASTER TYPES, SECTORS, AND REGIONS

The largest portion of humanitarian spending goes to longstanding, conflict-related needs in Africa (Table 6). This has been the case for many years and holds true despite a more than doubling of the funding for natural disaster response (driven by mega-emergencies in other regions) during the past two years. These patterns suggest a sustained humanitarian 'investment' on the part of both the governments providing most funding for aid and of the recipient implementing agencies that have established a long-term operational presence around this funding source.

Table 6: Total humanitarian contributions by region (including Haiti) (US$ million)

	Africa (sub-Saharan)	Asia and Pacific	Latin America and Caribbean	Mid East and N. Africa	South/Cent/ East Europe and Caucasus
2006	4,713	763	141	1.099	124
2007	4,608	1,098	273	919	107
2008	6,407	2,219	409	1,231	204
2009	6,190	2,536	141	1,755	32
2010	5,087	4,608	3,832	939	16

Source: Data from UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS)

For several years Sudan, with its vast size, long-running and brutal conflict and high profile on the international human rights and diplomatic stages, has been the largest recipient of humanitarian aid (Figure 12). Going back to 2006 (and excluding the unprecedented private sector response to Haiti), the largest recipients of humanitarian contributions after Sudan have been Pakistan, Ethiopia, DR Congo, Somalia, Afghanistan and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Figure 12: Largest recipient countries for humanitarian contributions, 2006-2010

Source: Data from UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS)
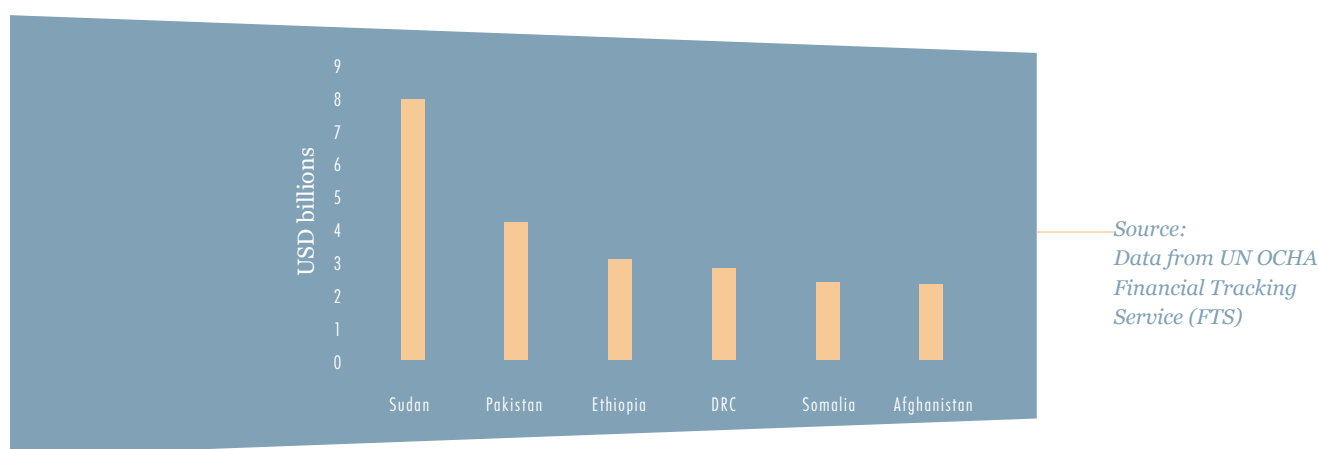
In all of these top recipients, long-running conditions of conflict have overlapped with areas prone to natural disasters, and in some case with geopolitical significance to the major donor nations.

Table 7: Total funding contributions by disaster type (US$ billion)

	Complex emergencies	Natural disasters
Grand total 2006-2011	39,594	10,733
2007-2008	5,646	1,114
2009-2010	7,615	3,369
Growth (%)	35	202

3.2.2 SOURCES AND CHANNELS OF HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

Government contributions: DAC donors still providing the lion's share

Governments, particularly the DAC donors, continue to provide the majority of humanitarian contributions to emergency responses globally.

The number of donor governments contributing to the international humanitarian system, as recorded by FTS, has doubled from the start of the decade. As of 2010, the number of official government donors to humanitarian response efforts had reached 158 (up 51% from the previous period), showing that the expansion of the donor base continues. Increasing numbers of non-DAC donors have entered the system and their overall contribution amounts grew considerably after 2005 and continue to grow.

Non-DAC governments also increased their percentage of funding to the CERF and other multilateral mechanisms (Development Initiatives, 2011: 42). The non-DAC proportion of overall funding from governments has actually gone down slightly in the past period in the wake of the 30% increase from DAC donor contributions, but this proportion may rise again for 2011 and 2012 if, for example, there is a significant non-DAC response recorded to the Horn of Africa crisis. The largest Western donor entities, the US government and ECHO, increased their average contributions from 2007/08 to 2009/10 by 60% [17] and 20%, respectively. Together the US and ECHO accounted for 38% of the total humanitarian contributions recorded by FTS in 2010 (28% and 10%, respectively).

Private humanitarian funding on the rise

The past two years has seen a fivefold rise of private funding, from sources including corporations, foundations and individuals. Private donations closely correspond to high-profile, sudden-onset natural disasters, most recently the Haiti earthquake in 2010, for which over a billion aid dollars came from private sources. A recent GHA report estimated that 57% of NGO funding comes from private contributions (Stoianova, 2012). The Haiti contributions in 2010 raised the overall share of private funding to 32% of total humanitarian resources in the system that year (Stoianova, 2012).

The Haiti experience illustrates how a massive natural disaster (particularly one in the backyard of one of the world's richest nations) can generate private donations, and how these donations can be mobilised far more quickly and in far greater amounts with today's new technologies for online and text-based giving. For the years that do not experience an emergency like Haiti or the tsunami, however, private funding accounts for a far smaller stream of money. Over 80% of direct aid flows to emergencies come from government sources, in the form of either bilateral grants or contributions to pooled funds like the CERF and CHFs. [18]

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17 This particularly large increase by the United States was largely driven by assistance to Haiti in 2010. In particular a contribution of $469 million was recorded in FTS as originating from the US Department of Defense for "transportation of USG personnel and relief commodities into Haiti, as well as provision of health and medical services." (OCHA FTS). This contribution is also noted in the subsection on military humanitarian aid.

18 While the GHA report estimates total private resources in the system to be 32%, in terms of recorded private aid flows to specific emergencies (including NGO allocations from their private fundraising, corporate contributions, foundation grants and the donations of private citizens raised through fundraising campaigns and consortia), these amounted to an average of 5% of the total in 2009-2010, as recorded by FTS.

More pooled funding

Contributions to multilateral funding mechanisms, such as the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) and the country-level Common Humanitarian Funds and Emergency Response Funds were higher by 50% in 2009/10, compared to the prior two years. Funding to the UN agencies grew by 30% and NGOs, while still receiving less in direct allocations from donors than the UN, fared even better in terms of growth: a 44% increase in contributions in 2009/10. The largest percentage changes in funding were enjoyed by the ICRC and IFRC and national societies: 80% and 103% respectively, again, driven by a surge of private funding for Haiti, for example, to the American Red Cross

Smaller increase in humanitarian aid going directly to governments

Direct government-to-government humanitarian funding, still favoured by many non-DAC donors, showed the smallest rise of all: just 13% between the two periods (although this is acknowledged as one of the weakest areas of reporting to FTS, so it may not capture all such transfers).

The largest share of all reported humanitarian resources for the system is still in the form of individual grants from donor governments to provider organisations (UN agencies, INGOs and the International Movement of the Red Cross/Red Crescent).

PUBLIC-PRIVATE AID INITIATIVES WITHIN RECIPIENT COUNTRIES: KENYANS FOR KENYA

Kenyans for Kenya, an initiative to raise funds from the private sector and the general public for drought response was a successful funding drive and the first of its kind in Kenya. The initiative was launched as a response to the perception that the government was not doing enough. A group of Kenyan and business leaders, led by Safaricom, including Equity Bank, Kenyan Airways and KCB, collaborated with the Kenya Red Cross to set up an online donation service through M-PESA. The goal was to raise approximately $500,000, yet over $11 million was raised within two months.

This success in raising funds was tarnished somewhat by a lack of transparency in monitoring the impact of funding allocations and a serious programming failure wherein the Kenyan Red Cross was forced to recall 362 tonnes of Unimix (a high-protein fortified food) due to aflatoxin contamination. In all, 726 schools in five regions in the country were targeted for feeding with the Unimix. (Harmer et al., 2012)

Public–private collaborations of this nature are being seen more frequently in emergency response in host countries. In general, national aid organisations do not have the same reluctance to cooperate with business interests as many in the international aid community. Overall, initiatives such as Kenyans for Kenya, and similar public–private collaborations in Asia, suggest a potentially promising path to increased capacity for independent emergency response.

Military resources

National militaries have always played critical, even pre-eminent roles in humanitarian response. In some countries these roles are formally legislated. Recent years have seen the military forces of donor countries, particularly the United States, also take on greater humanitarian roles in foreign nations. This has very different implications when it occurs in countries affected by natural disasters, such as Haiti and Japan, as opposed to in conflict theatres, where the donors themselves may be parties to the conflict. When relief activities are undertaken by militaries for strategic reasons, for instance as 'hearts and minds' components to stabilisation and state-building campaigns like the Coalition's Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and reconstruction aid in Iraq, it conflicts with core humanitarian principles and can create difficulty – even danger – for other humanitarian actors (Egeland et al., 2011). These issues aside, it is undeniable that militaries bring formidable financial and material resources to the humanitarian endeavour.

The GHA 2011 report illustrates how the US armed forces are not only the largest military provider of humanitarian assistance by far, but also the largest military humanitarian donor, with the US Defense Department contracting over $100 million annually to third-party entities to implement assistance activities (Development Initiatives, 2011: 49). Many other national militaries, including at least half of the OECD DAC donors, also have spending lines within their militaries for aid to civilians. These 'operations other than war' as they are sometimes known can at times be financed under the discretionary spending of field commanders, e.g. the US military's Commanders Emergency Response Programmes (CERP) in Afghanistan and Iraq, or budgeted under various operational or procurement lines, making it difficult to identify and compare spending rates. Development Initiatives has calculated a total of $1.4 billion in humanitarian spending by military actors (primarily the US) between 2006 and 2010, which includes over $500 million just in 2010 for the Haiti response (Fig 13).

Figure 13: Government donors of official humanitarian aid delivered via military actors, 2006-2010

Source: Development Initiatives, based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System data
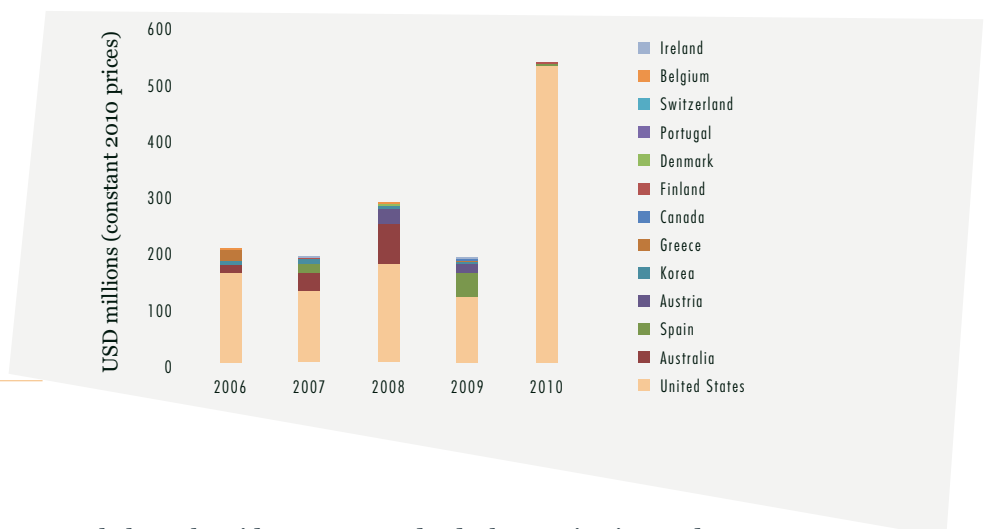
Despite budgets that seem enormously large by aid-agency standards, humanitarian and recovery assistance remains a relatively small part of what militaries do and far removed from their core business. But if military actors sit outside the formal humanitarian system as defined for this study, they nevertheless maintain a longstanding, and often fraught, working relationship with it. This only stands to intensify as military provision of aid increasingly becomes the norm and is supported by growing budget allocations, and particularly in cases where the aid is undertaken within the context of counter-insurgency.

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE

This section draws on findings from the evaluation synthesis and literature review, survey responses, field studies and interviews, as well as prominent research undertaken by other research and academic institutes. The findings are integrated into an assessment of the humanitarian system's performance against measures broadly framed around the six OECD criteria of coverage/sufficiency, relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness, connectedness, efficiency and coherence.

4.1 COVERAGE/SUFFICIENCY

This subsection examines the performance of the system in terms of mobilising resources in amounts sufficient to meet needs, and how well it covered the totality of affected populations. Questions of access, though distinct, must also be considered when assessing coverage/ sufficiency. Put simply, if asking, 'Does the system have adequate resources to do the job and is it able to reach all populations in need?' the answer, unfortunately, is still no. Taken together, the results of the interviews, surveys and evaluation synthesis suggest that the system still falls short on the criterion of coverage/sufficiency, despite continued growth in humanitarian funding and personnel. With the exception of the Haiti earthquake response, which received large amounts of public and private funding, perceptions of insufficiency in the system were even slightly stronger than in the pilot study. As Section 2 illustrated, the system lacks a hard set of numbers on total people in need of humanitarian aid at any given time, but the increase in numbers of emergencies (particularly natural disasters) and funding requests gives an idea of the upward pressure. The goal of full coverage/sufficiency, at the present time at least, appears to be slipping further out of reach.

4.1.1 FUNDING AGAINST NEEDS

The analysis of aid flows in the previous section showed no overall downturn in humanitarian funding for 2009-2010. As a proxy for humanitarian needs the research team used the stated requirements contained in the Consolidated and Flash Appeals and Humanitarian Action plans, as well as figures for the affected populations of emergencies compiled by EM-DAT, appeal documents and other sources. Although none of these measures can provide a precise measure of human needs in crises, they are useful as general indicators of severity and of coverage when set against funding trends.

Although the amounts of humanitarian contributions have continued to grow, even during the recession years, the average amounts requested in humanitarian appeals rose in 2009-2010 by 82%, outstripping the rise in funding and resulting in a decrease of average coverage against stated requirements overall (by 6%), compared to the prior period (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Humanitarian response contributions against requirements, 2007-2010

Source:
Figures from OCHA FTS
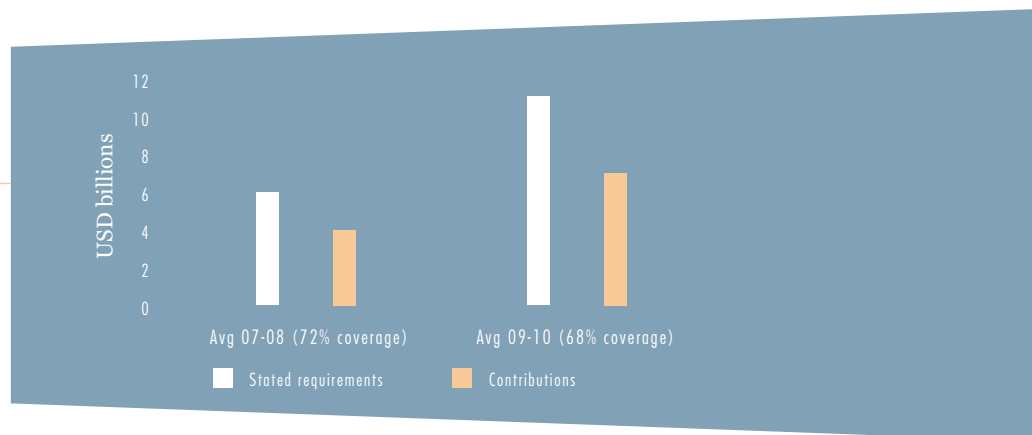
The large jump in stated requirements (appeal requests) appears to be driven in part by the requirements of one of the largest UN humanitarian agencies, UNHCR. UNHCR more than doubled its 'ask' in humanitarian appeals in 2009-2010 compared to a prior period; its total appeal requests were $881M in 2010, up from $386M in 2007. Interviews revealed that this was primarily the result of a change in the budgeting process of the agency, which now originates more from demand-driven, population-based needs assessments as opposed to a supply-side estimate of UNHCR's planned programme costs. Because the new approach is based on numbers of affected people, it appears to offer a more realistic measure of needs than the CAPs have represented in the past.

Survey respondents were largely in agreement that funding fell short of the needs in their setting (Figure 15), Haiti being the major exception. Interestingly, the aid recipients surveyed expressed more satisfaction than dissatisfaction with the amount of aid that they personally received. However, because this was a survey specifically of aid recipients, it does not reflect the affected people who were not reached by humanitarian aid, so cannot assess sufficiency overall.

Figure 15: Survey responses on adequacy of funding

Source:
Response data from
SOHS 2012 surveys
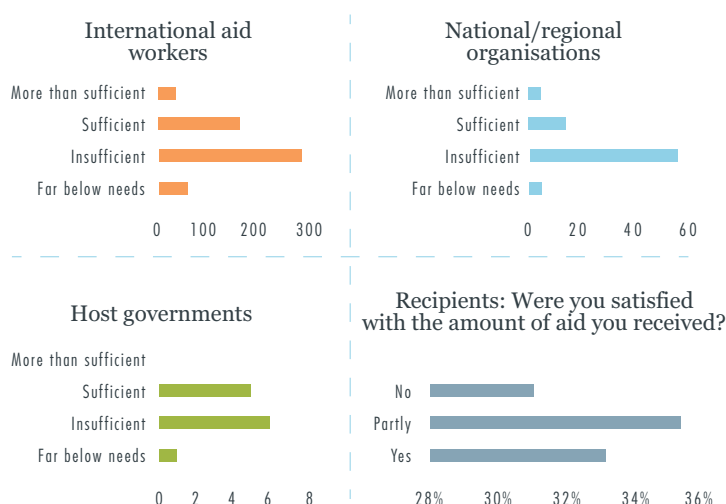
4.1.2 FUNDING COVERAGE ACROSS EMERGENCIES AND SECTORS

It is an unfortunate and enduring reality that different humanitarian emergencies receive significantly different levels of attention and resources, irrespective of need (Table 8). The sudden, devastating Haiti earthquake elicited over $3.5 billion in 2010, compared to the relative neglect of the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire, which directly affected a million people (OCHA, 2011d) but received only $159 million in total in 2010 and 2011. Meanwhile, another national crisis in Africa in 2011, Libya, with 1.5 million estimated affected (OCHA, 2011f), received over $460 million in humanitarian contributions, not to mention intense international and media attention.

Table 8: Comparison of emergency funding coverage

Emergency	Estimated number of people affected (US$ million)	Funds committed/ contributed (US$ million)	Total aid per affected person
Cote d'Ivoire/West Africa	1	$159	$159
Haiti	3	$3,500	$1,167
Libya	1.5	$460	$307

Sources: Population figures from EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database and UN OCHA humanitarian appeal documents; funding figures from OCHA FTS.

Looking at the sectors of humanitarian aid across all emergencies, and the level of funding coverage they receive, reveals a few new developments. The pilot study reported that since 2005 funding against stated requirements had increased in all sectors and that funding coverage had also become more equitable across sectors and emergencies. This was attributed largely to the multilateral funding mechanisms which can direct pooled funds toward underfunded areas.

In the two years since the last review, however, progress was more qualified. On average, coverage of sectoral needs went up in 2009-2010, compared to 2007-2008, from 53% to 54%, but growth in coverage was not equal across sectors. Notably, the coverage of stated requirements decreased in a few sectors, including the already less well covered sectors of education and protection (Table 9). In the surveys, national and international aid actors expressed the same perception that the protection sector in particular lacked sufficient resources (bearing out the evidence from funding flows) and also singled out early recovery as requiring better coverage.

The category of 'Mine Action' decreased the most in coverage, dropping to 50% funded from 64% funded in the prior period. Conversely, the largest coverage gains were seen in Shelter/Non-Food Items and Safety and Security (but this latter sector nevertheless remains the least funded of all, at just 31% covered).

Table 9: Changes in average funding coverage of stated needs, by sector (%)

	Agriculture	Economic recovery	Education	Food	Health	Mine action	Protection /HR/RoL	Safety & security	Shelter/ MFIs	Water/ sanitation
2007-08	46	35	47	89	49	64	46	14	46	49
2009-10	48	49	39	85	51	50	43	31	55	48
Increase/decrease	+4	+41	-16	-4	+6	-22	-7	+118	+19	+1

Source: OCHA FTS

The background case study of the 2011 drought in Kenya illustrates these typical sectoral coverage patterns. Food assistance programmes have represented the largest and most consistently funded component of humanitarian assistance supported by donors in Kenya for many years. The emergency in 2011 was no different. Humanitarian contributions of 84% of the requested appeal for food aid was received, compared to 29% for agriculture and livestock, 15% for education and 10% for protection. This trend is also reflected regionally. Up to 70% of the Horn of Africa humanitarian appeals have focused on food since 2005 and only 15% on livelihoods (ALNAP, 2011).

Beyond traditional sectors, interviewees identified fluctuations in funding for cross-cutting issues. Most were considered to be hard to attract funding for because they do not correspond to a distinct sector/cluster in the CAP and their impact is hard to measure. In the area of mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS), for example, there has been some greater donor support, but it remains ad hoc. In addition to protection, as noted above, child protection was also noted as suffering from perceived continued underfunding. In particular, donors varied considerably in their willingness to fund child protection. Interviewees considered trafficking, migration and child labour to be particularly underfunded. For example, in Pakistan it was especially difficult to support child protection or protection generally, both diplomatically and financially.

4.1.3 THE EXPANDING REMIT OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Increasing amounts of humanitarian funding are being directed to activities before and after the humanitarian emergency, i.e. preparedness, capacity-building and disaster-risk reduction and resilience activities of the pre-emergency side, and early recovery, infrastructure rehabilitation and the ongoing provision of basic services (after) in the absence of a state-led alternative. Humanitarian emergencies, of course, will often occur amid underlying conditions of poverty and chronic need, where it is hard to determine the end of these needs and the beginning of acute 'humanitarian' needs. This is discussed further in *Subsection 4.3* below.

Recent evaluations note inadequate funding for recovery efforts and for long-term programming in protracted crises, even as these amounts are seen to increase according to reported contributions. Multi-mandated agencies also note that restrictions on the use of funding in rapid-onset crises force them to prioritise 'response over long-term impact', and generous funding in the relief phase of some emergencies can be followed by slow and small flows for recovery.[19]

Local and regional organisations perceive the lines that the international aid system has drawn between 'preparedness', 'relief', 'recovery' and 'development' as artificial and counterproductive. National NGOs, host government representatives and regional actors interviewed for this study acknowledged that they understand that the distinction derives mainly from the large international donors keeping the relief and development funding baskets separate. However, it makes little sense for local NGOs to focus only on emergency response when the acute needs are so intricately connected to so many other long-running needs of local communities.

4.1.4 GROUND-LEVEL ASSESSMENTS AND PERCEPTIONS OF FUNDING, ACCESS AND OPERATIONAL COVERAGE

As found in the pilot study for 2007-2008, the interviews, survey responses and secondary literature for 2009-2010 suggest that stakeholders largely considered humanitarian funding and presence to be inadequate to meet needs. Most international aid workers felt that funding resources were not enough to meet humanitarian needs in their setting. Most respondents said that funding was 'insufficient,' but only a small minority saw it as 'far below the needs'. An even smaller group said that the funding in their setting was 'more than sufficient' – and most of these were answering from Haiti and speaking from the vantage point of that high-profile, highly-funded response. This finding of insufficiency held across all survey populations of aid practitioners and host governments.

Evaluations of the responses to the Haiti earthquake note that funding as a whole was adequate (Steets et al., 2010). Aid-recipient survey responses in Haiti collected for this study also showed a higher level of satisfaction with the quantity (though less so with quality) of aid received than recipients in the other settings where surveys were disseminated. A very different consensus was evident in interviews and literature regarding the floods in Pakistan, which saw a relative paucity of funding and resources in 2011. Several respondents highlighted 'disaster fatigue' in the case of Pakistan, suggesting that a second major flood disaster in consecutive years would naturally fail to create any momentum of international attention and generosity. The Horn of Africa crisis ultimately received significant levels of funding from donor governments, but after an inexcusably slow start *(see Subsection 4.3.1 on Timeliness).*

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19   Exemplified, for example, in UNICEF's review of its Cyclone Nargis response (UNICEF, 2009).
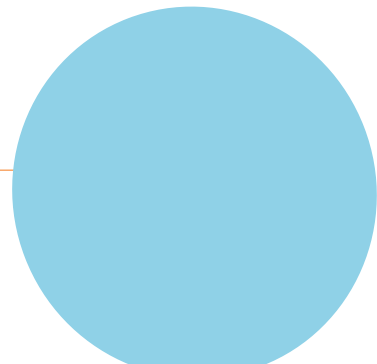
In stark contrast to the multitudes of aid actors descending upon Haiti after the earthquake, the less visible emergencies faced not only funding shortfalls but deficits in operational coverage and capacity as well. In Cote d'Ivoire for instance, there was no surge of new private-sector actors and corporate entities coming in to help. Instead, the humanitarian system was represented by a small number of core aid organisations, such as the ICRC and MSF, willing and able to operate in difficult, dangerous and underfunded places, as well as the UN agencies mandated to respond.

This counters the idea of traditional humanitarian actors becoming more and more marginalised with the increased engagement of new actors and organisations (e.g. corporations, national militaries). On the contrary, said one NGO commentator,

...the experience 'reaffirms the importance of traditional humanitarian actors and system. When you get right down to it, we're the ones that are expected to be there'.

The observation about weak human and operational resources in Pakistan in 2011 was echoed in Yemen as well. This slow-onset crisis failed to capture international donor or public interest. Some interviewees asserted that agencies were 'putting their best staff' into Libya and Syria, despite the greater needs in Yemen.

In surveys, most respondents overall indicated that operational access to populations in need had neither improved nor declined in their setting. Where access problems did occur, according to humanitarian practitioners, these were primarily political (e.g. host government constraints) or security-related in nature, rather than logistical. In contrast, most host-government officials said that logistical issues were the main source of access problems. In a few countries, a majority of respondents noted a decline in access over 2009-10, however. These included Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan.

"There is an unnecessary split between a humanitarian stage of operations and... recovery and development. In many emergencies, development-type programming can be adapted to be implemented even while emergency conditions exist."

SOHS survey respondent

SURVEY OF RECIPIENTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID

Field-based surveys gathered responses of 1104 people who received humanitarian aid during 2009-2010 in Haiti (179), DRC (325), Pakistan (100) and Uganda (500). The questions covered experience with humanitarian assistance and how the system could improve. Although respondents' opinions on some points naturally varied according to their situation, on others there was surprising commonality. A selection of the results is shown in Figure 16. However, this is a non-random snapshot of four contexts and should not be read as statistically

Figure 16: Aid recipients: combined survey responses

Did the aid you received address your most important needs at this time?

Were you satisfied with the amount of aid you received?

Were you satisfied with the quality of aid you received?

Were you consulted by the aid group on what you needed prior to the distribution?

Did the aid groups communicate well with the recipients and local communities about their plans and activities?

Were you able to give your opinion on the program, make complaints, or suggest changes?

Did the aid group listen and make changes based on your input?

Combined survey responses: DRC, Haiti, Pakistan and Uganda
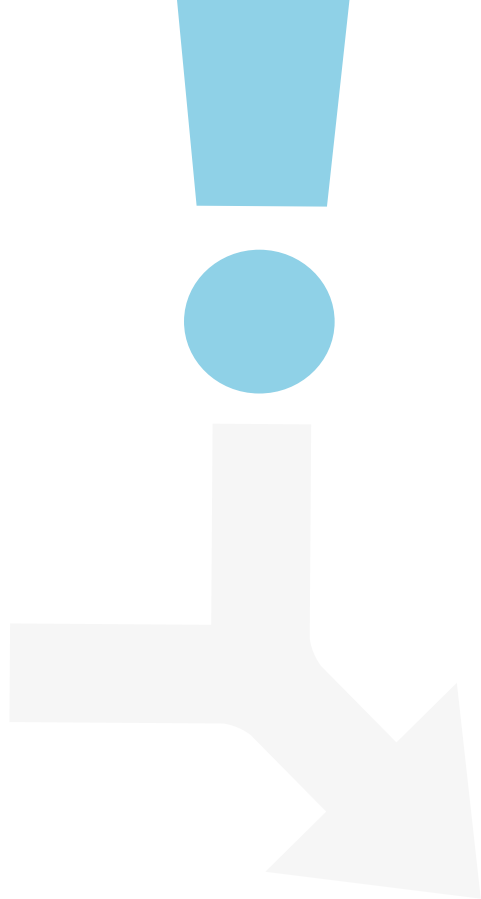
4.2 RELEVANCE/APPROPRIATENESS

This subsection examines the relevance and appropriateness of humanitarian assistance during the research period – in particular, whether the system identified appropriate responses to needs. It includes a focus on the drive to improve approaches to needs assessment and a review from the evaluations synthesis of how needs assessment has driven response. It considers the inclusiveness of needs assessments, including joint assessments involving government and national actors and the use of participatory approaches. Overall it finds the weakest progress and performance in the areas of recipient consultation and engagement of local actors, despite the rhetorical emphasis given to these issues.

4.2.1 EVALUATION FINDINGS ON RELEVANCE

A significant number of evaluations found that interventions were appropriate to the needs of recipient communities. As justification, they most commonly cited that community or local government priorities had been met (Handicap International, 2010; Hagens and Ishida, 2010; Laugerud et al., 2009; Cosgrave et al., 2010a; de Klerk et al., undated; Ievers and Pacaigue, 2010, among others). A smaller number found interventions to be either only partially or not relevant to the communities they were serving. However, these findings contrast with the field-based surveys of aid recipients undertaken for this report, which revealed that two-thirds of the respondents said that they were dissatisfied or only partly satisfied with the amount and quality of the overall package of assistance that they had received *(See Text Box)*. The most common reasons cited in the evaluation synthesis for failing to meet community expectations were: inability to meet the full spectrum of need, weak understanding of local context, inability to understand the changing nature of need, inadequate information-gathering techniques or an inflexible response approach (Dolphin et al., 2010; Beer et al., 2009; UNHCR and DANIDA, 2010; Bonard et al., 2010; Kvernrod et al., 2009).

Among the large-scale emergencies, evaluations of the Pakistan responses most commonly cited the effective use of community consultations to drive relevant programming (Hagans, 2009; Murtaza et al., 2010. Interventions in the Horn of Africa were often cited as relevant, but concerns were frequently raised about the treatment of 'acute symptoms' of a more complex context, and overemphasis on emergency programming (Murphy et al., 2011 Polastro et al., 2011). The overwhelming sense from evaluations of the Haiti response was that a significantly more relevant response would have been possible with a more comprehensive understanding of the context underlying the acute needs resulting from the earthquake, especially issues related to the urban nature of the disaster (Clermont et al., 2011; University of Haiti, 2011; Binder and Grünewald, 2010).

Across several contexts and emergency types, evaluators noted a problem with preconceived notions of vulnerability, which led to inappropriate interventions. For example, an evaluation of DG ECHO's assistance to vulnerable groups in the Central African Republic (2007-2010) found that 'killer assumptions' in project design had limited overall relevance and that a better understanding of vulnerability was required (Watt and Poulsen, 2010). Similarly, but in the context of the protracted refugee situation for Burundians in Tanzania, an evaluation found that no contextual analysis had been done in advance (UNHCR and DANIDA, 2010). In the response to Typhoon Ketsana, Christian Aid found differences between vulnerability as defined by communities and the pre-conceived notions of response agencies (Ievers and Pacaigue, 2010).

More encouragingly, evaluations of natural-disaster response found positives in the timeliness and coverage of needs assessments. An evaluation of ECB agencies in the West Java and Sumatra earthquake response found that joint needs assessment had enabled greater geographic coverage and greater sectoral spread (Wilson et al., 2010). Although concerns were raised about beneficiary selection, ECB agencies were noted to collaborate regularly on situation reporting as well as joint needs assessments. A CRS evaluation of transitional shelter activities in the wake of the same disaster in West Sumatra also found that proper assessment allowed the programme to meet local needs and priorities. A survey among aid recipients from West Sumatra noted 99.6% satisfaction (CRS, 2010).

Survey respondents from the international system indicated that there had been moderate improvement in the quality of needs assessments in the past two years – a similar percentage was seen in the pilot study survey. Although INGO interviewees tended to believe that local NGO participation in needs assessment had increased overall, evaluations noted the poor engagement of local actors, a lack of attention to their inputs and/or a weak assessment of national capacities (Willitts-King et al., 2010; Beer et al., 2009). A study aimed at improving the effectiveness of INGO interventions in Iraq found that national NGOs were often not in agreement with international actions. Some 40% of national NGOs felt that some international organisations had inappropriate priorities, objectives and programmes; 28% stated that international organisations had an insufficient or inaccurate understanding of the Iraqi context, including a failed understanding of vulnerability (Beer et al., 2009).

"I think humanitarian work is donor-driven in my country… if more local communities and local actors were involved in humanitarian needs assessments, [it would]… improve the humanitarian principles in practice and bring positive changes."

SOHS survey respondent

The Report of the UN Secretary-General, Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA, 2011b) states that CAPs are increasingly based on joint or coordinated needs assessment. Interviews and evaluations have mixed views on this issue and this perception is not widely shared. Recent studies suggest that needs assessment are falling short of a range of good practices. Overall, the evaluation synthesis found that there was a paucity of comprehensive needs assessment and that this problem was often compounded by weak contextual analysis. A major study by Tufts (Mazurana et al., 2011) goes further than most in saying that humanitarian assistance remains driven by 'anecdote rather than evidence' and cites several failings in the systematic use of sex- and age-disaggregated data.

On national engagement in assessment processes, the findings are mixed. The CERF Performance Accountability Framework (PAF) reviews on Colombia and Bolivia (Taylor, 2011a; 2011b) noted that although national disaster-response mechanisms are relatively strong, needs assessments through government remain focused on infrastructure and damage as opposed to populations and a vulnerability/needs-based approach. In Kenya the main assessment mechanism, the Long and Short Rains assessments, are a rare example of a nationally driven, government-led, multisectoral and multi-agency process but there are some concerns about whether the information generated is useful for decision-making regarding appropriate humanitarian interventions (ALNAP, 2011; Levine, 2012). A key role for aid actors in these contexts is to support the strengthening of national assessment systems.

Access constraints in some contexts continue to inhibit an accurate assessment of need. Up to 60% of South Sudan is inaccessible for parts of the year. As a result, critical data, including on mortality and morbidity, remain unavailable. Data on nutrition, for example, exist in only 25 of 79 counties where humanitarian partners have conducted surveys (OCHA 2011h). In contrast, in Somalia, despite the access constraints, there is a strong assessment tool in the Food Security and Nutrition Assessment Unit (FSNAU), which is well supported, trusted and has a unique mechanism for collecting data through national counterparts with relatively good access throughout the country.

4.2.2 APPROACHES TO NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As noted in the pilot study, the international humanitarian system has made considerable advances in developing new tools, frameworks and methodologies for needs assessment. Over the past two years these efforts have continued through several inter-linked initiatives, including the IASC's Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF) and the INGO-led Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS).

Following a multi-stakeholder consultation, the IASC Working Group created the IASC NATF in July of 2009, with the goal of promoting cross-sector needs assessment and strengthening decision-making for humanitarian response. OCHA serves as the secretariat for the task force, through its Assessment and Classification of Emergencies (ACE) team. After relatively slow progress in the initial phases, the NATF agreed clear objectives for 2011, including the finalisation of the provisional NATF Guidance and Tools and trial application in four on-going emergencies and four preparedness missions; the development of a Multi-cluster Initial/Rapid Assessment Framework (MIRA) for use in the first 72 hours and first two weeks of an emergency and ongoing collaboration with Task Forces on Information Management and linkages to early recovery.

The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) was launched in 2009, as a consortium of three INGOs (and a member of NATF) which aims to strengthen the capacity of the humanitarian sector in multi-sectoral needs assessment. A recent evaluation noted that cooperation had sometimes been difficult but that there had been several positive developments(Currion and

Willitts-King, 2012). Not least, ACAPS was felt to have brought sound technical processes and practical guidelines to common needs assessment. Ultimately, the evaluation found that the project will probably need to be housed within the NATF/OCHA ACE framework and recommends an extension to see the work handed over. The ECB's Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) initiative is also linked, in that ECB has worked with ACAPS since 2011. ECB consortia in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Bolivia and Niger have undertaken JNAs, with a view to improving joint, rapid needs assessments. Interviews yielded some positive commentary on ACAPS, but most respondents felt that efforts to improve needs assessment at the global level have been lacklustre overall. Interviewees frequently noted that NATF has been overly UN-centric – over complex, too top-down and that it has been difficult to get agreement on a method of joint needs assessment in or across a couple of sectors.

Other initiatives include the Humanitarian Emergency Settings Perceived Needs Scale (HESPER). This is a joint WHO and King's College London initiative designed to assess rapidly the 'perceived needs' of affected populations and allow their views to be taken into consideration. The project specifically aims to fill the gap between population-based 'objective' indicators such as malnutrition or mortality rates and/or qualitative data based on convenience samples such as focus groups or key informant interviews.

In terms of inclusivity and participation in needs assessment, a majority of survey respondents from international aid organisations (77%) and a smaller majority of respondents from national NGOs (64%) report having participated in joint needs assessment. Most of these respondents also felt that needs assessments had 'somewhat improved' over the past two years, but that the involvement of local actors in the process was still viewed as fair to poor. Host-government representatives, however, were unenthusiastic in their assessment of progress in needs assessment, with a majority seeing little or no improvement. As noted above, perhaps more concerning is that only 25% of aid recipients surveyed in three of the four settings felt that the aid they received addressed their most important needs at the time.

Donors tended to stress the importance of the UN-led multi-sector and inter-agency rapid assessments, as opposed to multiple individual-agency assessments. Yet INGOs caution in this regard that, because UN security restrictions often place severe limits on the range of UN-led assessments, coverage often can be compromised. Some NGOs argued that overall assessment methodologies should focus far more at the community (not individual) level, including an assessment of local capacities and that far too often international aid actors assume there is no local capacity.

While the majority of policy discourse around assessment has focused on needs, there is a growing discourse on the need to look at 'risk' instead of 'need'. This view is especially prevalent in the context of slow-onset cyclical disasters and closely linked to risk reduction in countries where natural disasters can be predicted (Save the Children and Oxfam, 2012).

Assessment and analysis of diversity (age, gender, diversity monitoring) does often take place, but it is not systematic, and often does not lead to action. For example, recent studies suggest that gender is still not taken into account properly (Mazurana et al., 2011). One study found that there continues to be a need for consistent sex-disaggregated data. It noted that data and information systems remain problematic due to a lack of data collection, time pressure, lack of 'gendered' indicators, and a lack of impact studies (O'Gorman and Clifton-Everest, 2009). Several interviewees maintained, however that gender-mainstreaming has made progress. As one interviewee commented, 'it's not perfect, but nearly every organisation out there is thinking about gender in some way in their work'. The new tools and resources such as GenCap advisers have, in particular, had a positive impact in some contexts, although knowledge generally of GenCap is limited. The recent DARA study found that donors are increasingly demanding some degree of awareness of gender issues from their partners, even though this is sometimes little beyond an exercise in 'ticking boxes' (DARA, 2012).
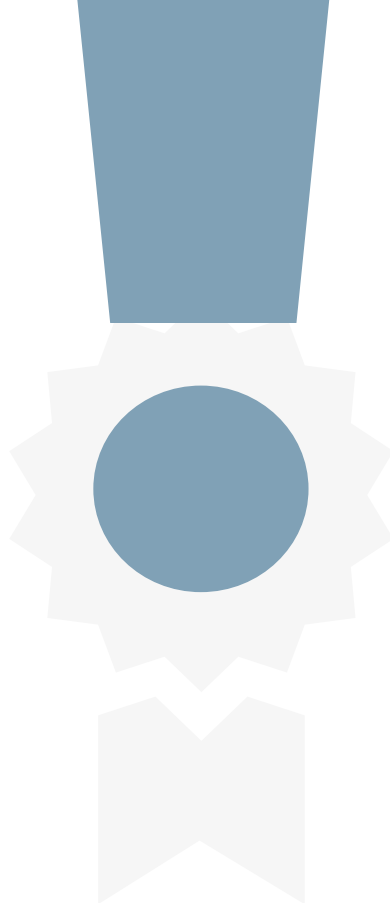
4.3 EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness is an especially challenging criterion on which to offer a concise, system-wide verdict. For the purposes of this study, effectiveness was measured by how well humanitarian responses met their objectives, how quickly the system was able to respond to emergencies, how well it monitored and evaluated its work, the quality of leadership and the competence of coordination efforts. This subsection focuses on six areas important to the system-wide effectiveness of response: timeliness, preparedness, human resources, coordination, leadership, and monitoring and evaluation. While evaluations and interview findings indicate that individual projects and overall responses had mostly met objectives, no major improvements overall were seen in these areas.

The evaluations reviewed cited evidence of effectiveness in specific areas (geographical or sectoral). Of the evaluations that address the effectiveness of interventions in broad terms, the majority found them to be effective or partially effective. The reasons cited included the achievement of projected goals, that further negative outcomes were avoided, that international standards were met or affected groups were satisfied with the results. [20] Reports that questioned overall effectiveness cited significant time delays, poorly defined measurements or failure to meet projected goals as key reasons.[21]

Among the major emergencies, the floods in Pakistan were perceived to present the most challenges, beginning with problematic relations between the government and aid organisations in both 2010 and 2011.

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20 These include evaluations in Malawi (Laugerud et al., 2009), Iraq (van Bruane and Deboutte, 2010), Cote d'Ivoire (Bradolini et al., 2009), Sudan (Gasana et al., 2009), Burundi (de Klerk et al., undated) and Thailand (van Bruaene and Sondrop, 2011).

21 These include evaluations in Haiti (Clermont et al., 2011) and Sudan (Sudanese NGO Forum, 2010; Ievers and Pacaigue, 2010).

Response in the Horn of Africa was perceived to be effective once launched, but too slow to meet the criteria of effectiveness overall. [22] A similar dynamic may be at work in the other crises that generated fewer headlines. The University of Haiti (2011) evaluation notes that the large volumes of timely funding to the earthquake response did not equate to fully utilised and effective aid, and highlights particular gaps in appropriate construction expertise and failure to engage with local experts.

Effectiveness also focuses on some critical areas of the humanitarian reform process which was initiated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, together with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 2005. Its overarching aim was to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership. Recently, the IASC principals have reflected on progress to date and found that emergency response capacity has been reinforced at the global level according to an agreed division of labour. Challenges remain, however, in deploying adequate leadership, establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms at various levels and ensuring clear mutual accountabilities, as evidenced in several major disasters over the past years. Furthermore, the application of the cluster approach has become overly process-driven and, in some situations, is perceived to undermine rather than enable delivery (IASC, 2012). In light of the growing recognition of the weaknesses in multilateral humanitarian response, the IASC principals decided to review the current approach to humanitarian response and make adjustments – this process has been coined the Transformative Agenda. Where relevant, this subsection will discuss attempted improvements through this agenda.

4.3.1 TIMELINESS

Since the pilot study, the humanitarian community's record on timeliness has been variable. There were concerns about delays in response in all three major emergencies since 2009 – the drought and conflict in the Horn of Africa, the 2010 floods in Pakistan and the earthquake in Haiti. In the Horn of Africa, interviewees and much of the literature agree that the system failed to respond quickly enough – early warning systems forecast problems in August 2010 and became much clearer in November 2010. Most commentators agree that the early warning worked, but there was a failure to act on it (ALNAP, 2011).

In Kenya, for example, the government was late to respond and to call for international assistance and those donors with large humanitarian portfolios argued that they did what they could with existing budgets at the country level before the government declared a disaster, but that they were dependent on the declaration to trigger any interest from their capitals (Harmer et al., 2012). In Somalia, there were wider political and security challenges which inhibited a timely response to the impending famine, as well as access constraints, a complex programming environment and an unwillingness of donors to invest (Save the Children and Oxfam, 2012). As one interviewee noted:

'How much more analysis do you need? …[we're] asked to survey and survey and survey. GAM and SAM rates should not be triggers for action – they are already hungry and going to die and treatment is massively expensive.'

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22 Evaluations and other literature include those on Haiti (Bernstein et al., 2010; UNICEF, 2010; IASC, 2010), Pakistan (Hagens and Ishida, 2010; Hagans, 2009; Murtaza et al., 2010) and Horn of Africa (Levine, 2012; Murphy et al., 2011).

INGOs themselves acknowledged that, in addition to access challenges, there were significant delays in scaling up response capacities, particularly in Somalia

The mobilisation of financial resources and the deployment of humanitarian workers were perceived to be sufficiently rapid in the Haiti response (Grünewald et al., 2010), the overwhelming nature of the event and the relative chaos in its aftermath did contribute to delays, however. A delay was noted in the production of the multi-sector needs assessment (DARA, 2010); logistics and the challenges of getting supplies into the response areas was noted by the British Red Cross among others (Fortune and Rasal, 2010). In Pakistan 2010, despite the sizeable response effort, the relief operation was complex and criticised for being slow to gear up and suffered significant coordination challenges (Polastro et al., 2011). In particular, most donors acknowledge that their response was slow. In response to the 2011 floods in Pakistan, there was insufficient emphasis on preparedness as agencies were still working at full capacity to respond to the impacts of the 2010 disaster. The government was also slow in giving permission for the international community to undertake assessments.

Timeliness in humanitarian financing appears to have declined slightly in the past two years, according to FTS data. If the preferable scenario is to have the largest amounts already allocated by the beginning of the year, donors in this reporting period performed less well than in the two years preceding. In 2009-2010 a smaller percentage of total annual contributions were committed in the first and second quarters (or the previous year) than was the case in 2007-2008 (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Funding decisions by quarter, indicating timeliness of humanitarian financing

*Source: OCHA FTS (*relates to the CAP, not donor fiscal year).*
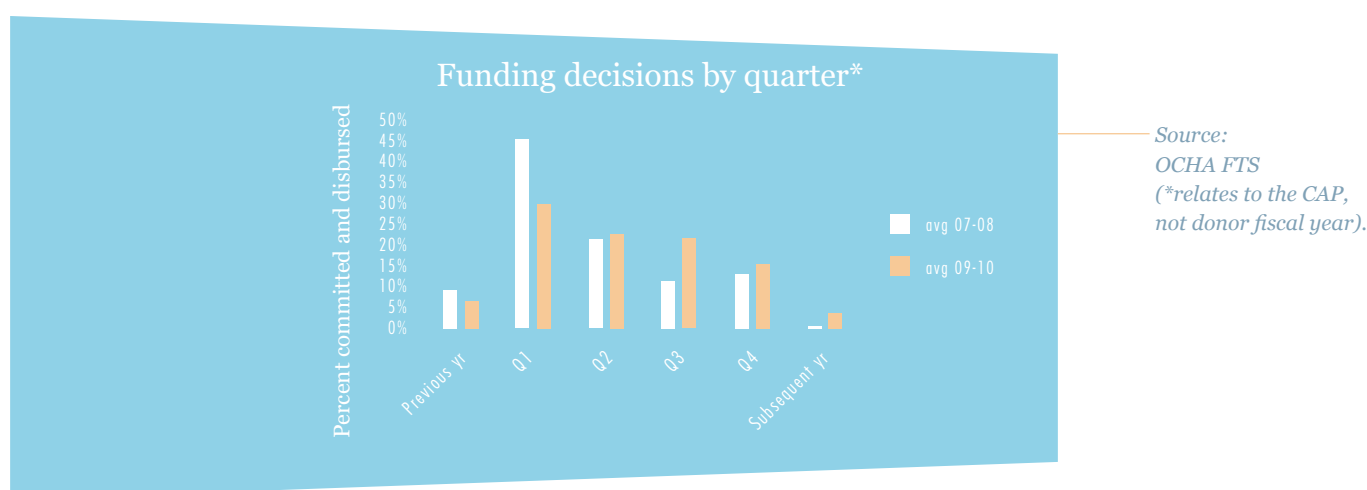
Aid recipients surveyed in the four aid contexts of DRC, Haiti, Pakistan and Uganda expressed the critical importance of timely response. When asked about the main things they would like to see humanitarian agencies do to improve their performance, more respondents answered 'be faster to respond' than any other option. This stands in contrast to the survey responses of international aid practitioners who gave fairly high marks to themselves for timeliness, collectively ranking 'speed of response' second among their performance attributes, after 'prioritisation of needs'. (They judged themselves weakest in 'participation of aid recipients in design and assessment of programmes'.)

CERF and other financing mechanisms

There are mixed views on whether the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) is leading to faster and more timely response. The five-year evaluation of CERF found that the mechanism offers one of the most rapid funding mechanisms available to UN agencies (Channel Research, 2011). The Fund is also seen to promote early action by UN agencies through acting as a guarantee which enables the release of internal emergency funding. Implementation by NGO or other partners with no access to significant internal reserves clearly remains contingent on the rapid pass-through of funds. The five-year evaluation found that, on average, these transfers take two to three months (Ibid). In field interviews, NGOs noted mixed experiences and significant inconsistency in pass-through arrangements with UN agencies. Since the CERF is now an established mechanism and a recognised part of any rapid response, some interviewees noted that donors now 'wait to see' how the CERF reacted before making funding decisions. Donors were generally positive about the CERF contributing to more timely responses.

In terms of effectiveness more broadly, the five-year evaluation found that the CERF tended to reinforce strong HCs and functioning coordination structures such as clusters. This finding is borne out by country studies undertaken as part of the annual CERF Performance and Evaluation Framework (PAF). In Ethiopia, with an established country-level pooled fund, and Zimbabwe, with a functioning inter-cluster structure, CERF allocations were undertaken in an inclusive fashion (Mowjee, 2011). Where such structures are not in place or are weaker, as in Bolivia and Colombia, UN agencies tended to regard the CERF as a mechanism primarily for themselves (Taylor, 2011a; 2011b). Where strong affected states are not willing to request international support on a large scale through an appeal, the CERF was noted as rising in importance as a financing mechanism. Such reliance on CERF, originally designed as an ad-hoc mechanism, is an interesting dynamic. Interviewees also noted the challenges for CERF in regional responses, as the mechanism is predominantly country-based.

There were also mixed views on the other common financing mechanisms. The CHFs [23] are generally viewed more positively than CERF by NGOs, especially when passing funding directly to an implementing agency (Goyder, 2011). Evaluations of country-level pooled funds have noted the trade-off between timeliness and inclusiveness. Many actors continue to perceive the mechanisms as heavy and bureaucratic, slowing response times which has prompted OCHA to begin developing a system to monitor timeliness using objective data. In South Sudan the CHF is considered a relatively strong needs-based instrument, and preparedness-oriented in that it prioritises prepositioning of stocks and frontline responses – particularly nutrition, WASH and health – the funding for which is frontloaded. The CHF for Somalia is considered to be based on a high level of trust between the HC and certain INGOs, enabling quick response. [24] The funds in DRC and Somalia have increased funding levels for national NGOs. While there is a presumption that the result has been a more effective response, the main weakness of CHF is that monitoring and evaluation is insufficiently robust and outcomes unclear. [25]

23 CHFs, or Common Humanitarian Funds, are country-level pooled funds under control of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and operating in support of the HC and the CAP or other jointly constructed strategic plans.

24 The first evaluation of the Somalia CHF was underway at the time of the production of this report and so its findings are not reflected here.

25 OCHA reports that 'strengthening M&E is currently the top priority for all country based pooled funds. A global framework has just been endorsed in March 2012 and it will be rolled out by the end of the year'.

In several humanitarian contexts during the period, the modalities of funding were perceived to be as important (or problematic) as the overall levels in the context of effectiveness. Short-term grant allocations, of the type long perceived as a bane to effective programming in chronic emergencies, were also noted as problematic in sudden-onset situations. An evaluation of Tearfund's response in Haiti noted the need for more time in which to spend DEC funds – specifically, that the requirement for 30% of funds to be spent in the first 6 months should be extended to 12 months (Goyder, 2010a). Similarly the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA) has had clear success in using its DFID-underwritten emergency response fund mechanism to initiate rapid assessment and relief activities in emergencies, but the requirement to spend down the ERF funding within just 30 days has also created difficulties (Stoddard, 2011).

4.3.2 PREPAREDNESS, DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND THE RISE OF RESILIENCE

On disaster-response preparedness, the SOHS research highlighted some positive changes. In some situations of recurrent disaster there have been important investments in preparedness. For example, through pooled funds, South Sudan has increased its preparedness capacity, with supplies prepositioned in a range of remote locations. In Kenya, investments in preparedness made a significant difference to the success of nutrition intervention in the 2011 drought response. On disaster-risk reduction (DRR) more broadly, however, some interviewees highlighted the 'missing link' between DRR objectives and development goals. A recent study found that DRR-related investments amount to only 1% of the $150 billion spent in the 20 countries that received the most humanitarian aid over the past five years – a 'disastrously low' amount (Development Initiatives, 2011), although how DRR is defined and reported against is part of the problem of the apparently low contributions.

Despite the significance of the climate change agenda, environment, as one interviewee pointed out is not 'on top of [any]one's list'. Recently, however, there has been welcome attention to the need for greater investment in disaster-prone contexts. This featured in the output from the recent fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Korea. Article 27 of the agreement on Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation states that governments 'must ensure that development strategies and programmes prioritise the building of resilience among people and societies at risk from shocks, especially in highly vulnerable settings'. There's also been greater recognition of the challenges facing fragile and conflict-affected situations. In addition to Busan and the New Deal, which recognised that fragile states are for the large part off-track to meet the MDGs, the World Bank's World Development Report 2011 has also called for a new approach to development assistance in conflict settings. [26]

From a policy perspective, there has been an important shift since the last SOHS report regarding the emphasis on risk reduction. The concept of 'resilience', as a potential unifying framework, bridging humanitarian, DRR, good governance/state-building and development goals, entered the aid lexicon many years ago but gained the spotlight in 2011 through the recommendations of the UK government's Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR) and has subsequently become a major new buzzword for some donors and their

partner agencies. In theory, resilience spans a wider remit than DRR, including making people and institutions more resilient to conflict as well as disasters. However most of the policy and programming emphasis thus far has been on disaster resilience. [27]

There are positive and negative aspects of this new agenda. One donor noted that resilience can be a 'superficial and open-ended term' that people interpret differently, and risks shifting the conceptual dialogue without any impact on the ground. The recent discussion has, however, opened up an old debate around humanitarian and development divides and offered a new framework for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. The agreement resulting from the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Korea, in addition to suggesting that developing countries take a lead in integrating resilience and disaster management into their own policies and strategies, seeks investment in disaster management. It remains to be seen how far these agreements will translate into commitment on the part of development actors to ensure more consistent and predictable financing for disaster resilience.

There were several positive examples of DRR and disaster-resilience programming including market-based interventions to tackle chronic food insecurity, including large-scale and longstanding safety-net programmes such as those in Ethiopia and Kenya. In the Sahel, ECHO was seen to have been more proactively addressing the recurring crises, long term, by linking ECHO and EU strategy and activities. There were also a number of donors considering developing flexible financing mechanisms, such as 'crisis modifiers' which release funding for humanitarian work to respond to a crisis, making the programme more flexible (Save the Children and Oxfam, 2012). Several interviewees noted with approval an increasing convergence between humanitarian and development spheres, mainly through DRR or disaster resilience. However, tensions remain. In South Sudan and a number of other protracted crises and chronically under-developed countries (CAR, DRC, South Sudan), development actors have been slow to build up their portfolios and humanitarian assistance still accounts for a far greater share of support to social services than it is designed to provide.

As noted in Subsection 4.1.3, national actors, government and local NGOs find the divisions between humanitarian and development activities unhelpful in the non-response aspects of disaster management: prevention, preparedness and recovery. It was also noted that transition from NGO/UN-led systems to those led by local government was poor, creating many gaps (Barham et al., 2011).

4.3.3 SURGE CAPACITY

Several actors note successes in speeding up the deployment of humanitarian personnel through rosters. However, the findings also suggest that the adequate scale-up of appropriately skilled and briefed staff is still perceived as problematic for both operations and coordination.

There are some good examples of successful investments in surge capacity. The UN Secretary-General's Report (OCHA, 2011b) notes some success in human resource practices in OCHA including the use of a Roster Management Programme and the establishment of a new surge mechanism, the Associates Surge Pool. There is also evidence of increasing responsiveness within specific agencies/clusters. One UN agency has designed new emergency procedures for 'level 3' emergencies. The Emergency telecoms cluster 'stock project' has become self-sufficient, after initial donor funding. Many NGOs now report improvements in dedicated

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27 See for example 'Defining disaster resilience: A DFID approach paper' (2011).

emergency units and standby staff capacity. Several INGOs also reported the availability of more standby equipment and pre-positioned stockpiles – 'being responsive and being seen as responsive is very valuable'.

Challenges remain however, and donor interviewees felt that UN surge capacity still needs work. One agency argued that many agencies are getting stuck between their long-term programmes (e.g. Pakistan, Haiti before disaster) and quick response: and as a result suffer an 'utter incapacity to switch gears'. From this perspective, organisations are putting more emphasis on development and are not structured financially and in terms of human resources to respond to emergencies. An ECHO study on the mapping of donor coordination noted that only the three major humanitarian donors had their own surge capacity (Spaak and Otto, 2009).

Evaluations also consistently noted that, although personnel may have been available, high turnover was an ongoing challenge to effective delivery. This phenomenon is noted consistently across rapid-onset disasters (Clermont et al., 2011), system wide technical evaluations (Steets et al., 2010) and evaluations specific to single organisations or geographical regions (Sudanese NGO Forum, 2010).

Lack of skills / contextual knowledge

On the positive side, the system benefitted from a growth in new initiatives for training and certification. In surveys, most practitioners surveyed felt that staff quality was unchanged, but a greater number than last time thought it had improved and fewer saw a decline. However, evaluations consistently show that staff in NGOs, UN agencies and clusters were perceived to be ill prepared in terms of basic language and context training in a significant number of contexts. Failures in technical knowledge were raised with respect to protection and Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) principles.

Staff training and a lack of appropriate skill sets were raised in many evaluations. For example, evaluations of mega-disasters predictably note influxes of relatively new staff with limited experience (DARA, 2010). There were numerous references to a lack of French and Creole skills in evaluations of Haiti (IASC, 2010; Grünewald et al., 2010). A lack of French-speaking internationals in Francophone contexts was noted in several specific evaluations (Baker and Mbogha, 2009). A general shortfall in contextual knowledge and/or appropriate language skills among international personnel are noted in OCHA's evaluation synthesis report of 2011 (OCHA, 2011c).

Several evaluations went as far as suggesting that a lack of language skills or contextual knowledge caused a net decrease in impact (Krüger and Steets, 2010). In Kenya, some agencies mobilised staff members from other offices who were experienced and had familiarity with the Kenyan context. But there was a general critique that the surge lacked an understanding of the context, assumed government systems didn't exist and didn't want to invest in how they worked. Agencies noted that these staff members found it hard to adapt, which often resulted in inefficiencies. A similar finding came from an internal agency evaluation of a natural-disaster response in Latin America which noted that its staff showed a lack of experience in working in an environment where the government had its own response systems and was capable of leading the response (Bauer, Williams and Biagi, 2010).

Interviews suggest that many agencies are still perceived as quite 'amateurish' in their preparation of staff about overarching political contexts in which they are going to work. In Darfur, it was noted that among many aid personnel deployed, there was very weak

understanding of the drivers and impacts of conflict in the communities. As one senior manager noted:

'if you don't understand the political, ethnic, tribal contexts it is difficult to be effective… if I had my way I'd first recruit 20 anthropologists and political scientists to help us work out what's going on in these settings.'

4.3.4 COORDINATION AND THE CLUSTER APPROACH

In recent years, the cluster approach is perceived to have grown stronger and more established. The Phase II cluster evaluation (Steets et al., 2010) attributes several overall benefits to the cluster system, including improvements in:

- *coverage of humanitarian needs in some thematic areas (including gender-based violence, child protection, disability, water and sanitation and nutrition)*

- *identification of gaps in humanitarian assistance and reducing duplications*

- *coordination overall, including stronger partnership between UN agencies and other international humanitarian actors*

- *planning and quality of proposals for major funding appeals, such as the Common Appeals Process (CAP) or Flash Appeals.*

In general, interviewees representing UN agencies, INGOs and donors were more supportive of the cluster approach than in previous years. Several respondents stated that they had previously been opposed to the idea but now saw benefits where clusters were well managed. NDMA officials stated that whether or not clusters were a close match to their own structures, they saw clusters as a recognisable entry point to the humanitarian system. Clusters can also enable host governments to exert significant control over assistance (Kiani et al., 2009). However, clusters are not perceived to act in the interest of national NGOs and fail to link with or support existing coordination-response mechanisms, often due to insufficient analysis of local context.

Clusters are also perceived to threaten humanitarian principles, where members are financially dependent on clusters or their lead organisations, and where cluster lead organisations are part of or close to integrated missions, peacekeeping forces or actors involved in conflicts (see Subsection 4.6, Coherence). Poor cluster management and facilitation often lead to process- rather than action-oriented coordination, and basic facilitation skills are still lacking, especially at sub-national levels.

Looking at specific clusters, interviews and the evaluation synthesis indicate the following:

- *Nutrition and WASH are seen as more successful, although views of WASH were more mixed (more positive views from the outside, and more criticism from the inside).*

- *Health has received a mixed response: some perceive it as improving, although this was not evident in the response in the Horn of Africa.*

- *The global education cluster is seen as very coherent and effective, partly due to its co-leadership by the UN and an INGO. Highly qualified international staff are now available, thanks to more higher-education programmes. At the country level, however, it still struggles to attract funds.*

- *The clusters were consistently noted as being less effective include protection (partly due to weak leadership) and early recovery. Protection has progressed since the pilot study but gaps are still perceived in the leadership of the global cluster, and in the quality and capacity of the large number of sub-clusters, including gender-based violence and protection in natural disasters. In particular, the protection cluster lacks a joint-advocacy strategy, and country-based strategies are lacking in many contexts where protection issues are critical.*

EFFECTIVE CLUSTER LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH SUDAN

The South Sudan case study revealed an example of strong cluster leadership. In this context, three key features have facilitated buy-in and emphasised key strengths as a model for coordination.

1. The clusters are co-led by the UN and an NGO, and the leaders are dedicated to the role of cluster coordination, not simultaneously focusing on their organisational responsibilities.

2. The cluster lead has a direct reporting line to the HC, so there is a degree of independence from the 'host' agency. (Other evaluations argue that, if adequately resourced and well managed, there is a benefit to having an internal 'agency' reporting line as well, so that the cluster issues are internalised by the key agencies.)

3. The HC takes seriously the issue of gap filling and Provider of Last Resort, and holds cluster leads to account on this.

Most interviewees highlighted the time-consuming nature of cluster coordination as a cost, but there was also a general consensus that overall this investment was worthwhile.

There was a striking lack of knowledge on performance indicators in clusters at the field level. A common finding in evaluations was that clusters had failed to strengthen monitoring and evaluation, either jointly or in terms of standard-setting for the cluster members. This has been noted specifically as an issue where clusters play a key role in pooled funding mechanisms – both country-level funds and the CERF. [28]

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28   The proposed monitoring and reporting framework referred to in footnote 21 aims at improving this situation.

Whether the interaction of clusters and funding mechanisms improves the effectiveness of response is debated. Though many reviews found coordination to have incentivised and increased participation in cluster meetings, one report observed that too much of a focus on pooled funding is perceived to undermine their primary coordination function in some contexts (Steets et al., 2010). The use of clusters in relation to the CERF, however, is reported as a positive trend (Steets et al., 2010) and to have improved the quality and inclusive nature of CAPs, Flash Appeals and CERF requests.

The ERC's Transformative Agenda (noted at the start of this Subsection 4.3) calls for 'streamlined coordination mechanisms adapted to operational requirements and contexts to better facilitate delivery'. In this vision, clusters would be: lighter structures focused on the delivery of results rather than process; annually assessed for relevance and only active where they add value; better resourced below national level with a shared responsibility for leadership and re-focused on contingency planning and assessment missions (IASC, 2012).[29] There is also a vision for more professional management by dedicated, trained and experienced coordinators, with meetings focused more on action than information or fund distribution. Efforts are also planned to improve information management with the aim of better understanding the impact of cluster activities.

Notwithstanding this provisional analysis on how to strengthen their functioning, five years after their launch, clusters are perceived, in general terms, to justify the significant investment that has been made in them. The five-year evaluation notes that there remains little opposition to working through these structures, and interviews for this study support this view.

Inter-cluster coordination

There were mixed reviews of inter-cluster coordination. In the Pakistan flood response in 2010 the inter-cluster mechanism was better received than the individual clusters. In many other cases, inter-cluster coordination is perceived to be ineffective, with little integration of cross-cutting issues.

Cash, for example, is seen as challenging the classic sector/cluster-coordination model and as more reliant on an effective system of inter-cluster coordination. Too often it is housed within a food-security sector/cluster when it should be seen as a multi-sector delivery modality. In several contexts it was noted that OCHA had a larger role to play here. The 2011 response to the famine in Somalia was cited as a useful example whereby cash focal points were appointed in each cluster, who then reported to an overall cash coordinator.

Although a cluster in its own right, protection is also effective only if it can be integrated into other sectors. This has proved challenging, and one interviewee noted:

> 'we haven't been successful is pushing protection into other clusters – a lot of effort and not always appreciated by the 'receiving' clusters. Inter-cluster coordination around protection, however, at field level is sometimes more successful, especially in WASH, nutrition, education.'

29 An argument for streamlining the clusters was noted in the response in Somalia in 2011. Under the UN's leadership, there were 12 clusters established for the humanitarian community. This compares with the OIC's alternate approach to cluster coordination, identifying four priority coordination areas.

In the areas of disabilities and the elderly, the challenge has been ensuring these are treated as distinct categories. Interviewees noted that many programmes deal with them as one. Most commentators agreed that the challenges of supporting elderly and disabled people are not as universal as those concerning gender, and that more work is needed to mainstream these concerns. Basic consultation of affected populations in crisis, and the collection (or recognition) of basic demographic data, is still quite weak (Mazurana et al., 2011).

4.3.5 LEADERSHIP

Since the humanitarian reform agenda began, there has been a heightened focus on the capacity and skills of the Humanitarian Coordinator to lead an effective response. The pilot report, among others, found that leadership was seen as a fundamental weakness of the performance of the humanitarian system. The major review of the UK government's Humanitarian Emergency Response (Ashdown, 2011) concluded that UN leadership remained poor, particularly in the larger disasters, at both strategic and operational levels. The study concluded that there was rarely a vision beyond fundraising or an organising narrative to draw together the disparate capacities.

Among others, an ALNAP study on leadership (Buchanan-Smith and Scriven, 2011) identified concerns in leadership for humanitarian action:

- *'Alarming evidence of a growing tendency towards risk aversion'. Within the UN system in particular it was recognised that risk-taking was more likely when individuals prioritised humanitarian objectives over their own career paths and recognised that they would not necessarily receive the support of their organisations.*

- *A stifling culture of compliance, linked to the drive for accountability and the normal constraints of bureaucracy.*

Although the study found inspirational examples of leadership by individuals and teams in the field, these were noted as having happened 'in spite of, rather than because of, the organisational culture in which they were operating'. An NGO study (Featherstone et al., 2010) recommends several actions at the level of the HC and ERC, for example: developing a system of collective accountability, commitment to participation in joint structures and commitment to the HC roster by UN agencies.

OCHA has long acknowledged the challenges of leadership at the HC level. In 2009, a strategy paper (OCHA, 2009b), which remains current, sets out the key issues to be addressed:

- *Individuals – getting the right individuals in place – with the requisite levels of knowledge, skills, experience and motivation.*

- *Management – assessing and managing the performance of HCs, offering them the support that they need, including technical support.*

- *Institutional environment – working with the IASC and other parts of the UN system to ensure that the humanitarian part of the coordinator's role is given sufficient priority.*

OCHA also acknowledges that some of the issues are beyond its remit and require political will across the whole of the IASC and the UN development system. Most success has been achieved at the 'individual' level, for example through training new HCs and strengthening

selection through the HC roster. The 'Transformative Agenda' of the new ERC also reinvigorates leadership as a focus. In December 2011, the IASC principals agreed on the following range of actions, among others:

- *a mechanism to deploy strong, experienced senior humanitarian leadership to guide the humanitarian response from the outset of a major crisis*

- *the strengthening of leadership capacities and rapid deployment of humanitarian leaders at various levels, to ensure the coordination architecture functions well*

- *improved strategic planning at the country level that clarifies the collective results that the humanitarian community sets out to achieve and identifies how clusters and organisations will contribute to them*

- *enhanced accountability of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and members of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) for the achievement of collective results.*

Many respondents, especially those in the UN system at headquarters level were positive about the 're-energised' nature of discussions in the IASC, especially at the principals level through the Transformative Agenda. Donors also tended to perceive improvements at the IASC principals level. One donor called it a 'step change in behaviour of agencies after Pakistan and Haiti; a willingness of the heads of agencies to work together'. Others doubted that the political conditions could be created to solve some of the key institutional problems. Collective accountability remains a particular challenge. Accountability for collective results would have to be accepted by each operational agency at its most senior levels. For the time being however, the HC function remains one with no authority over the UN system in any given country context.

While these global initiatives go forward, interviews and evaluations focused on the last three years have consistently continued to point to gaps and failures in leadership. The responses in Haiti and Pakistan were seen to be 'defined by poor leadership' and the evaluations frequently cite failures of leadership in early stages of the responses (Polastro et al., 2011; Grünewald et al., 2010), although improvements in Pakistan were noted in 2010 (Cosgrave et al., 2010b). Where leadership has been effective, such as in South Sudan, the impact is striking on many aspects of the humanitarian operation. In some protracted-crisis contexts, the RC often fulfils the development profile far better than the HC one, and several interviewees suggested that the profiling for the position was particularly inappropriate in certain contexts.

4.3.6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The issue of monitoring was identified as a key weakness in the pilot study, has since received relatively little attention and is still highlighted as a significant weakness in many evaluations and in survey responses. While receiving significantly more attention, evaluations have made mixed progress. Affected states are still notably absent in evaluations of their own responses or in participating in joint evaluations with the international system.

Methodologies

The study found mixed reviews of the effectiveness of both monitoring systems and evaluations. The vast majority of evaluations on the ALNAP database use standard OECD/DAC/UNEG evaluation criteria. Similarly, the evaluation set for SOHS is heavily skewed towards the use of standard methodology – those based on OECD-DAC and/or UNEG

criteria. In a review of 40 evaluations on the Haiti earthquake response, for example, Haver (2011) notes an over-reliance on traditional methodology. The majority of evaluations are noted to use all, or a selection of OCED-DAC criteria and/or, in the case of UN agencies, those of the UN Evaluations Group (UNEG). The paper notes that relatively few evaluations focus on the views of aid recipients and that opportunities for joint or thematic evaluations appear to have been missed.

Several NGOs, however, are establishing methodologies centred on the views of aid recipients. For example, under the ECB umbrella, CARE and Save the Children (2010) evaluated their response to the Haiti earthquake using the People First Impact Method Assessment as the basis for focus group discussions, as well as key informant interviews and literature reviews. The same methodology was used in an evaluation of West Darfur and undertaken by Darfuris themselves (O'Hagan, 2011). The tool is designed to complement SPHERE, the Good Enough Guide and HAP through participatory methods. A similar exercise, also using focus group discussions, observation and interactive workshops, was undertaken by five ECB agencies in the West Java and Sumatra earthquake responses (Wilson et al., 2010). Results from these evaluations do give a better sense of the perceptions of aid recipients on a range of issues. As yet, it is unclear whether they have resulted in learning and better programming and/or a stronger sense of accountability to aid recipients.

There is more acceptance of the idea that impact evaluation is important. Approximately 25% of evaluations in the sample make some reference to 'impact'. There is no standard treatment of the criterion however, and in a significant number of cases the concept is conflated with that of effectiveness. Where there is an attempt to measure impact, caveats about the problem of attributing outcomes to specific inputs are usually included. There are a few examples (including those by IRC and HSNP) of randomised controlled trials, using a control population adjacent to the area of intervention. Such evaluations tend to be university-sponsored studies with full academic/scientific rigour. But others point out that it is costly to establish a baseline and track progress against it.
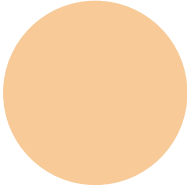
The pilot study noted that monitoring efforts were found to be consistently weak. Evaluations and interviews for this study suggest that this situation remains largely unchanged. Several evaluations pointed to either a lack of field monitoring or a weakness in channelling back findings to improve programming (Christian Aid, 2009; Fortune and Rasal, 2010; NORAD, 2010). Where adequate monitoring systems were noted to be in place, challenges remained in creating a feedback loop which resulted in improved programming. An evaluation of the UNICEF response to cyclone Nargis, for example, noted that although a system was in place with results-based indicators, there was neither the time nor resources to analyse or use the data (UNICEF, 2009).

Types of evaluations
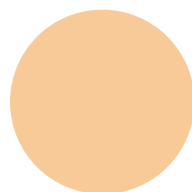
Single-agency evaluations are still the norm. There is lots of internal demand for single-agency programme evaluations, mainly driven by donor reporting. A combined team (of internal personnel and external consultant/s) is seen by some agencies as allowing for greater objectivity with the benefit of inside knowledge as well as being cost-efficient. Single-agency evaluations pose significant risk however that the beneficiary community and other stakeholders become overwhelmed by multiple evaluations.

There is a general impression that donors are very supportive of accountability trends at the rhetorical level, but it is unclear that there are sufficient funds being invested in monitoring and evaluation. In general, donors still expect very little information on outcomes or impact.

As found in 2009, there are mixed views of real-time evaluations (RTEs). On the positive side, inter agency RTEs have included strong components of feedback from affected-populations. Significantly, however, RTEs are rarely considered timely, often because Humanitarian Country Teams are understandably reluctant to partici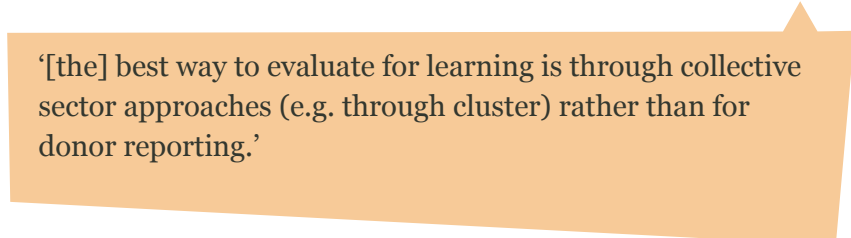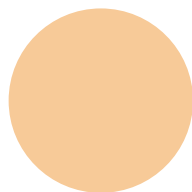pate in evaluations during the acute emergency phase.. Donors and agencies consider RTEs useful, but most acknowledge that they often state what we already know and have not changed operational approaches. They have also become heavier and slower as opposed to the quick and light, corrective mechanisms they were intended to be. They are also seen to be displacing wider collection of data. As one interviewee commented:

'RTEs weren't meant to be the single answer to how we're performing. We still need other forms of evaluation – particularly system-wide ones, post-crisis response.'

Instead, sector-specific evaluations are considered often more useful. One interviewee noted:

'[the] best way to evaluate for learning is through collective sector approaches (e.g. through cluster) rather than for donor reporting.'

For their part, donors are seeking to push for other forms of accountability, e.g. peer-review processes, where directors within agencies peer review each other's performance within a given context. But there is agency resistance here.

Some recent RTEs such as those for Myanmar, Haiti, Kenya and both Pakistan RTEs stand out in that they specifically set out to include the views of aid recipients. The multilateral aid review undertaken by DFID 'turned out to be incredibly influential', according to one interviewee (DFID, 2011). It was partly appealing due to the comparatively stark terms in which performance was measured. Some other donors have adopted a similar approach.

Affected states continue to do little in the way of evaluating their own responses, despite sometimes having a critical role in the response (Harvey, 2009). The evidence base on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of government responses to disasters is woefully insufficient (Harvey, 2009). In Kenya, for example, the government has never undertaken an evaluation of its own response to a disaster, and interviewees were doubtful about whether this would occur for the 2011 response, despite Kenya having pledging over $100 million of its own resources to the relief effort (Harmer et al., 2012).

OCHA is encouraging good evaluative practice (or at least some evaluative practice) among governments in Asia. The Government of Pakistan's evaluation of the 2010 floods is an important example of this. While not independently managed and lacking in detail regarding how much money and resources the government and the military put into the response, the National Disaster Management Authority published two reviews – one focusing on the

appeal and response effort and the other on lesson-learning from the perspective of the NDMA (NDMA, 2009). These are two important contributions reflecting the perspectives of the Government of Pakistan on the response, which might serve to assist and improve the relationship between the government and the international community for response efforts in future.

Repeating the results of the pilot study, this year's survey again found weak coordination to be the major deficit system effectiveness. The response options of this year's survey were worded differently, however, and yielded a more nuanced result. The Pilot study survey combined 'poor coordination/leadership' as a possible response to the question of what was the single biggest weakness. This year's survey split that response in two, differentiating 'poor leadership at the HC level' from overall 'poorly coordinated response efforts'. Respondents again ranked poor coordination as the number one biggest weakness, but poor HC leadership only ranked only as the sixth largest problem, suggesting that the issues is more systemic rather than associated with a single individual or position

Figure 18: Five biggest hindrances to effectiveness, according to international aid actors
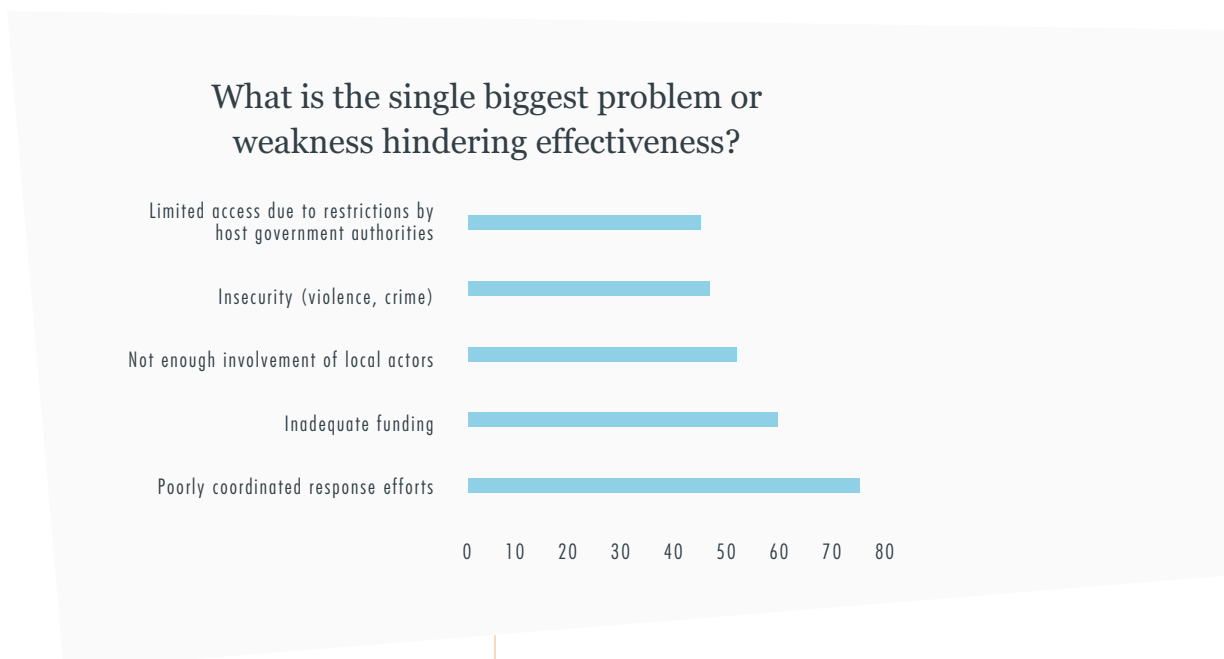
Source:
Survey responses
from international aid
practitioners
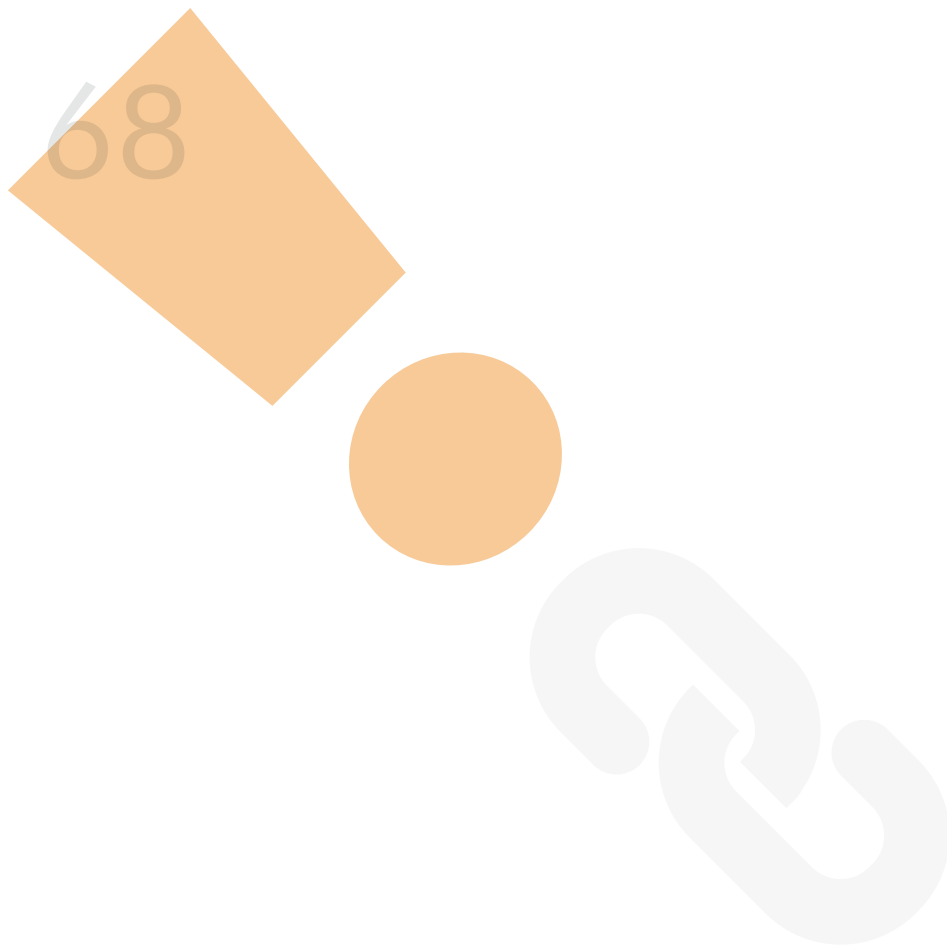
4.4 CONNECTEDNESS

Connectedness is as a measure of how well the humanitarian system works to connect its short-term activity to the longer-term objectives of host countries. It also measures how well the system partners with host-country stakeholders. In this analysis, the second measure is used as a proxy indicator of the first. This subsection looks first at the engagement with national governments and at coordination efforts with national systems. It then examines the state of partnerships and capacity building with national organisations. The final part examines progress in building greater accountability to affected populations.

Overall, the study found good progress in engaging with affected states, including an increased recognition of the need to improve support for affected states' priorities at the national level in contexts of natural disasters. This progress has also been reflected in more nuanced approaches to supporting nationally led coordination efforts, but the evidence for this is limited to a small number of contexts. Significant work remains to ensure coordination is supportive of a wide range of state structures and tailored to support state response capacities (Harvey et al., 2010; Harvey and Harmer, 2011; Haver and Foley, 2011).

Despite the increasing importance of local partnerships in highly insecure settings, there remains an underinvestment in the capacities of local partners. And although there are increased opportunities for local organisations to apply for pooled funding, there is still very little bilateral funding being directed towards them. At the beneficiary level, the last two years have seen ongoing efforts to improve accountability to beneficiaries. There has been a proliferation of means to capture beneficiary perspectives but there is less evidence to suggest that this information is used strategically to improve humanitarian performance.

4.4.1 ENGAGEMENT WITH NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

In a set of interviews with representatives of National Disaster Management Authorities (NDMAs) or similar structures, a significant majority reported that their institutions were relatively new or, more often, in the process of strengthening significantly, often in line with new national legislation and guidelines, as well as increases in staffing and capacity. There has been an important increase in the development of disaster-response legislation in Asia-Pacific region. This has been partly supported by the IFRC's International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles Programme (IDRL). The programme has played an important role in developing, guidelines for the 'facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance' and in supporting states to incorporate good practice into their own national legislative and regulatory frameworks.[30]

NDMA interviewees revealed a significant degree of satisfaction with improvements in the international system, specifically its performance in recent emergencies and capacity to coordinate. Despite this, they also expressed frustration with the international system's lack of deference to national authority. They noted a lack of respect for national capacities, customs and sovereignty and an ongoing 'tendency for agencies to bypass national authorities and to directly engage at local levels.'

Overall and particularly in Asia and Latin America, the international system acknowledges the growing strength of governments in disaster response. UN representatives described the humanitarian system as struggling with how to support governments in Asia that are becoming stronger in managing their own disaster responses. One noted that out of six members of ASEAN recently hit by hydrological or meteorological disasters, none had requested CAP or flash financing through regular channels:

'in some ways this is because we've become hamstrung by the rules and procedures we created. We really need to think through whether [UN resolution] 46/182 mechanisms any longer apply.'

A similar situation is noted in Latin America; a UN representative reported that stronger NDMAs are 'increasingly likely' to push for government not to make external assistance requests. Reviews of the use of the CERF in Columbia and Bolivia (Taylor, 2011a; 2011b) noted that while governments at the central level were increasingly set against international appeals, regional and municipal authorities with strong relationships with international agencies tended to value the resources and support that the international system could bring. The study also noted that, in the absence of formal appeals for assistance, the CERF has gained in importance.

While the increase in government capacity is clearly positive, international actors noted the tensions between better centralised coordination and their independent and impartial role in the delivery of assistance and protection. For their part, INGOs noted that there were often

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30 Background on the IDRL guidelines and process can be found at IFRC (2008) Introduction to the guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance. International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (www.ifrc.org).

challenges in working with government, particularly at the central level. While understanding the importance of linking with national systems, many acknowledged the tendency to default directly to operational mode, citing the humanitarian imperative, especially during rapid-onset emergencies or in conflict situations. The need for independent action, when faced with a central government set on blocking or diverting aid away from segments of a population, was highlighted as an ongoing challenge in some states, as well as challenges for UN leadership advocating effectively for humanitarian action. Many interviewees recognised that governments were sensitive to 'post-tsunami invasions' of international actors. They also acknowledged that despite offering services that are ostensibly free, the international system comes with significant costs attached for national governments in terms of time and resources, especially for coordination with bulky and, for some, unfamiliar systems.

Coordinating with national systems

The evaluations and reviews noted the need to organise cluster interventions more closely around state structures in natural-disaster situations (Deschamps et al., 2010). In some instances, notably Kenya and Ethiopia, several clusters (or sectors in the case of Kenya) are reported to be primarily government-led, with a similar model in existence in the Sahel. In the Philippines, clusters have been recognised in national legislation.

According to local NGOs, coordination at the central level however has added little value for local engagement, and they perceive insufficient attention to coordination in local settings. Local NGOs emphasised the need for central systems to connect better to provincial and local government, as well as community leaders and for cluster leads to invest more in training and capacity building at local levels. [31]

4.4.2 WORKING WITH NATIONAL NGOS

National NGO engagement in humanitarian responses has not been supported effectively. On coordination, since the first cluster evaluation in 2007 there has been little improvement of the engagement with national NGOs through the cluster approach, including providing, for example, adequate translation or easy access to key documentation. National actors in Pakistan cited failures in their first experience of the cluster rollout in the 2005 earthquake response, and no improvement in the 2010 floods (Thomas and Rendón, 2010). In Haiti, interviewees reported that, in general, the cluster system did not do a good job of engaging local NGOs, and pressured national NGOs to attend meetings with little in return.

Despite limited opportunities afforded to national NGOs for coordination, a wide range of interviewees and evaluations of UN and INGO programmes noted the importance of working closely with national actors. In particular, security and access constraints have increased the need and in some contexts this dynamic is seen to have improved working arrangements with local organisations, for example in Somalia and Pakistan. Despite this, there remain significant challenges in ensuring responsible and effective partnerships with national NGOs. This finding was highlighted in the studies on South Sudan and Kenya and in a range of evaluations. In South Sudan, for example, despite a long history of operations, national NGOs in general have highly unstable and ad-hoc financing and are required to scale up and down rapidly, based on project-specific funding.

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31 See for example, HAP (2011) Voices of affected communities: Kenya food crisis.

Several donors require that international agencies work with local partners. Although this is acknowledged as an important and positive conditionality, there are contradictions in its implementation. For example, donors rarely fund national NGOs directly, nor support sustained capacity-building measures via INGOs. In particular, funding for national NGOs via international agencies rarely provides the necessary longer-term support for building up office infrastructure, administrative and financial capacity, including hiring permanent staff, as well as covering operational and running costs. [32] Training and capacity building are the most susceptible to cuts if proposals exceed available budgets. Overall therefore, the capacity of national NGOs in many contexts remains very weak, particularly in the highly insecure contexts where there is so much interdependence between international and national providers.

In natural-disaster settings, the challenges are not necessarily different. Analysis of evaluations over the last two years highlights that capacity building with both national organisations and government entities was limited. Goyder (2010b) found that local partners working in response to the Indonesian earthquake were treated more like sub-contractors and little investment was made to improve their response for future disasters. This concern was seconded by members of the ADRRN network who argued that when INGOs talk about 'partnership', they often meant 'subcontracting.' The network recognised that this had potentially negative effects on national entities, including over-rapid growth. This had the potential to turn a genuine civil society entity into a contractor, with potentially undermined values and heightened risks of corruption.

A further challenge for national NGOs is the burden placed on small but qualified local organisations scaling up to meet the demands of multiple international partners. In one county in northern Kenya, two well-established local organisations were heavily relied upon as partners during the 2011 drought response and acted as implementing partners for over ten different programmes each. This results in significant, albeit short-term, opportunity but also placed pressure on these two organisations to meet the demands of their international partners. It is often noted by INGOs that national NGOs find it very difficult to say no to a contract or to say they've reached their limit. A similar finding was identified in Pakistan, where INGOs thought that local partners tended to be overstretched but rarely admitted it, and that there was significant competition for partners. Both factors resulted in weaker implementation.

More generally, the pressure to meet international standards can limit engagement with national NGOs. This was identified in Pakistan where monitoring and evaluation was not undertaken by some national NGOs and there was a subsequent recognition of the need to add more value by working to standards and improving reporting. INGOs recognised the need to build capacity of NNGOs in areas where recurrent crises occur. It was noted, however, that it was very difficult to undertake meaningful capacity building in the middle of an emergency, precisely when funding was most readily available.

Pooled funding and access for NNGOs

National NGOs have varied experience in accessing pooled financing. In South Sudan, it was agreed that in the CHF for 2012, the minimum allocation for national NGOs would be reduced to US$ 50,000 (down from US$ 200,000 which was considered inaccessible to most

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32 Regarding the adequacy of security training and assets afforded to national staff and NNGOs, see discussions on duty of care and responsible partnership in Egeland et al. (2011) and Stoddard et al. (2011).

national organisations who don't operate at that scale without the support of an international partner). At the time of research very few NNGOs had received funding from the South Sudan CHF [33] and shown limited knowledge of the CAP and related financing processes.

In the Central African Republic, a similarly low proportion of funding goes to national NGOs from the CHF. The CHF annual report for 2010 notes that only one national NGO project was funded (constituting 3% of the total fund). In DRC, a consistent focus on supporting national NGOs led to 45 projects being supported in 2010 through the country level Pooled Fund (13% of the total fund and up from 7% in 2009). In Somalia, this phenomenon is significantly more pronounced. Due largely to restrictions on access for international actors, national NGO projects accounted for more than 50% of the total number of projects funded through the CHF (and over 40% of project funding). Although the five-year cluster evaluation found that clusters tended to exclude national NGOs, funding in many contexts is allocated largely through cluster mechanisms (Steets et al., 2011).

4.4.3 ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Despite recent pushes in the humanitarian sphere for accountability and transparency, people's knowledge of the aid process – who is entitled, what they are entitled to, how they can access it and who to contact if they encounter problems accessing it –is often still inadequate (Maxwell et al., 2011). Disaster-affected persons are rarely given opportunities to assess the impact of interventions and comment on performance. According to one study on accountability to disaster-affected populations, 'they are rarely treated as end-users of the service'. No examples were found of organisations establishing criteria of success through dialogue with communities (Gostelow et al., 2010).

Feedback mechanisms are also varied. The Gostelow study (2010) found that where there were processes in place (for example, complaints boxes), there was also insufficient understanding of how the mechanism works, lack of trust in the security of the process and fear of retaliation, and doubts about access and utility of the process (likelihood of response) (Gostelow et al., 2010).[34] Accountability mechanisms at field level were also found to be often duplicated, and very project oriented. It might be more efficient and effective to have more coordination between agencies regarding accountability approaches. Equally, as an important progression at the global level, there is a move towards better harmonisation of standards through the joint Standards Initiative and initiatives such as the Steering Group for SCHR's certification project. [35]

On the positive side, there are some important examples of good practice in the area of accountability to beneficiaries. In Kenya, the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) has invested significantly in accountability mechanisms which are considered to be working so well in HSNP contexts that there is some evidence the mechanisms involved are also being used for other roles, such as for conflict resolution, advocacy and in political dialogue with counsellors and parliamentary representatives (Harmer et al., 2012).

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33 Latest reports have national NGO percentage of allocations at 7% - over $3 million.

34 See similar issues highlighted in the Pakistan Flood report, on sensitivities and contextual constraints in raising complaints (http://hapinternational.org/pool/files/pakistan-deployment-report-2011-for website-v2.pdf)

35 See: http://www.jointstandards.org/.

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) study on the impact of Complaint Response Mechanisms (CRMs) found that, well-managed, they could foster trust between agencies and communities (Banos Smith, 2009). The study also noted that careful analysis of cultural context and power dynamics within communities was essential to ensure that more privileged community members did not dominate. Leadership and a positive organisational culture on the part of the implementing agency were also important factors. [36] HAP is recognised as having played a significant role in strengthening agencies' internal standards relating to beneficiary accountability but there has been mixed impact overall (Salkeid, 2009). According to HAP interviewees, Salkeid notes, that: 'some communities had positive experiences with humanitarian organisations that are implementing different aspects of the HAP Standard.' An indication that better practices can come about from agencies that have adopted and absorbed the standard, however the wider value of having of a compliance verification process through HAP Certification remains unclear' (Salkeid, 2009: 47).

Communications and other companies, including 'social entrepreneurship organisations', are investing in improving information for and communication with affected populations.[37] The use of mobile devices and networks is becoming increasingly important, both to deliver cash and for communication with aid recipients. For example, Internews undertook an information needs assessment among refugees in the Dadaab camps, through Open Data Kit (ODK), using mobile phones, software and through traditional means (see Internews program news). Agencies are also experimenting with different types of communication tools, for different uses and in different contexts. Examples include: offering emergency information, collecting information for needs assessments or for monitoring and evaluation, surveying individuals, or obtaining information on remote populations from an appointed individual at community level. Sometimes there are payment incentives, and sometimes not.

During the response to the Haiti earthquake, one key initiative by groups of geospatial specialists used satellite imagery to support mapping and build a picture of the situation on the ground using OpenStreetMap, which became a key element of the response (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2011). As another example, the Humanitarian Innovation Fund is supporting a joint project implemented by Internews in partnership with OCHA and Ushahidi on 'Integrating Local Media and ICTs into Humanitarian Response in Central African Republic'.[38] Communications technology is also being used to fundraise in developing countries, for example through mobile text donations for Haiti in 2009, and through the Kenyans for Kenya initiative in 2011.

However, the limitations on new technologies are also recognised. For example, CDAC have highlighted that in some contexts, traditional means like radios and call centres are most appropriate. In Pakistan the aid community used SMS in the 2008-2009 displacement crisis to good effect, but it was less appropriate during the flood response in the southern provinces, since people there were less literate, the local script didn't translate on the phone and some castes and tribes had proscriptions against the use of this technology. Gender issues were also cited: women don't have equal access to phones.[39]

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36 See for example, issues highlighted during the Pakistan floods (2011), on sensitivities and contextual constraints in raising complaints (http://hapinternational.org/pool/files/pakistan-deployment-report-2011-for-website-v2.pdf).

37 The World Disaster Report argued that 'Information is a vital form of aid in itself… Disaster affected people need information as much as water, food, medicine, or shelter. Information can save lives, livelihoods and resources' (World Disaster Report (IFRC, 2005)).

38 See: www.humanitarianinnovation.org/projects/large-grants/internews

39 See Pakistan Deployment report (http://hapinternational.org/pool/files/pakistan-deployment-report-2011-for-website-v2.pdf).

4.5 EFFICIENCY

This subsection examines key developments in the last two years regarding the efficiency of international humanitarian action, which can be measured in terms of both money and time. It first discusses the increasing focus of some donors on efficiency, cost-effectiveness and 'value for money' and provides an illustration of how these dynamics are playing out in one field case study. Second, it presents available evidence on whether clusters and common humanitarian funding are increasing efficiency. Third, it reviews a range of recent opportunities to improve efficiency at the operational level and, fourth, it discusses some of the persistent systematic barriers to an efficient humanitarian response.

Overall, views of the relative efficiency of the system since the pilot are largely the same. Some major donors, facing budget pressures, have become increasingly concerned with cost-efficiency, or 'value for money' (VfM) over this time period, and have institutionalised more complex proposal and reporting tools to satisfy these concerns. Challenges remain, however, in clarifying the concept of VfM and making meaningful comparisons between contexts. Key innovations noted in the pilot, including the use of cash and mobile communications technology, have reached a transformative scale. Their use has become significantly more widespread, indeed mainstream, during this reporting period. Clusters and country-level pooled funds (discussed above in Subsection 4.4) are credited with contributing to greater coherence within the system, but at times can sacrifice speed for inclusiveness.

SOHS survey respondent

"Donors need to be more strategic in how they view and fund capacity building. Emerging initiatives are not coordinated and increase the risk of duplication, cancelling out efforts and confusing the sector as a whole"

4.5.1 DEFINING EFFICIENCY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

As defined by the OECD/DAC, 'efficiency' measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of inputs. This generally requires comparing different approaches to achieving a particular output and it requires adequate and comparable financial information (Beck, 2006). Unfortunately this type of information is rarely available, making both intra-agency and inter-agency comparisons difficult. Agencies' budgeting systems differ widely and a host of factors (e.g. distance, scale, local salaries) can make delivering the same outputs much more expensive in one context than another. Moreover, outputs, while easier to measure, can be misleading as indicators. For example, seeds delivered after the end of planting season are of little value, regardless of whether they were procured at low cost. Outcomes and impact are obviously much better indicators of value, but they are also much more difficult to measure, especially in continually fluctuating humanitarian contexts. They are also subject to considerable debate, especially about whether objectives should be defined in the short or long term.

Partly because of the methodological difficulties, evaluations and the wider literature have typically given little attention to questions of efficiency and cost-effectiveness (Harvey et al., 2010: 43). This was also true in the past two years: many of the evaluations reviewed make no mention of efficiency and some exclude it as a criterion, on the basis that the level of detail and required skill sets do not fit with a 'standard' evaluation model. For example, Save the Children's evaluation of the response to Cyclone Nargis (Featherstone et al., 2009) notes that efficiency cannot be studied within the normal evaluation window and would be considered by a separate team of staff members from administration, finance and logistics.

The past two years have shown an increasing interest from donors in efficiency, however. In response to potential or actual cuts in aid budgets, many Western government donors have placed greater emphasis on ensuring that their spending is cost-effective. The Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR), for example, commissioned by the UK government, called for DFID to renew its focus on VfM, through 'focusing on achieving the best outcomes for affected people... and [driving] radical change, for instance in the supply chain' (Ashdown, 2011).[40] Coming from a different direction, some Islamic organisations have embraced efficiency and recently criticised what they see as high overhead costs within the UN, particularly in the Somalia famine response.

Despite its new rhetorical prominence, there remains significant scepticism, confusion and resistance to the concept of 'value for money'. In South Sudan, VfM is gaining importance and donors are asking questions regarding costs and benefits. These include questions about how many people will be served for the money, the sustainability of the projects, and the impact of the programme on people's lives. In a context where operations are complex and expensive because of access constraints (due to the extremely poor state of infrastructure and related transportation options, as well as insecurity and restrictions on movement), it is difficult to know how to apply a VfM framework. Donors have acknowledged the difficulties and have yet to articulate their approaches fully.

Some interviewees argued that a focus on efficiencies for comparative purposes simply doesn't work in a context like South Sudan, because 'saving lives in South Sudan is incredibly costly'. One international NGO estimated that it cost $500,000 to open a new base somewhere in South Sudan and another noted that, since it costs more to address people's

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40 Although there are wider definitions of 'value for money', such as the BOND definition of VfM as effectiveness, economy (cost-effectiveness) and efficiency, for the purposes of this study and the available evidence, it is used in this section as an aspect of the DAC criteria of efficiency.

needs, 'you are perceived as delivering less, but the time needed to deliver here is much, much higher'. Another noted that their organisation had, ironically, taken on extra staff in order to provide a monthly report to the donor on VfM.

Beyond the practical difficulties of applying the concept of value for money, there was a sense among some practitioners that the concept runs counter to the humanitarian ethos. One argued:
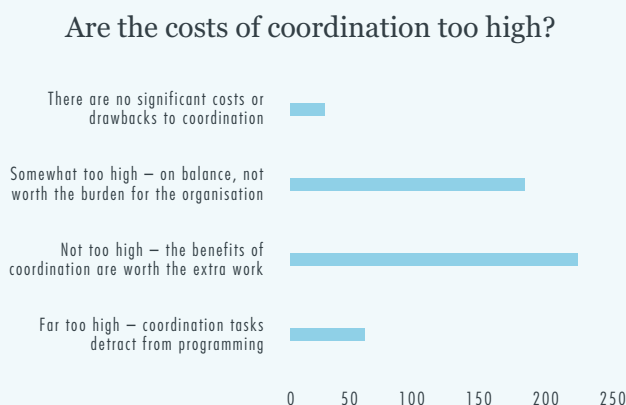
'humanitarian action is not economic.... All of these frameworks are an attempt to translate a commercial model to something that is not.'

Another interviewee from an international NGO saw VfM as 'antithetical' to better understanding of impact, and said it had resulted in monitoring and evaluation being put 'on the back burner'.

4.5.2 COORDINATION AND FINANCING MECHANISMS

As with the pilot study, a consensus of reviews and survey respondents was that the benefits of coordination, including clusters, exceeded the costs in terms of administrative burdens. In the South Sudan case study, for example, most interviewees highlighted the transaction costs given the time-consuming nature of cluster coordination, but there was also a general consensus that overall this investment was worthwhile (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Survey responses on coordination and efficiency

Are the costs of coordination too high?

- There are no significant costs or drawbacks to coordination
- Somewhat too high — on balance, not worth the burden for the organisation
- Not too high — the benefits of coordination are worth the extra work
- Far too high — coordination tasks detract from programming
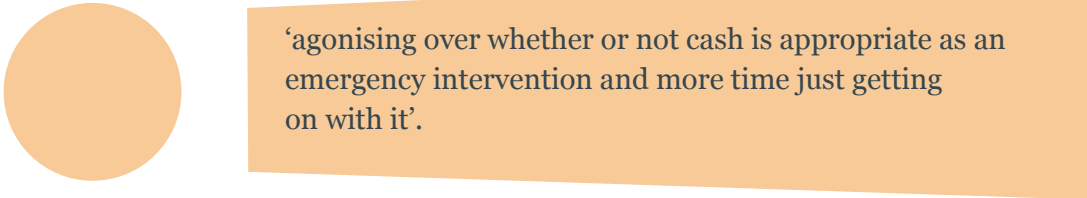
0 50 100 150 200 250

Nonetheless, there are still pockets of scepticism regarding whether clusters promote or decrease efficiency. Some INGO representatives interviewed at the global level felt that clusters may have made the system more inefficient overall, by increasing the focus on serving bureaucracy rather than improving operations. In certain contexts, notably Pakistan, several actors have criticised inefficient coordination structures. Several local NGOs felt that the cluster approach 'has never worked effectively or efficiently in Pakistan', with meetings consisting of 'one-way traffic' in the form of a presentation by the cluster lead agency. Echoing this, an evaluation of the response to the 2010 Pakistan floods found a general 'lack of commitment to lowering transaction costs' (Polastro et al., 2011: 6). The global-

level evaluation of the cluster approach cites poor management in particular as leading to redundancies and decreasing efficiency (Steets, et al., 2010). More generally, the lack of coordination among donors and agencies was noted as decreasing efficiency in several instances (Spaak and Otto, 2009; Bhattacharjee et al., 2010; Watt and Poulsen, 2010).

The pilot study noted concerns of provider agencies about the potential inefficiencies of common humanitarian funds (CHFs), in particular the cost implications of passing funding through multiple layers. Such concerns have persisted in recent years, even as the mechanisms themselves have not been fundamentally questioned. A global evaluation of CHFs found that 'in general the CHF has shifted both transaction costs and risks from donors and on to clusters and recipients, especially NGO recipients' (Goyder, 2011: 27). It also questioned the value added of UNDP as a managing agent, arguing that it 'is still not able to offer a comprehensive monitoring service to justify what it charges for this MA function' (Goyder, 2011: 31).

4.5.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

The interviews, case studies and evaluation synthesis highlighted several areas in which greater efficiencies are being realised, or have the potential to do so. Cash transfers were frequently mentioned by interviewees as a way to increase efficiency and were also noted as one of the key innovations in the sector (Ramalingam, 2009). One interviewee commented that, while cash transfers are now far from new, the level of acceptance from donors has changed significantly, which means far less time is spent:

'agonising over whether or not cash is appropriate as an emergency intervention and more time just getting on with it'.

Cash is seen as efficient largely because it eliminates procurement costs and allows recipients to choose what they need. Cash is seen as harnessing the power of the market to produce greater efficiency. In Somalia, for example, agencies contacted Somali diaspora groups who import food, telling them there will be a demand in the market and that 'how they get the food in is not our concern.' This approach is seen as smarter and more efficient than 'making the whole supply chain come the under non-profit system', in the words of one aid official.

Evaluations of cash programming are more likely to include cost comparisons, since the alternative to cash transfers – in-kind assistance – is relatively clear and there is frequently the need to 'make the case' for cash in a way that is not typically necessary for other types of programming. Cost calculations are still fraught with difficulties, however, including comparing the transport and distribution costs of in-kind approaches with the administration costs of cash transfers, and how to take into account exchange-rate fluctuations, inflation and shifts in prices, as well as the costs incurred to recipients. In light of the widespread view of cash as more efficient, it may be important not to overstate the case; as noted in a recent review of good practice, 'there will be times when in-kind assistance is needed even when it is more expensive' (Harvey and Bailey, 2011: 38-39).

Across a variety of interventions, mobile-phone technology is seen as having great potential to increase efficiency. For example, interviewees noted that the governments of Japan and Thailand used SMS and Twitter to spread messages about the disaster response. Mobile phones also allowed members of the general public to donate funds easily via text message, increasing the level of funds available, notably after the Haiti earthquake and among Kenyans in response to the drought in Kenya. Mobile phones have also facilitated greater efficiencies in monitoring and evaluation, for example with post-distribution and evaluation phone surveys, as well as in family tracing and protection programming.

The interviews and evaluation review pointed to several areas where staffing and logistics could be made more efficient. Mobilising internal short-term deployments, for example, has proven difficult and often leads to inefficiencies, as evaluations found for UNICEF in response to Yemen and for Norway in response to Haiti (Steets and Dubai, 2010). For the largest disasters, some agencies are seeking to establish new procedures designed to speed up response and increase efficiency. UNICEF, for example, has recently initiated a set of internal responses to the highest category of emergency ('level 3') that include standard operating procedures for business operations that are designed to be more efficient.

Working with and through local NGOs and government actors is gaining increasing appeal in some contexts due to a variety of factors, one of which is the need to reduce overheads and increase efficiency. In South Sudan, for example, cost-effectiveness was noted as a positive consequence of working with local CBOs as they are from the area, have good access for mobilisation and minimal overheads. Remaining tensions with such a model, however, include concerns around corruption and the diversion of aid, and the difficulty of monitoring and internal oversight of the work of local NGOs in remote areas. For their part, local NGOs in other contexts have criticised what they see as an over-focus on efficiency as part of the 'sub-contracting model' (as discussed in Subsection 4.4 above). This type of relationship can encourage a local organisation to grow too fast, can lead to corruption and ultimately undermines the dignity of national NGOs.

4.5.4 SYSTEMIC INEFFICIENCIES

Humanitarian response costs more and is less efficient when there are too many actors, poor coordination and the response is ill-conceived or inappropriate, or too late. These system-wide factors were seen as contributing to inefficiency in several recent cases. In Darfur, for example, interviewees expressed the view that aid had been provided in ways that were ultimately more expensive, largely because donors and the Sudanese government did not want to commit to a longer-term, more sustainable response that could have built on local capacities. Similarly, in the Horn of Africa, the lack of response to good early-warning information was seen to contribute to delays leading to a more costly and less efficient response. Acting early, by contrast, can preserve livelihoods and at limited cost. A study by Save the Children US found that it cost US$ 1 to link a pastoralist to a trader for destocking and the transaction provided food for two months, which would otherwise have cost US$ 97–165 through a programme of food aid (Abebe et al., 2008).

"We still need to see more coordination, especially from the lead organisation. [There are] too many short-term coordinators that come for a month then leave a vacuum."

SOHS survey respondent

4.6 COHERENCE

This subsection examines progress in the last two years on coherence – in terms of whether key humanitarian principles are being respected by agencies, and whether donors are effectively meeting their commitments under Good Humanitarian Donorship. As highlighted in the pilot report, this is a complex and difficult topic to address in relation to performance of the humanitarian system. The pilot found that there was increasing concern about the lack of respect for principles in several conflicts from warring parties, and also from donor governments and their militaries, as a result of integrated approaches to international engagement to build stability in fragile states. Two years later, the situation has not changed. Further, while continuing to call for respect for humanitarian principles, many humanitarian organisations have themselves also willingly compromised a principled approach in their own conduct through close alignment with political and military activities and actors (Egeland et al., 2011).

4.6.1 RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

Aid organisations and others interviewed perceived that, in several contexts, affected states and donors remain driven by political and security interests rather than objectively defined needs. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia were often repeated as contexts where the politicisation of aid was hampering effective support to vulnerable populations. As highlighted in Subsection 2.2 above, host and donor governments have impeded humanitarian action in certain cases by restricting movements and activities of aid workers, imposing security measures that run counter to maintaining perceptions of neutrality, such as requiring agencies to use armed protection, funding partially and by legally prohibiting formal contact with groups designated as 'terrorist' and thus seriously hindering

humanitarian negotiation. In addition to the difficulties imposed by states, agencies have at times and in some contexts accepted one or more of these conditions, undermining the safety and security of their staff and increasing the likelihood of access constraints. Collective, coordinated and principled approaches by agencies are notably absent.

There is increasing emphasis on ensuring a more comprehensive approach to humanitarian action (as discussed in Section 4.3), incorporating issues of liveli¬hoods with prevention, preparedness and response. This can help to build more resilient communities, and has been highlighted as a significant and important shift in addressing the longstanding divide between humanitarian and development communities. The World Disasters Report (2011) notes that this shift also brings into question the operating principles that should guide aid actors in protracted crises. Humanitarian agen¬cies are often the most active in undertaking these activities, but are at times forced to work outside accepted humanitarian principles (Maxwell et al., forthcoming).

The challenges of humanitarian crises to affected states – and the possible impact they might have for government survival (politically) – means that the humanitarian agenda will be increasingly affected by calculations reflecting national interest that may not always square neatly with humanitarian principles, particularly impartiality (World Disasters Report, 2011). The response to the drought in Kenya in 2011, for example was marked by political interference throughout, affecting contracting, recruitment and the manipulation of targeting and distribution processes (Harmer, et al.). In Kenya and other contexts, such as Pakistan, the less rigorous application of humanitarian principles during natural disaster has implications for how those same principles can be applied in areas of conflict.

These challenges are combined with more familiar ones. One distinct set of views from the interviews was that, although partial, the success of humanitarian reform in making responses more coordinated and coherent under largely UN-led clusters serves to diminish the responsiveness of the system at its periphery. In other words, more independent action is necessary to complement the greater mass of actors working through central mechanisms. A case study for the IASC cluster evaluation (Grünewald and Sokpoh, 2010) found that in Chad there was an overall lack of respect for humanitarian principles due to the increased domination of the UN in humanitarian action. From this standpoint, an apparently increasing reliance on UN logistics and security advice is also problematic in the retention of a principled approach. The ability of obstructive agents to block aid operations which are over-reliant on a central delivery channel was advanced as a particular problem of recent years. Cote d'Ivoire was cited as a striking example, along with Libya and South Sudan.
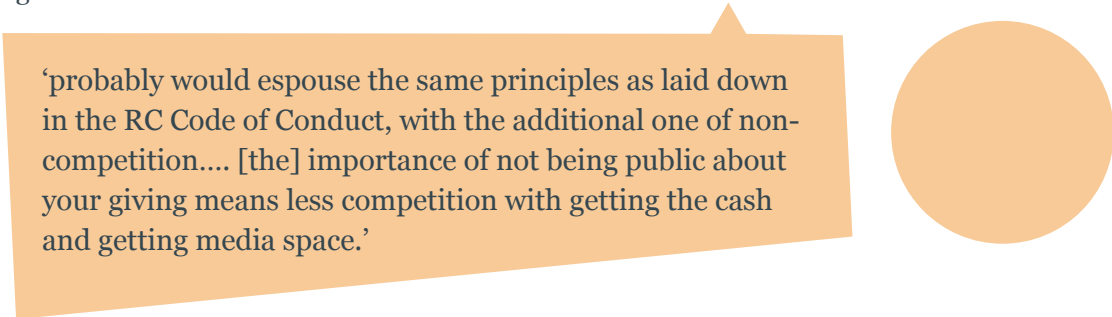
Integrated mission contexts contribute to this challenge. A recent study by ODI and the Stimpson Centre (Metcalfe et al., 2011) notes that UN integration arrangements have supported increased access for UN and some non-UN humanitarian actors to beneficiary communities. This has been achieved through the use of mission logistical assets and the provision of area security by UN peacekeeping forces and military escorts. However, the consequences of this include, for example, the challenges of working in protection when cluster members, or prospective cluster members, have different risk thresholds and security approaches, such as not operating with armed protection (Glad, 2012). In interviews, the widening scope of 'humanitarian action' was closely linked to the politicisation and securitisation of aid. Referring to Haiti, one interviewee put forward the view that if organisations accept funding "for reasons of ego or fundraising" on the basis that they can contribute to reconstruction or recovery which are inherently political problems, they need to take responsibility for the failure. It was also noted that compromises are inevitable in the challenge for the UN of upholding principles in the latter stages of responses where political dialogue with local authorities is essential.

Responses in highly politicised contexts are viewed as particularly problematic for the retention of humanitarian principles. In a recent study on good practice for operating in complex security environments, it was found that the stated or implied policy of some governments and inter-governmental organisations to ban all contact with entities designated as 'terrorist' has severely undermined opportunities for humanitarian actors to negotiate access for aid to civilians (Egeland et al., 2011). Interviewees highlighted multiple occasions when agencies failed to maintain an impartial response when under pressure from strong states, such as in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

In Pakistan, for example, INGOs perceived the government as sophisticated in dividing the international humanitarian community. One interviewee cited the example of the Pakistan military undertaking operations which would cause internal displacement, then expecting NGOs to respond. A real-time evaluation of the response to displacement in Pakistan in 2009 (Cosgrave et al., 2010) found that the government constrained the response of INGOs in an effort to re-assert sovereignty over certain regions and that NGOs failed to challenge the situation. Overall, the evaluation found that the response was not in line with humanitarian principles. More generally, several interviewees expressed concern about the transparency and impartiality of aid flows on the part of some host governments – particularly in Asia and also in Kenya (Harmer et al., 2012).

There has been increasing attention to the role of principles in relation to Islamic organisations. In particular, during the response to the famine in south-central Somalia, Western agencies suffered severe access constraints and international Islamic organisations and local partners were perceived to be filling some of the gaps. One interviewee noted that Islamic organisations:

'probably would espouse the same principles as laid down in the RC Code of Conduct, with the additional one of non-competition…. [the] importance of not being public about your giving means less competition with getting the cash and getting media space.'

It was also noted that there might be less emphasis on neutrality, 'because they don't see their Western counterparts practising it'. In addition, interviewees perceived much more focus on the efficiency of aid than on transparency.

For their part, donors voiced few concerns on politicisation, with the exception of one donor who spoke strongly in support of independent and impartial humanitarian action. Most donors recognise the growing divide between 'strongly principled' humanitarian agencies and the others. This divide has also been identified between donors. The recent DARA report (2012) finds that the top-ranking Scandinavians are all Group 1 countries and have been dubbed 'Principled Partners', based on generous funding, commitment to humanitarian principles such as neutrality and impartiality, and flexibility in the way they fund their NGO partners. It was noted however that none of these donors has major military or strategic interests to make neutrality more difficult (DARA, 2012).

4.6.2 UPHOLDING COMMITMENTS TO GOOD HUMANITARIAN DONORSHIP

Strengthening the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) mechanisms at field level was prominent in the workplan of the GHD group, but there was little sense from interviews or other sources that the GHD initiative has improved coordination among donors at the field level. To most actors, the GHD initiative remains an elusive concept. Interviews suggest a perception that donor representatives at field level have ever-larger portfolios – that although humanitarian funding is not decreasing, it is expected to cover a wider range of activities. Significant for both monitoring and evaluation, there was also a perception that donor representatives, with the exception of those of the few very large donors, are likely to be generalists with shrinking travel budgets. They are therefore less likely to make field visits or to receive technical support from headquarters.

Donors, on the other hand, emphasised the ongoing importance of the initiative and the GHD group as a forum for interaction with new humanitarian donors and for the discussion of important policy initiatives. Examples include: transition funding, an emerging consensus on the importance of risk (rather than need) as a focus for measurement and discussions on streamlining reporting mechanisms. On reporting, there is an ongoing critique that too much of the accountability focus is to headquarters and ultimately to donors, which is often at odds with accountability to aid recipients. For their part, donors do not feel that they are getting what they want from UN agencies and NGOS in terms of reporting, to the extent that they've requested from the IASC a standardised reporting format. In the absence of a likely alternative, the ECHO standard form is being considered as a model.

One important initiative maintained in the GHD process is the DAC-led evaluations of donors' humanitarian portfolios. These peer reviews complement DARA's Humanitarian Response Index (HRI), which continues to offer an independent assessment of donor adherence to GHD. Several DAC peer reviews have been undertaken since the pilot study, including for the US, Netherlands and Spain. The US review (OECD, 2011c) found a lack of cross-government humanitarian policy which led to some inconsistencies in programming with respect to humanity and impartiality. In the Dutch review (OECD, 2011a), the DAC noted the urgent need for a cross-government humanitarian policy to ensure the 'protection' of humanitarian funding from use in stabilisation activities. On the positive side, the Spain review (OECD, 2011b) found significant progress in commitment to GHD and the strength of humanitarian programming more broadly. Progress has included: structural revisions which safeguard independence from broader political agendas and humanitarian principles, and strengthened systems for rapid response and pre-positioned funds with key NGO partners.

CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER ACTION

The humanitarian system continued to expand and diversify during the years 2009-2011, reflecting widening engagement by a broad range of developed and developing countries. Regional and national capacities for humanitarian response and coordination increased, presenting both opportunities and occasional discomfort for the international system. Thanks to new technologies and initiatives to advance communications with affected populations, the voices of aid recipients began, in a small way, to be heard. And the humanitarian reform process, at five years in, began what one interviewee termed a 'course correction', to focus on the more fundamental and intractable problems that have plagued the system for many years.

As noted in the pilot report, the humanitarian system is by nature self-critical, with a tendency to emphasise its failures and shortcomings. This report attempts to strike a balance, identifying the weaknesses and areas for improvement while at the same time noting accomplishments and extraordinary efforts in both operational and policy spheres. The diverse and complex nature of the 'system' as defined for this study means that change is inevitably slow and a two-year timeframe is unlikely to result in highly significant changes. Compared to the previous (pilot) study, the balance of evidence does suggest measured progress in some specific areas of reform or focus, but not all.

Importantly, there is evidence of a slow but important shift towards recognition and support for the primary role of an affected state in responding to assist its population, but much less evidence of the system building those capacities. There is also a sense of steady progress in capacities for preparedness, prioritisation and coordination mechanisms, but little evidence of advancement in other areas of identified weakness – notably humanitarian leadership. There has been significant activity in the methodologies for ensuring appropriate humanitarian response, but less so in monitoring these, and the benefits from investments in humanitarian accountability mechanisms are yet to be realised.

Finally, in many crisis contexts, there is a sense of a diminishing distance between the humanitarian system and its aid counterparts. This is partly a reflection of increased policy attention to identifying and mitigating against possible disaster risks, to assist populations in advance of crises, rather than in their aftermath. This is a welcome new trend, but it also suggests the need for dialogue about the practical application of humanitarian principles as this agenda takes root, from the perspective of both donors and agencies.

The SOHS study is a broad assessment and was not designed to emerge with specific recommendations for policy or operations. However, its findings call attention to particularly glaring and perennial challenges that bedevil the humanitarian system and warrant renewed, focused energies to address. Realising that many are already the subject of ongoing work, the study highlights the following proposed areas for action.

Coverage/sufficiency

Apart from the need to generate new and greater levels of funding to meet overall needs, the findings highlight the ongoing and uncomfortable stretching of humanitarian funds into spheres of activity on the edges of response work, including preparedness, disaster-risk reduction and resilience activities, on one side, and early recovery, infrastructure rehabilitation and the indefinite provision of basic services in the absence of a state-led alternative. With the rise of the resilience agenda in particular, it is critical that new financing instruments are considered to provide the long-term, flexible financing that these broader non-relief interventions require.

Relevance/appropriateness

The findings underscore the need to deepen investments in contextual analysis and to engage aid recipients and local organisations more meaningfully in determining needs and programme design. They also call for increased efforts to collect and appropriately use data disaggregated by sex and age. New initiatives in the area of assessing risks, especially in the context of slow-onset cyclical disasters, are encouraging and call for greater linkages to development strategies in order to be effective.

Effectiveness

As this is the largest and most comprehensive criterion, selecting particular areas for action is challenging. Three areas that appear to stand out are the need for consistent, effective humanitarian leadership in crisis countries; preparedness and surge capacity for more rapid response (including appropriately skilled staff); and investment in monitoring and the need for greater engagement in evaluations on the part of host states.

Connectedness

Growing awareness of the need to strengthen national systems and response architecture needs to be matched by practical engagement and financial support. This applies to both state and non-state humanitarian actors.

Coherence

The study notes the ongoing challenges in the ability – and at times the willingness – of humanitarian actors to operate according to their core principles and for donors to support them in doing so. A focus on documenting good practice or achievements in collective, coordinated, principled approaches in crisis contexts would be valuable and would serve to support much-needed learning on the effective operationalisation of humanitarian principles. For their part, donors could revisit their commitments to Good Humanitarian Donorship, which is nearly a decade old and also encourage affected states to reflect on their role in supporting humanitarian principles.

The analysis in this review paints a picture of a complex and multifaceted system. The system's diversity brings increased opportunity for engagement between a range of governments and humanitarian aid actors, with varying capacity in response efforts. The growing diversity also makes it more important than ever to track trends in progress, inaction, or indeed retreat, in order to increase accountability and transparency of the entire system, not just any single context, sector or set of actors. The study team hopes that this first full State of the Humanitarian System review offers stakeholders a fresh update on the system, an opportunity to reflect on their role in it and its wider course, and a focus on the areas outlined 'for action' to bring about system-wide improvements.

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ANNEX: PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

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Jock Baker, Program Quality & Accountability Coordinator, CARE International

Sarwar Bari, National Coordinator, Pattan Development Organization (PDO), Pakistan

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Andy Bastable, Public Health Engineering Coordinator, Oxfam GB

Mia Beers, Humanitarian Policy Advisor, USAID/OFDA

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Michael Bouchard, Senior Country Representative, Mobile Accord

Melanie Bruns, Expert Programme Coordination, Welthungerhilfe/German Agro Action

Omer Bulle, Ministry of Livestock Production, Government of Kenya

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Kasper Engborg, Head of OCHA Office, Uganda

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Abdul Fatah, Food Security Livelihood Project Officer, WASDA, Kenya

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Scott Gardiner, Chase, DFID

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Oliver Lacey-Hall, Head - Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, OCHA

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Monzu Morshed, Deputy Chief of Party, SHOUHARDO II Program, CARE Bangladesh

Henry Nakitare, District Commissioner, Turkana Central, Government of Kenya

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Peter Njunji, Christian Recovery and Development Agency, South Sudan

Monica Noro, Shelter Cluster Coordinator UNHRC

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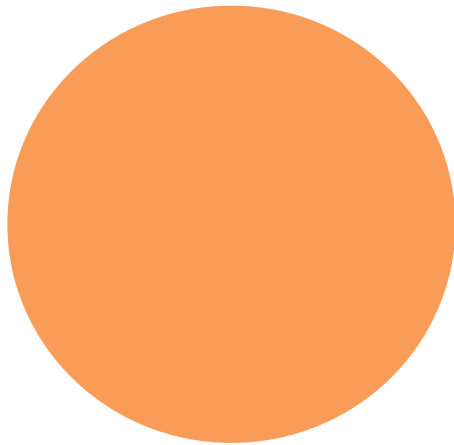
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