



EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM2023

PROCEEDINGS

sweden
2023.eu



NOTE:

This is an interactive pdf.

In the table of contents, just click on the subject you want to visit and you will be automatically redirected to the right page.

You can return to the table of contents by clicking on the title EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM 2023 which is located at the top of all pages.

EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM 2023

PROCEEDINGS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
Unit E1 — International and Interinstitutional Relations, Legal Framework

E-mail: EU-HUMANITARIAN-FORUM@ec.europa.eu

European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

Manuscript completed in June 2023

Final edition

This document should not be considered as representative of the European Commission's official position.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

© European Union, 2023

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged and the original meaning or message of the document is not distorted. The European Commission shall not be liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse. The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.

CONTENTS

Co-hosts’ summary, by the European Commission and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union	6
European Humanitarian Forum 2023: reports on the sessions	9
Russia’s war in Ukraine: protracted crisis and challenges of principled humanitarian action	9
Leading by example: 1 year into the donors’ declaration and the climate and environment charter	11
Localisation: the guidance on the promotion of equal partnerships with local responders	14
Responding to an unprecedented global food crisis and averting famine	17
Putting international humanitarian law at the heart of external action: ensuring accountability	19
Safeguarding principled humanitarian action from the unintended negative impact of sanctions and counterterrorism	21
Addressing access impediments through humanitarian diplomacy	24
Reaching those in the most dire situations: understanding the severity of needs	26
Unlocking efficiency through flexible funding: responding to new needs and changing operational contexts	28
The situation of women and girls in humanitarian crises: how to uphold humanitarian principles while preventing a humanitarian catastrophe? The case of Afghanistan	30
Mitigating climate-driven disasters: scaling up resilience and anticipatory action	32
What can donors do to support a more effective and efficient humanitarian supply chain?	34
Fleeing for survival: forced displacement in Latin America and the Caribbean	36
Soaring humanitarian needs and limited resources: engaging emerging donors and new sources of financing	39
Protection of civilians and humanitarian civil–military coordination	42
Stepping up the commitment to conflict-affected children: working across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus	45
Saving lives with limited resources: the need to prioritise	48
Boosting synergies for humanitarian action and civil protection in crisis response	51
The challenges of humanitarian negotiations and principled response: how far are you ready to go to save lives? The case of Yemen	53
Strengthening synergies between humanitarian and development actors in protracted and complex humanitarian crises	55
Protection in urban warfare: reducing risk to civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers in conflict	57
Making better use of science to respond to climate-induced disasters in a humanitarian context: the role of early warning systems	60
Summary	63
Towards the European Humanitarian Forum: reports on warm-up sessions	64
Regional warm-up session – Asia and the Pacific	65
Regional warm-up session – Latin America and the Caribbean	68
Regional warm-up session– the Middle East and Eastern Neighbourhood	70
Regional warm-up session in Dakar	72
Regional warm-up session in Nairobi	75
Global warm-up session: looking back – 1 year into the Ukraine conflict	78
Global warm-up session: reconnecting emergency responses to long-term adaptation needs	80
Global warm-up session: disaster risk reduction and climate change – sustainable early warning and early action	82
European Humanitarian Forum agenda	84
Humanitarian talks sessions agenda	85

CO-HOSTS' SUMMARY, BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



1. The European Commission and Sweden, in its capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, co-hosted the second edition of the European Humanitarian Forum (EHF) on 20 and 21 March 2023 in Brussels. The event gathered almost 3 000, out of which more than 1 700 in-person, participants from EU Member States, international, national and local organisations, humanitarian partners, international financial institutions, multilateral development banks, the private sector and other stakeholders to discuss challenges for the humanitarian action. The Forum offered an opportunity to further strengthen the cooperation and partnership among participants. High-level discussions, political debates and practical workshops allowed to put forward innovative approaches to address the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time and find common solutions.
2. The forum took place in a context of sharply increasing humanitarian needs, changing geopolitical realities and a shrinking humanitarian space. Principled and effective humanitarian response is needed now more than ever. The forum reaffirmed the EU's and its Member States' leading roles as humanitarian donors by announcing initial humanitarian funding of EUR 8.4 billion for 2023. Together, the EU and its Member States are providing more humanitarian aid than ever before.
3. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has caused colossal human suffering, loss of life and destruction of civil infrastructure. Furthermore, its effects continue to ripple across the globe. This war, the global rise in food prices and the escalating consequences of climate change and natural hazards are creating additional pressures on the livelihoods of millions of people across the globe, exacerbating humanitarian needs even further. The UN estimates that more than 330 million people around the world are in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance – a steep increase from 274 million last year.
4. The EU and its Member States are continuing their efforts to channel emergency assistance to Syria and Türkiye following the devastating earthquake. The Donors' Conference co-hosted by the European Commission and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, in coordination with the Turkish government, held in Brussels, mobilised additional funds in support of the people suffering from this tragic disaster.

The EU and its Member States have delivered since the last forum

5. Since its launch at last year's EHF in March 2022, the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) has helped to fill critical delivery gaps, through humanitarian air bridge operations, provision of common logistical services and expert support to frontline responders. So far, the EHRC has been used to deploy aid in 10 countries ⁽¹⁾, as an expression of the EU's commitment to help people affected by disasters and conflicts across the world.
6. International humanitarian law (IHL) protects civilian populations, supports principled humanitarian action and protects humanitarian and healthcare workers. Following last year's forum, the European Commission issued a call to establish a yearly independent report on IHL.
7. Climate change and environmental crises are one of the main drivers of growing humanitarian needs. In August 2022, the European Commission published its guidance on the operationalisation of the minimum environmental requirements and recommendations for EU-funded humanitarian aid operations. The first annual progress report on the 2022 Humanitarian Aid Donors' Declaration on Climate and Environment illustrates how its signatories support the most vulnerable people affected by crises caused or worsened by climate change.

Tackling soaring humanitarian needs: mobilising resources, improving performance and reducing needs

8. This year's forum focused on how to address the increasing gap between humanitarian needs and resources. The participants noted the commitment by the EU and its Member States to securing additional humanitarian funding in order to ensure a more sustainable and balanced sharing of **humanitarian financing within the EU**.
9. The participants discussed how to mobilise additional **humanitarian funding globally** and achieve a more balanced funding structure to address growing humanitarian challenges by increased dialogue with emerging donors, the private sector and international financial institutions. These efforts go hand in hand with rallying support for principled humanitarian assistance in line with the principles of good humanitarian donorship and IHL.
10. The forum highlighted the importance of ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in aid delivery, including by enhancing the **participation of local and national actors** (LNAs) and women-led organisations. To this end, the European Commission launched its own guidance on localisation on how to achieve equitable partnerships between international and local responders, building on experiences and best practices.
11. The participants confirmed the importance of transparent and **principled prioritisation of scarce resources**, both between and within crises, and committed to pursue efforts towards making analyses of severity of need comparable across crises, connecting needs assessments and response planning, and ensuring good quality through independent oversight.
12. The forum also discussed the value of **quality funding**, in terms of multiannual funding and flexible funding, for quick scale-up of response to urgent needs, ensuring operational continuity in neglected crises, in line with the principles of good humanitarian donorship. To provide incentives for increased flexible funding, participants recognised the need to further improve visibility, transparency and reporting, and encouraged the use of programme-based approaches as a flexible arrangement to support partners.
13. The forum discussed ways to **reduce humanitarian needs**, including by mitigating climate-driven disasters and combining approaches to tackle root drivers of crisis while addressing people's immediate acute needs and strengthening their resilience. The European Commission reconfirmed

1) Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Moldova, Mozambique, Somalia, Syria, Uganda and Ukraine.

its commitment to continue allocating funding for disaster preparedness, including by ensuring the mainstreaming of preparedness and resilience.

- 14.** The forum highlighted that climate change and environmental degradation are drivers of humanitarian needs and threaten to deepen already wide inequalities. The vital importance of taking **anticipatory action** was underscored, aiming to cut the humanitarian needs and direct more development and climate assistance to climate-related crisis, such as droughts and floods, to build resilience, mitigate and prevent shocks from developing into full-blown humanitarian emergencies. Adaptation, preparedness, early warning and a strong focus on building resilience for the most vulnerable communities with all available tools can help to mitigate these negative impacts. The European Commission will continue convening the signatories to the Humanitarian Aid Donors' Declaration on Climate and Environment twice a year.

Addressing conflict and preserving humanitarian space: enabling safe and efficient humanitarian action in conflict areas

- 15.** Conflict remains the primary driver of humanitarian needs, and the erosion of humanitarian space affects the ability to deliver aid in an unhindered and safe manner. The participants expressed alarm at the shrinking space for **principled humanitarian action** and emphasised the need to also maintain a principled humanitarian approach in contexts in which political neutrality was not possible.
- 16.** The participants stressed the need for a more systematic approach to intensify **humanitarian diplomacy** and invest in capacities for humanitarian negotiations and community-based initiatives to improve respect for IHL by armed actors, secure and sustain access to people in need and unblock administrative obstacles to effective and principled humanitarian action.
- 17.** The EU and its Member States remain committed to **Education in Emergencies**, not least in terms of investment, focus on quality and the protection of education from attacks.
- 18.** The participants recognised the need to mainstream **gender equality** and the empowerment of women in all stages of humanitarian response, taking into account the specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of women, girls, men and boys in the design of needs assessments and the implementation of all programming.
- 19.** The forum underlined that the **protection of affected people** is a shared responsibility and should be at the centre of all humanitarian action. Humanitarian actors must step up their engagement to address protection risks and reach meaningful protection outcomes, in cooperation with peace, development, human rights and local actors.
- 20.** The participants stressed the importance of ensuring that sanctions regimes do not impede the effective delivery of principled humanitarian assistance, and for effective and transparent **humanitarian exceptions in sanctions regimes**. In this context, participants called for a harmonised transposition and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2664 (2022).

The European Humanitarian Forum – the way ahead

- 21.** The EHF has become the annual platform to explore and address global humanitarian issues in a wider, cross-sectoral context and jointly bring forward innovative and more sustainable, effective and efficient solutions.
- 22.** The forum's third edition will be co-hosted by the European Commission and Belgium, in its capacity as the next President of the Council of the European Union, in the first half of 2024.

EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM 2023: REPORTS ON THE SESSIONS

Russia's war in Ukraine: protracted crisis and challenges of principled humanitarian action

Monday, 20 March 2023, 11:00–12:15

Moderator

Heba Aly

Panellists

Olha Stefanishyna, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine; Johan Forssell, Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Sweden; Filippo Grandi, UNHCR; Maksym Dotsenko, Director-General of the National Committee of the Ukrainian Red Cross; Maciej Popowski, Director-General, DG ECHO, European Commission; and Marie-Pierre Caley, founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of the international NGO ACTED.

Executive summary

The panel facilitated a rich discussion that focused on reaching a mutual understanding and sharing solutions to ensure effective and principled humanitarian action in Ukraine. Deputy Prime Minister Olha Stefanishyna opened the discussion with a reminder of Russia's unprovoked military aggression in Ukraine – a situation that had been ongoing for a year – and paid tribute to the ability of the Ukrainian government to keep the government and state functioning despite around 50 % of the country being occupied. Participants talked about the current humanitarian response and how to ensure that it paves the way for the next steps, such as early recovery, social safety nets and reconstruction. Two major priorities were identified: demining (Ukraine is now one of the countries in the world most contaminated by landmines) and rehabilitation and care for victims of the conflict.

Participants exchanged ideas about how donors can maintain a principled humanitarian approach



while taking a clear political and military stance in cases such as that of Ukraine. The consensus was that, despite the challenges, donors and partners must abide by humanitarian principles. Humanitarian access has been identified as the main challenge – delivering aid to the front lines and beyond, reaching the ‘last mile’, where people are in dire need. Access to areas occupied by the Russia or its proxies is particularly difficult in Ukraine. However, panellists pointed out the impressive commitment and resilience of local organisations and volunteers in Ukraine, who have served as an extraordinary example of localisation in action.

The needs are enormous, and the issue of global humanitarian funding was addressed. Participants agreed that the problem is not too much funding for Ukraine but rather a global lack of resources for all the humanitarian crises in the world. On a positive note, it was observed that the Ukrainian refugees had mainly been welcomed in the EU, including through specific measures such as temporary protection status. This is a good model yet to be used for refugees in other situations.

Maintaining a neutral stance during the military aggression in Ukraine was a topic that garnered mixed reactions and created debate among the panel, particularly as the conflict directly affects Europe. The EU, represented by Director-General Maciej Popowski, reiterated that its support for Ukraine did not compromise its impartiality in delivering humanitarian aid on a global level. He also reminded attendees that the EU did not divert funding from other crises to address the emergency in Ukraine.

Panellists provided recommendations for future principled and sustainable humanitarian actions. These included standing up for humanitarian principles and attracting foreign investments for faster recovery. Again, the panellists highlighted that this area needs further discussion beyond the forum.

The distinction between neutrality and solidarity was also mentioned, stressing that the two approaches can be complementary, especially when the response is led locally.

Finally, a call was made to start the recovery process even while the destruction is still happening, and it was noted that the learning process continues.



Leading by example: 1 year into the donors' declaration and the climate and environment charter

Monday, 20 March 2023, 11:00–12:15

Moderator

Fanny Petitbon

Panellists

Azmat Khan, CEO, Foundation for Rural Development; Ignacio Packer, Executive Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies; Susanne Fries-Gaier, Deputy Director-General for Humanitarian Assistance, German Ministry for Foreign Affairs; Julia Stewart-David, Director B (Acting), DG ECHO, European Commission; Petr Gandalovič, Director of the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czechia; Stéphane Romatet, Directeur du Centre de crise et de soutien, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères; and Fie Lauritzen, Team Leader Policy and Practice, DanChurchAid, and VOICE board member.

Executive summary

This session took stock of the implementation of the Humanitarian Aid Donors' Declaration on Climate and Environment 1 year from its launch at EHF 2022 and discussed how to meet the needs expressed by signatories to the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations. Panellists discussed 'accountability' for following up on these two key international policy documents, particularly from an EU perspective. Talks also considered the implications of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) sixth assessment report (AR6), published on the date of the panel discussions. Key findings included the need for unity in tackling the climate emergency and the increased urgency of addressing global temperature changes, along with a renewed focus on dialogue with NGOs and more attention to the gender impact of climate change.



An intensification in humanitarian climate crises has been seen internationally, and this is certain to continue in the coming years, as Ms Romatet said. Donors, NGOs and other stakeholders must now include the climate aspect of humanitarian crises in plans and actions, including investments and funding. France is expected to set a good example here, with its national humanitarian strategy up for review and likely to include a climate chapter.

On the first anniversary of the donors' declaration, 24 countries and the EU have signed up. This sends a clear message of commitment to incorporate climate action into humanitarian response design. Indeed, many donors have already adapted their strategies for disaster reduction, climate adaptation, anticipatory action and greening.

There is still, however, a need to measure and strengthen the implementation of local, national and international responses to humanitarian climate crises, Ms Stewart-David said. On Friday, 17 March 2023, DG ECHO published the first annual report of the donors' declaration, finding that the outcomes are very satisfactory. After adopting the declaration, most of the reporting signatories started implementing climate action, DRR and climate change adaptation in their humanitarian responses. In addition, the Commission, through DG ECHO, has developed a mapping of available expertise listing support and resources available to the humanitarian community to follow through on the commitments of the climate charter, which should now be more widely communicated and shared to help humanitarian organisations.

The charter itself is a 'unique' entry point for increased collaboration in the face of climate-driven humanitarian crises, Ms Lauritzen reminded the panel. As such, it sets the bar high. DanChurchAid



already includes climate action in 30 % of its projects, but hopes to increase this to 50 % by 2026. This requires a ‘whole-of-organisation approach’ to climate change alongside the global approach promoted by the declaration and charter. Local actors are vital to making any sustainable impact, while the gender aspect of climate action is still largely overlooked. There is a need to promote the role of women when it comes to climate financing.

The donors’ declaration and the climate and environment charter have encouraged first steps towards tackling climate change in a humanitarian context, but, as Mr Packer warned the panel, ‘This is not about baby steps. This is a sprint.’ Signatories and associated actors need to be helped to move faster and with greater agility through complex challenges. Mr Packer underlined the need for breaking silos, scaling up and mainstreaming climate action and adaptation. There is a need to remember that the world is facing a compound of multiple crises arising from climate change and humanitarian emergencies. Harmonising requirements for donors should be a key aim to result in less paper and more aid. Mr Packer also strongly supported the recommendation to create a secretariat for the climate charter.

Mr Kahn agreed that climate change is not creating similar impacts across the world or even within the same country, region or community. Therefore, actions have to be very localised, remembering that local communities often know the solutions but do not have the resources to act. A ‘locally led response’ with international donor support can often be best placed to deal with the immense humanitarian needs created by climate change, which often affects communities unexpectedly, for instance, with flash floods.

Dealing with humanitarian crises in a more ‘anticipatory’ way is not only more effective but also more cost-effective. The IPCC is no longer asking just for improvements, but for a 50 % emission cut from all sectors and actors over the next decade, at the same time as promoting a humanitarian approach. This requires a quantified approach with measurable targets. A ‘standardisation of requirements’ could help speed up solutions’ development. Ms Fries-Gaier pointed to the WFP innovation accelerator as an example of an existing project that aims to find ways of scaling up the many good ideas for tackling climate crises and serving vulnerable communities.

The Czech Council Presidency was able last year to pass resolutions on humanitarian resilience at the same time as developing a national Czech EWS against flash floods, Mr Gandalovič said. He also flagged the adoption of the Council conclusions on DRR, adopted last November under the Czech Presidency. This streamlined ‘nexus’ of local and international action could ultimately curb the amount of humanitarian aid needed to tackle climate change. Interconnection is particularly important, for instance, in creating humanitarian conditions for people displaced by climate change to safely return home.

Localisation: the guidance on the promotion of equal partnerships with local responders

Monday, 20 March 2023, 11:00–12:15

Moderator

Ali Al-Jaberi

Panellists

Juliet Eyokia, Project Manager, Community Empowerment for Rural Development; Regina Antequisa, Executive Director, Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits; Michael Koehler, Deputy Director-General, DG ECHO, European Commission; Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Secretary General, CARE International; and Dominic Crowley, VOICE President.

Executive summary

Localisation is seen not only as transferring power and resources to local actors but as a necessity to improve the overall quality and efficiency of humanitarian aid and make it more tailored and contextualised to local needs. Local actors have valuable knowledge, legitimacy, creativity and understanding, but are often denied access to the resources that would enable them to scale up their capacity. This capacity needs to be leveraged in a way that allows the whole community to work in a coherent manner to achieve the most significant impact on the ground. A change in mindset is needed, and a change of practice. DG ECHO is encouraged to push donors to support locally led and community-led actions by ensuring equitable partnerships and sharing both the risk and the power.

Ms Eyokia reported on the field virtual warm-up session on localisation organised by DG ECHO's East and Southern Africa regional office on 24 February. She summarised the key points: the need for fairer risk sharing among partners, better funding options and their effective promotion, new ways for local actors to access funding for quick responses to humanitarian crises in their communities and more systematic inclusion of local actors in coordination mechanisms.

Mr Koehler introduced the new guidance note published by DG ECHO, 'Promoting equitable partnerships with local responders in humanitarian



settings'. It aims to recognise local and national humanitarian actors' current value, skills and resources and to build equitable partnerships to maximise mutual strengths and minimise weaknesses. It includes built-in flexibility and context orientation, with incentives intended to encourage partners to identify the right way of localisation in a given crisis and provide them with a competitive edge regarding funding requests. Comments on this guidance note included the following:

- the active, direct role of DG ECHO in its implementation would be welcomed;
- the current limit of EUR 60 000 for local implementing partners is very low;
- the ambitions should not be undermined by the increasingly heavy burden of administrative and compliance requirements put on local actors.

The advantages of localisation were addressed. The facilitation of strengthened local actors makes humanitarian programming more effective and more responsive and fosters cost-efficient actions on the ground. In addition, it generates wider community participation, protects people's dignity, strengthens transparency and shared accountability, and encourages action to address the root causes of vulnerabilities.

There was a call to stop talking about 'sub-grantees', as the word carries an inherent connotation of unequal power. Instead, terms should include 'mutual due diligence', 'shared risk taking' and 'collaborative compliance': the language of mutuality and inclusion. 'Localisation' itself can sound patronising; responses to humanitarian issues should be 'locally led' – rather than 'localising' old ways of doing things – while being globally connected.

There is a need to ensure a gender-inclusive localisation agenda. This is a key topic, as women-led organisations are critical responders, yet are often poorly recognised and chronically underfunded. They need soft or unearmarked multi-year funding. Procedures need to be simplified, and power dynamics within international NGOs need to be challenged. Local women-led organisations need better access to direct, good-quality and flexible funding.

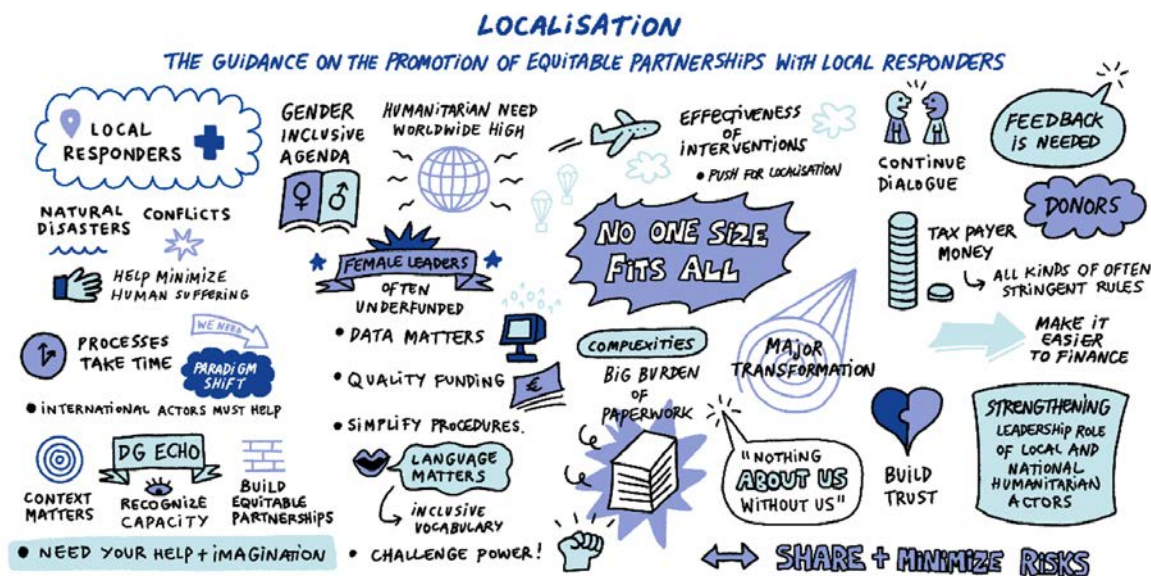
Panellists noted that people and communities suffering from a crisis want to be treated as partners and not just as recipients of aid. They can lead the process and manage their priority actions in this capacity. Moreover, localisation requires equal partnerships between local and international actors in humanitarian and development initiatives.

Also discussed was whether the ambition stated at the World Humanitarian Summit to be 'as local as possible and as international as necessary' is being met and whether the impediments to achieving this ambition are being addressed. For example, failure to change the risk burden could prove to be an impediment to meaningful progress on localisation. International organisations should use their influence and advocacy power to amplify the voices of LNAs and advocate for their inclusion and participation in decision-making processes.

With the increase in humanitarian needs, the response capacity of the present system is becoming more overwhelmed every year. Therefore, a different system is needed in which local action takes place and local resilience is strong and active. New rules may have to be created that, for example, enable DG ECHO to contract with local organisations directly.

In concluding, the panel recommended the following steps:

- more investment is needed in anticipatory actions to reduce risks in communities;
- localisation must maintain the principles of impartiality and independence;
- language needs to change;
- international organisations should use their voices to amplify the actions of local actors;
- local capacity building should include funding for training and technical support;
- local actors need to be given a greater sense of ownership and accountability;
- all actors need to work together with a shared commitment to move from rhetoric to action.



Responding to an unprecedented global food crisis and averting famine

Monday, 20 March 2023, 14:00–15:15

Moderator

Anya Sitaram

Panellists

Jean-François Riffaud, CEO of Action Against Hunger France; Sarah Charles, Assistant to the Administrator of the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance of the US Agency for International Development (USAID); Abdirahman Abdishakur, Special Presidential Envoy for Drought Response for the Federal Republic of Somalia; Minata Samate-Cessouma, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union; Reena Ghelani, United Nations Famine Prevention and Response Coordinator; and Michael Koehler, Deputy Director-General, DG ECHO, European Commission.

Executive summary

The panel stressed that we must look at the root causes of hunger to stop food insecurity, not just react to emergencies. The issue of hunger needs to be seen as a political issue requiring all actors to commit, including, but not limited to, the humanitarian sector. As an example, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated food crises around the world, and this illustrates that the perception that crises are local events is wrong. Ukraine was referred to as the ‘mega-crisis’ of our time.

The need to expand the donor base was a significant talking point, as humanitarian food assistance depends too much on a limited number of donors. Addressing conflict as a driver is another key issue, as 60 % of food crises occur in conflict settings. The panel also stressed the need to better integrate hunger-ridden countries into the financial system, with particular attention to debt relief and food system development. It was noted that the military aggression in Ukraine had brought in new donors, but resources are still scarce, and we need to prioritise aid to countries most in need, such as Burkina Faso, which is showing early warning signs of famine.



The discussion also focused on working collectively to ensure greater efficiency. Suggested solutions included better collaboration with local actors and governments; engaging with new types of actors; and better using knowledge and data to provide more effective, timely and relevant responses.

Finally, the panellists emphasised that food crises are becoming more complex. We are witnessing crises in which several root causes interact and reinforce each other, making food security even more challenging to address. There are no quick fixes for this, and it is difficult to know how to start addressing such complex crises. Clearly, humanitarian assistance must be part of the equation, but cannot be the only response. One question that needs to be further discussed is where and how to start addressing complex crises in a comprehensive way.

We need to understand that each crisis is different, and hence we need to provide responses based on specific needs, not guided by the instruments we already have.

RESPONDING TO AN UNPRECEDENTED GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS AND AVERTING FAMINE



Putting international humanitarian law at the heart of external action: ensuring accountability

Monday, 20 March 2023, 14:00–15:15

Moderator

Ali Al-Jaberi

Panellists

Ilze Brand Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, UN Human Rights Office in New York; Knut Doermann, Head of Delegation of the ICRC to the EU, NATO and Belgium; Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative, Human Rights; Kim Seelinger, Special Adviser on Sexual Violence in Conflict to the International Criminal Court Prosecutor; Maung Sawyeddollah, Executive Director, Rohingya Student Network; and Piet Heirbaut, Director-General for Legal Affairs, Belgium.

Executive summary

This session built on the first EHF and the 2022 UN General Assembly high-level event on accountability for sexual violence and other violations of IHL. Speakers identified many examples already in place to support IHL, including in cases of violations, but stressed the need for additional measures to ensure the protection of those affected by armed conflicts.

The panel opened with a statement from Mr Sawyeddollah, a young man who spent more than 5 years living and working in a refugee camp in Bangladesh. As Executive Director of the Rohingya Student Network, he expressed gratitude to the EU for its efforts to support the Rohingya community, but stressed that ‘we need more than aid and sanctions. We want to return home.’ In this respect, justice and accountability for the atrocities suffered by the Rohingya community are also needed. He also asked the EU to support community-led initiatives and prioritise making local people part of consultations, to restore safety and dignity and to support their return home.

The EU is working in six key areas to make sure that IHL is at the heart of its external action, noted Mr Gilmore. These are included in the EU’s guidelines on IHL, with regular implementation reports. IHL is part of the EU’s bilateral work with countries, and part of its work in multilateral and regional fora. Reflecting on the message of Mr Sawyeddollah, he also noted the EU’s support for the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, and for other mechanisms of criminal justice for violations of IHL. The EU has long-standing support for the International Criminal Court and is now able to provide support for Ukraine, including for the collection of evidence of war crimes. The EU is also in the process of setting up a Global Observatory on the Fight against Impunity.

The ‘credible information’ built up through UN-mandated investigative and monitoring mechanisms is an important part of documenting violations of IHL, said Ms Brand Kehris. As well as criminal accountability, justice for victims is also key. This is why the UN supports 13 such mechanisms. All this ‘preparatory work enhances the chances of holding perpetrators to account for violation of human rights and humanitarian law.’ But there is also a need for political will to make sure that these mechanisms are effective.

Compliance with IHL is more relevant today than ever and will continue to be a priority in Belgium's foreign policy, including in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Congo and Myanmar, said Mr Heirbaut. There is, however, still a need to improve humanitarian diplomacy to protect civilians and ensure IHL is respected. Countries cannot do this in isolation, which is why Belgium, for instance, supports the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the ICRC, the International Criminal Court and the Mandate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, among others. In addition, the Belgian national committee on IHL plays a key role in coordinating and disseminating IHL.



Sexual and gender-based crime continues to be a great concern during conflicts, including in the context of Ukraine, said Ms Seelinger. We need many avenues for justice: international, regional and local. In Ukraine, there is a need to support local actors who are documenting cases of sexual violence. The International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor General also created a specific unit for investigating conflict-related sexual violence. There is, however, a need to find the balance between accountability and the time it takes for survivors to come forward with their cases. Success in this means moving beyond a traditional approach to crime and developing a 'holistic' approach.



The Geneva Conventions are still a powerful tool to promote IHL and humanitarian principles, said Mr Doermann. Impartial humanitarian action also needs to be safeguarded to ensure that humanitarian actors can work across the front lines. Accountability is indeed very important, but it usually comes after the event. This shows the importance of investing in preventative measures, including influencing domestic legislation, military doctrines, enhanced training and socialising respect for IHL. It is important to have discussions on new technologies around warfare and IHL. 'Violations of IHL are not a necessary by-product of armed conflict,' he concluded.

In the ensuing discussion, the Geneva Academy of IHL and Human Rights recalled the continued need for a comprehensive annual report on IHL, which would help ensure respect for the Geneva Conventions. Speakers from the audience also reminded the panel of the need for 'child-focused accountability' during war. This means remembering not simply the child soldier, but also the problems of illegal transfer of children and forced marriage.

Safeguarding principled humanitarian action from the unintended negative impact of sanctions and counterterrorism

Monday, 20 March 2023, 14:00–15:15

Moderator

Erica Moret

Panellists

Emmanuel Tronc, Country Director, HEKS/EPER; Adela Deaconu, Director Group Export Controls, Philips; Maria Judah, Deputy Assistant Director, Regulatory Affairs, US Treasury Office; Joanne Smyth, Deputy Director, Irish Department of Foreign Affairs; Marriët Schuurman, Director, Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Mihela Zupancic Magovac, Acting Director, General Affairs, DG ECHO, European Commission.

Executive summary

Mr Tronc related how, in Syria, the indirect impacts of sanctions are aggravating the suffering of the population and significantly increasing both the need for and the cost of humanitarian response. He called for standard, clear, harmonised and open-ended exemptions to allow humanitarian organisations to focus on supporting the population. These should be linked with analysing the impact of the sanctions on delivering humanitarian aid to reshape the different sanctions regulations and alleviate the population's suffering.

Panellists welcomed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2664, a cross-cutting humanitarian carve-out covering all UN sanctions regimes. Ms Judah explained how it is an important step forward to enable the flow of legitimate humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations while at the same time upholding sanctions as a key instrument for promoting international peace and security.

The thinking that went into UN Resolution 2664 was briefly described. It was based on the recognition that humanitarian actors were facing an increasingly complex environment that posed challenges



to delivering aid, especially in challenging environments. The resolution is intended to send a clear message that sanctions should not impede the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance by reputable humanitarian organisations.

Although UN Resolution 2664 was described as ‘a very good start’, it does not always create the right, balanced level of legal certainty. This is particularly the case for the private sector, which consequently does not get as involved in humanitarian actions as it might want to. Ms Deaconu remarked that Philips provides products such as medical devices, and vital maintenance and training services for these devices. Such services are often forbidden under sanctions. She made a plea for specific and dedicated exemptions to enable the private sector to work more closely and effectively with humanitarian organisations.

Concerns about circumvention were addressed, and the monitoring, tracking and reporting procedures were briefly described. Should abuse be discovered, tools exist to respond appropriately.

Ms Smyth noted that, while UN Resolution 2664 represents a significant change in the system, it solves only some difficulties related to delivering humanitarian assistance. Moreover, it needs to be implemented, which takes time. Therefore, consistency of implementation is considered a key priority, along with feedback from NGOs and humanitarian operators on the ground.

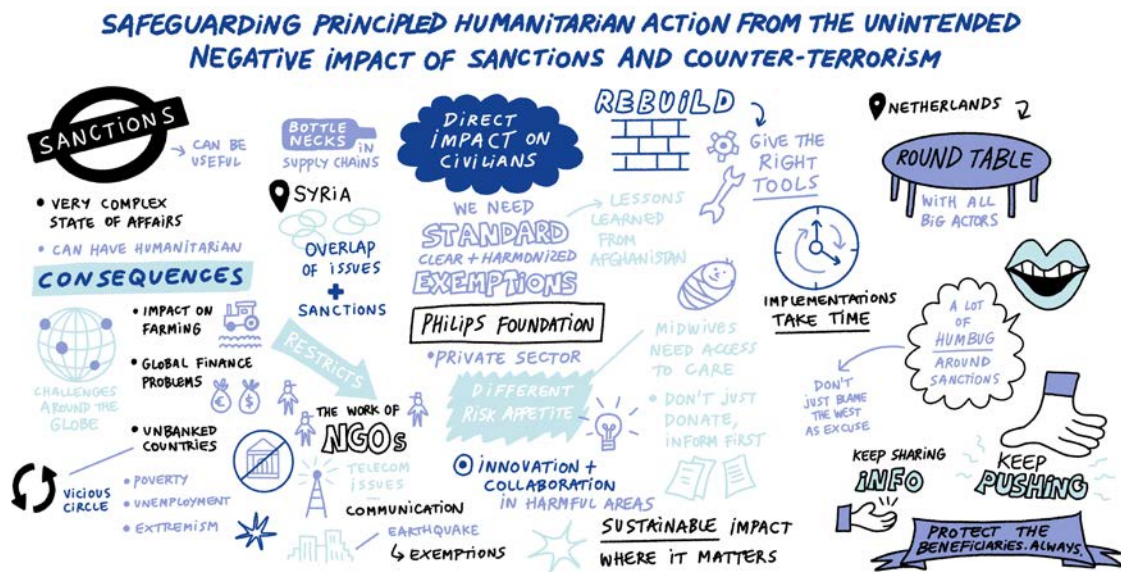
To address a variety of issues surrounding safeguarding humanitarian actions, the Netherlands has set up a round table on financial access to discuss not only sanctions, but also anti-money-laundering and counterterrorism measures. Ms Schuurman described how the platform is NGO-led and brings together policymakers, the Ministry of Finance, financial institutions and humanitarian and development organisations. It allows bottlenecks and new challenges to be quickly identified. It makes sure all parties have access to the right information to avoid overcompliance and the de-risking policies that can harm the people who are meant to be protected. It has also led to increased take-up from the private sector.

A question from the floor related to the collection and screening of data concerning beneficiaries of humanitarian actions. The response from the panel was that, while partners and suppliers need to be vetted, the vetting of beneficiaries is considered a red line that should not be crossed. Therefore, any request for such vetting from regulators or donors should be resisted, as sharing such data could place



beneficiaries in danger. This was considered to be a key point on which all organisations throughout the world should always agree.

In closing, Ms Zupancic highlighted the creation of ecosystems to provide stability and legal certainty to everybody involved and the construction of networks to create trust among different actors that can lead to policy change. She described UN Resolution 2664 as a landmark decision, but is aware it does not provide a solution. However, it is a huge opportunity to harmonise the language and the approach to sanctions across regimes at all levels. The European Commission will facilitate further discussions to ensure that the benefits of the carve-out are fully realised.



Addressing access impediments through humanitarian diplomacy

Monday, 20 March 2023, 15:45–17:00

Moderator

Heba Aly

Panellists

Opening remarks by Martin Griffiths, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (pre-recorded video message). Panellists included David Harland, Executive Director at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue; Edem Wosorno, Chief of the Response Branch, OCHA; Camilla Waszink, Director of Partnerships and Policy, the Norwegian Refugee Council; Elmehdi Ag Wakina, Programme Director of L'Association Malienne pour la Survie au Sahel; and Antón Leis García, Director, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.



Executive summary

With the lack of a common definition of humanitarian diplomacy, this session enabled a free-flowing ‘outside-the-box’ exchange between different stakeholders, thus helping identify a certain commonality in understanding the concept and practice of humanitarian diplomacy.

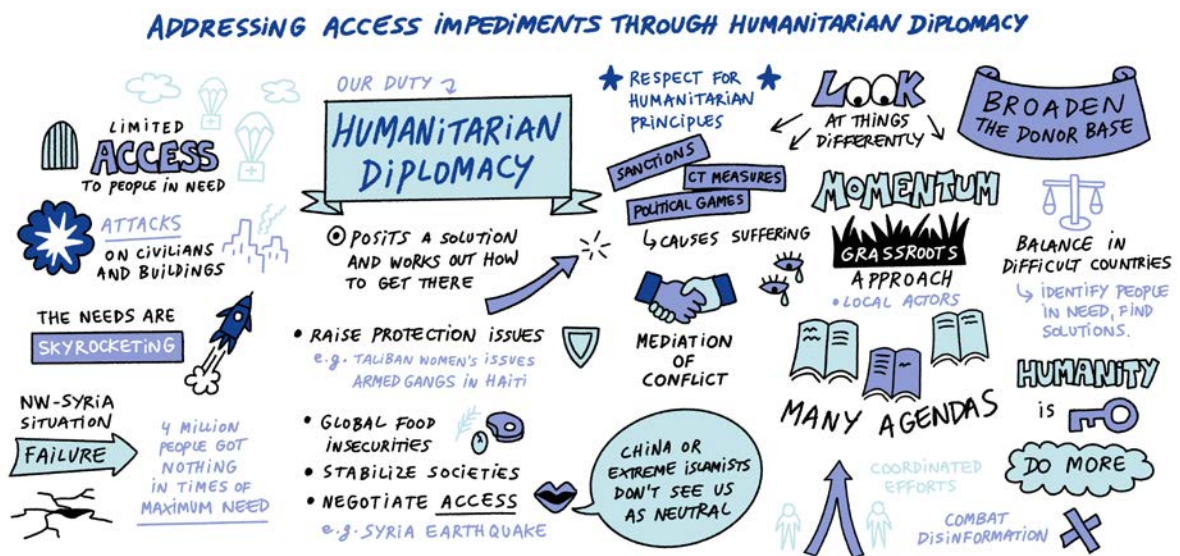
The session showed that stepping up collective leverage in protecting the humanitarian space, notably through coordinated, joined-up and local measures to address the combined impact of multiple access impediments, is in the shared interest of donors and humanitarian actors, both the UN and NGOs. This should be in parallel to strong political leadership and diplomatic efforts for conflict prevention, mediation and resolution. Local actors have a key role to play; thus it is necessary to follow grassroots rather than top-down approaches and design humanitarian access strategies in a way that enables accountability to affected populations and facilitates access to protection services and support by crisis-affected communities.



The panel discussed concrete examples, and enabling factors, of humanitarian diplomacy in practice, such as the Black Sea grain initiative. There is a clear need for more systematic and structured engagement across various constituencies, including with other actors who are in a position to enable or hinder access to people in need. Existing coordination efforts should be used more actively at global and local levels. The panel also discussed the challenges for humanitarians, especially with different agencies having different approaches, which can lead to a lack of coordination and prevent the humanitarian community from speaking with one voice.

During the session, participants also discussed the operational challenges faced by frontline humanitarian workers in engaging on access, notably those stemming from restrictions imposed by parties to conflicts, non-compliance with IHL, persistent or increasing bureaucratic and administrative impediments, the chilling effects linked to potential risks stemming from sanctions regimes and counterterrorism measures, and other more novel constraints, such as misinformation and propaganda critical of humanitarian actors. The complexity of the operating environment was illustrated by examples of participants' experiences in the field, and by comments during the Q&A session.

Panelists concluded on prioritising strengthening the use of humanitarian diplomacy for access while ensuring respect for the humanitarian principles and encouraging States and all parties to conflicts to fulfil their obligations under IHL.



Reaching those in the most dire situations: understanding the severity of needs

Monday, 20 March 2023, 15:45–17:00

Moderator

Julia Stewart-David

Panellists

Carin Jämtin, Director-General, Sida; Bruno Lemarquis, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Dominik Stillhart, Deputy Director-General of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; Leila de Paiva Oliveira, Senior Project Manager of the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF); and Nick Dyer, Director-General, Humanitarian and Development at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, United Kingdom.

Executive summary

Speakers considered the learnings from current efforts to understand the severity of needs and what should be put in place to secure a needs analysis that allows for effective prioritisation within and between crises. The session agreed that the need for humanitarian aid is increasing and that there is often insufficient funding to reach those in dire situations, showing the need to join forces for a more impartial, accountable and well-prioritised humanitarian response.

Effective prioritisation is a matter of having good, reliable data. Without this information, governments cannot justify actions taken in response to a crisis. The United Kingdom has decided it will be more deliberative about where humanitarian resources are spent, setting aside a set amount of aid and analysing the severity of needs. Even with this approach, however, 'data is currently not underpinned



by a common and transparent approach’, said Mr Dyer. To help solve this problem, the JIAF should be widely deployed ‘and we should all buy into it.’

Other panellists cautioned that the JIAF may not yet be the most effective tool for all regions. The Democratic Republic of the Congo faces one of the most protracted, severe crises in the world, with the highest number of internally displaced people in Africa. Instead of the JIAF, the country uses a home-grown system based on all the reliable data available to prioritise cases in line with key criteria. A problem faced by this system is that ‘the tools we use tell us about the severity of needs, but not what is behind them’, said Mr Lemarquis. Vulnerabilities



and development deficits could be caused by, for instance, conflict, land use disputes or struggles for access to mineral resources. The next generation of tools needs to track the causes of needs. ‘We need to understand the vulnerabilities better and if they are by default or design.’

A JIAF 2.0 has been developed and should start to be rolled out in June 2023. This new version aims to be ‘evidence-based but flexible enough to let different regions use the data’, said Ms de Paiva Oliveira. Better use of advanced technologies is still needed to improve the classification of the severity of needs. In many cases, despite the digital revolution under way around the world, analysis continues to use very basic technologies.

Using international tools, such as the JIAF, IPC, GPC or the UNHCR–WFP joint hub on targeting, can provide countries with a common understanding. They can then implement such tools together, adapting them to the circumstances at hand. There will always be a need to look at conditions on the ground to implement responses in line with needs, access and security. There is no one data analysis tool suitable for deciding on a response without considering the situation on the ground. In Ukraine, from a purely statistical or data point of view, ‘needs and vulnerabilities are much lower than the level of aid given’, Mr Stillhart pointed out, but this is a ‘striking example’ of where other needs rightly overrule a basic data analysis. Speakers agreed that Ukraine is a particular case raising many questions about meeting needs with resources. Assuming the conflict continues, it will be necessary for the donor community to show it is not ignoring crises in the rest of the world.

There is also a risk of a ‘data equity gap’, whereby countries with more data get more assistance. The JIAF could go some way to fixing that problem, but investment in the political space will always be needed to maintain trust and to ensure that decisions are based on good evidence rather than assumptions.

One audience intervention encapsulated a basic problem affecting all efforts to build up the trustworthy, objective data needed to understand the severity of needs. ‘There is a pact of trust around data that should exist for us to take it into consideration,’ the speaker said, ‘but there is nothing more political than data.’

Unlocking efficiency through flexible funding: responding to new needs and changing operational contexts

Monday, 20 March 2023, 15:45–17:00

Moderator

Lisa Doughten

Panellists

Babatunde Anthony Ojei, Country Director, International Rescue Committee; Gloria Modong, Executive Director, Titi Foundation; Titta Maja-Luoto, Director of the Department for Development Cooperation, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Deike Potzel, Director-General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peacebuilding, and Humanitarian Assistance, German Ministry for Foreign Affairs; Philippe Lazzarini, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Executive summary

During the panel discussion, Ms Modong explained how flexible funding is a lifeline for people and communities affected by crises and is vital in implementing core thematic priorities to facilitate a swift, needs-based response. Flexible funding not only strengthens stakeholders' decision-making, but also allows them to make decisions about the kind of programming or assistance they need. It enables local NGOs to plan strategically across their operations and manage resources efficiently and effectively, contributing to long-lasting impacts in the societies they serve. However, from a local perspective, many of these benefits remain a distant dream. A call was made for more local actors to become involved in discussions on a programme-based approach (PBA).

Mr Lazzarini said that flexible funding is also a lifeline for agencies such as the UNRWA, a UN agency tasked with providing education, primary health services, a social safety net and municipal services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. Their 30 000 staff – primarily teachers, doctors, engineers and social workers – depend on voluntary contributions from Member States. Because of the inability to transfer funds from one project or cluster to another, there have been occasions when the UNRWA has had to temporarily suspend its operations. Flexible funding prevents this from happening. Mr Lazzarini pointed out one obstacle to flexible funding – the difficulty in clearly defining a response as humanitarian, post-humanitarian or development. It is usually determined by the source of the available resources and varies from donor to donor.

Mr Ojei explained that a PBA enables a better-functioning humanitarian system to be put in place and allows more people to be reached. This is because a PBA opens up



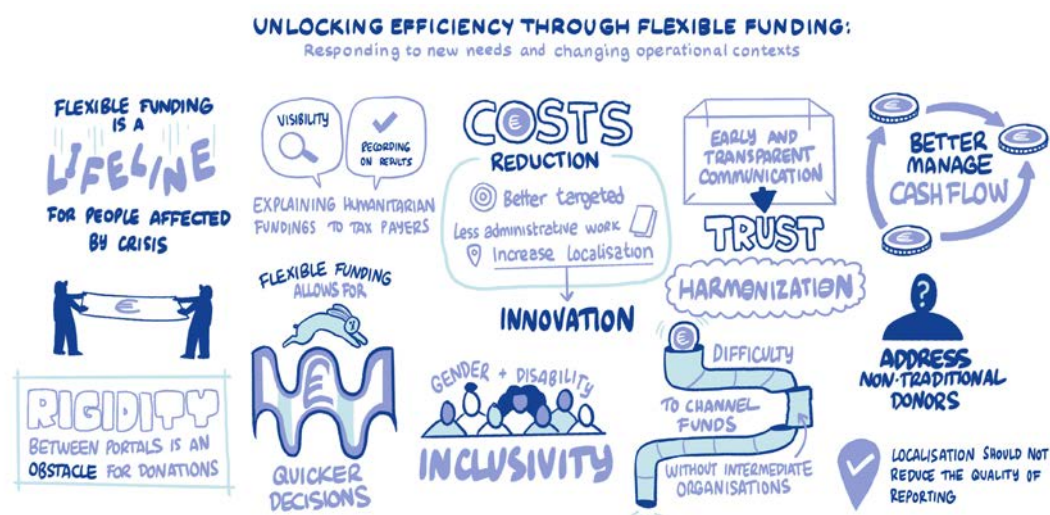
opportunities to engage in ways that are not possible using existing grant models. He gave the example of a cholera outbreak in Nigeria that occurred in the middle of a humanitarian response. Thanks to a PBA, the International Rescue Committee could respond immediately with the level of support necessary, rather than go through a lengthy bureaucratic procedure to get the relevant funds. Another example was the ability to increase the number of beds in each stabilisation centre for malnourished children in Nigeria from 40 to 70. A PBA was therefore considered a very useful mechanism that strengthens programming.

Panellists agreed that a PBA is also a key enabler of localisation because it allows country programmes to choose how best to use the PBA funding, including by working with local partners. A PBA encourages multi-year funding, which creates greater stability and enables commitments to multi-year agreements with local partners. It also enables staff to be retained for longer, which supports knowledge retention.

Ms Maja-Luoto mentioned a couple of drawbacks related to visibility and reporting. Finland gives core funding through UN humanitarian organisations instead of directly to a crisis, but this is invisible to Finnish taxpayers. Ms Potzel said that the key thing that has enabled Germany to increase levels of flexible funding is that the government is convinced of the benefits of flexible funding. It ensures a rapid response to a crisis. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the Ukrainian Red Cross was immediately able to respond just 1 day after the war broke out, partly because the German government had provided core funding to the German Red Cross. A similar speed of response was seen in Türkiye and Syria during the recent earthquake. Flexible funding improves efficiency as responses can be better planned, coordinated and targeted to the situation on the ground. Moreover, it reduces administrative work, and thus costs, not only for the donor but also for the humanitarian organisation.

During the discussion, topics raised included the need for greater risk tolerance on the part of humanitarian donors to support national local partners, including by building capacity and promoting multi-year funding. This should be extended to all partners by adopting a PBA on a multi-year basis and including the whole humanitarian system. Humanitarian actors were encouraged to improve visibility, transparency, results, reporting and achievements. Mention was made of gender mainstreaming and focusing on disability to be more inclusive in the response.

There is a need to give a voice to those affected by crises, and the use of flexible funding is a way to allow necessary programmatic shifts when circumstances change. Another topic raised was the need for development actors to show greater risk tolerance. By protecting development gains, humanitarian needs could be reduced in the future, ensuring that development funds do not slip into the humanitarian realm.



The situation of women and girls in humanitarian crises: how to uphold humanitarian principles while preventing a humanitarian catastrophe? The case of Afghanistan

Monday, 20 March 2023, 17:15–18:30

Moderator

Ikenna Azuike

Panellists

Anniken Huitfeldt, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway; Caroline Gennez, Minister for Development Cooperation, Belgium; Nora Hassanién, Deputy Country Director in Afghanistan, Save the Children; Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Secretary General of CARE International; Parasto Hakim, Founder of Srak undergrounded home schools and online university across Afghanistan; Catherine Russell, Executive Director, United Nations Children’s Fund; and Petras Auštrevičius, Member of the European Parliament.



Executive summary

The panel of the EHF plenary session stressed the dire situation of women and girls caught in humanitarian crises globally, and the situation for female humanitarian workers. The discussion highlighted the worsening situation for Afghan women and girls in light of the Taliban’s restrictions on women, most recently by banning Afghan women from working for NGOs.



The ban on Afghan women working for NGOs raised serious concerns for the humanitarian workers, who feared losing their jobs and wondered how women would be supported. In addition, female beneficiaries wondered how they would be reached. Women are indispensable to assess, deliver and monitor humanitarian aid in Afghanistan.



In a gender-separated society, a gender approach is of utmost importance, as women and girls live a different reality and have different needs. There can be no discrimination based on gender. The international

community has agreed on a framework to continue humanitarian aid in a principled way, for instance by not replacing women with men in the delivery of aid. It is important to continue engaging with the Taliban and to have further exceptions for women to work. No one will benefit from further isolating the Taliban, and certainly not women and girls. Engagement should also continue with Muslim countries that, like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, have taken a position in favour of women's rights to education and to work.

When the ban was announced, once the first shock of the news passed and operations were initially placed on hold, humanitarian organisations present engaged with the Taliban to continue their work, with women carrying on as staff. Without women, humanitarian activities could not and cannot take place. Communities have often been key in these discussions, as they understood the importance of having women to ensure that humanitarian aid also goes to women. In some cases, women and girls were being supported by Afghan men who had made demands for programmes that helped young girls become teachers and Afghan boys who protested when girls were prevented from going to university. Even male teachers and scholars have refused to teach unless girls can return to school. The support is there, but the needs are immense.

Most humanitarian organisations have now resumed the majority of their activities. Afghanistan is a very diverse country; the situation varies in each province. But as Afghan women are saying, 'There is always a way.'

A key message from several panellists was to refrain from instrumentalising women. No one should talk about women without women. However, this ban should not be used as an excuse to disengage from Afghanistan. There is a need for the political channel to find a political solution rather than using humanitarian aid as a political channel. Afghanistan cannot be forgotten; if we forget Afghanistan, the situation will continue to worsen from humanitarian, human rights, security and regional points of view.

The situation is declining. In 2021, there were approximately eight million people in need of food assistance; today, there are 21 million in need. Marriage may be the only option for a 13-year-old girl who can no longer attend school and whose father cannot support the family. If she becomes pregnant, there may not be sufficient health facilities to deliver the baby safely. Furthermore, people face an emergency crisis, and hunger has reached over 20 million; 4 in 10 children face acute malnutrition.

Despite the dire situation, humanitarian organisations and Afghan women are creative in finding solutions. A network of hidden schools has been created; sectoral silos are broken to enlarge the possibilities of delivering aid. Education is crucial to ensure that a future generation is not being taught about extreme ideologies. One panellist mentioned the possibility of having restrictive measures on the Taliban responsible for 'gender genocide'. However, sanctions have to be carefully designed so as not to affect the population. The worsening of the humanitarian situation is also due to the very poor economic situation, and the economy could further collapse.

The panel concluded with a strong plea not to forget Afghanistan and to listen to women in their diversity. There is a need to remain engaged in Afghanistan, providing principled humanitarian aid to address the most urgent needs of the population, in particular those of women and girls. There is also a need to engage with the Taliban, despite the fact that we disagree with them. Gender mainstreaming is key at all stages of humanitarian work. 'If we fail women, we fail the economy, we fail the social investment, we fail the future.'

Mitigating climate-driven disasters: scaling up resilience and anticipatory action

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 09:30–10:45

Moderator

Anya Sitaram

Panellists

Masresha Andarge, Peacebuilding, Human Rights and Humanitarian Programs Advisor, Action for Integrated Sustainable Development Association (AISDA); Hong-Thuy Paterson, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer, Green Climate Funding; Deike Potzel, Director-General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peacebuilding, and Humanitarian Assistance, German Ministry for Foreign Affairs; Xavier Castellanos, Under-Secretary-General, National Society Development and Operations Coordination of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and Maciej Popowski, Director-General, DG ECHO, European Commission.



Executive summary

During the panel discussion, it became clear that prompt action is required to reduce the severity of disasters caused by climate change. The panel presented insights and ideas, with the main message being that we need to ensure there is funding from humanitarian, development and climate sources. The goal of the discussion was to show how climate change affects communities at risk and find places where communities are not ready for climate shocks. The need for an integrated approach was called for, driven locally and with interventions across the HDP nexus. Outcomes of the Asian regional consultation in Bangkok were presented, highlighting the need to document existing practices, share experiences, better understand displacement and conduct green humanitarian operations.

The discussion also focused on the actions that nexus actors could take to support at-risk communities and build their resilience to climate shocks, with Ethiopia being cited as one example of a country experiencing the impact of continued climate shocks, with drought being the most common in pastoral communities.



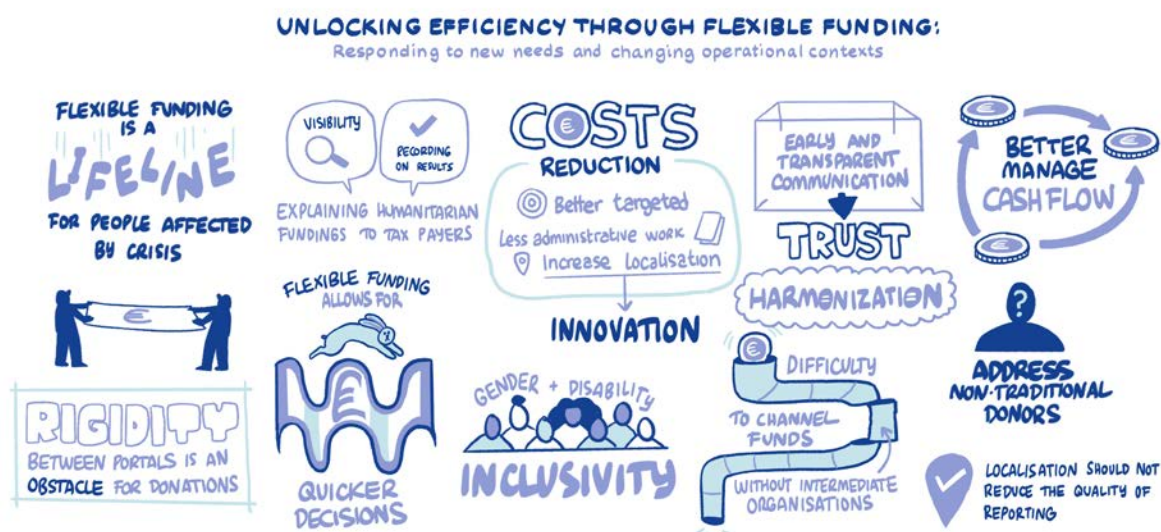
The audience heard how the duration and frequency of the droughts are increasing, which is having an impact. People are suffering due to the loss of water and lack of rain, which means they have had to move to highland areas for water. Inevitably, this has led to conflict and many casualties. The lack of water has also led to the loss of livestock and food insecurity. Furthermore, water scarcity means hygiene and sanitation quality decrease, leading to outbreaks such as cholera. Nevertheless, some climate change-related issues have been solved by collaborating with neighbourhood organisations to develop resilience-building programmes.

The role of anticipatory action was addressed, which could counteract the impact of climate change. Preparing for climate change was seen as critical to conquering the challenges, particularly with greater financing, as less than 5 % of humanitarian funding goes to preparedness. The crucial role of community resilience, particularly local knowledge, was highlighted as a critical aspect.

Audience interaction came from a Slido poll that indicated a need for coherence between climate–development–humanitarian funding as the biggest barrier to addressing climate shocks internationally. Better coordination overall and increased funding were suggested as ways forward. Anticipatory action and the necessary data are key. Prevention can reduce the need for funding and ultimately save lives and livelihoods. For example, under a German-funded programme, the FAO provided EUR 230 million to intervene before a locust plague, rather than the estimated EUR 1.7 billion to respond to the impact afterwards. The role of development banks and climate financing was also discussed as a way to reduce the debt burden for countries affected by climate shocks by offering affordable borrowing rates as a way to work with the private sector locally. In these cases, access to long-term funding is essential, but the risk for investors is high. Development banks can help by taking the risk initially, which triggers the private sector to go in afterwards. For other international financial institutions, there are opportunities for coherence. Development banks are there for the long-term.

One proposed solution was to create a ‘nexus fund’ to push international actors, mainly those working on the ground, to better coordinate their actions in response to climate shocks and to build communities’ resilience. There is much knowledge among different actors and a need to break down the silos. Anticipatory action is one way, but development actors must step in much earlier. It was stressed that anticipatory action would not work without communities being involved in preparedness efforts. Donors also need more convincing of the use of anticipatory action and its effects, and their appetite for risk must increase. Ultimately, positive examples from the ground are key.

‘It was stressed that anticipatory action would not work without communities being involved in preparedness efforts.’



What can donors do to support a more effective and efficient humanitarian supply chain?

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 09:30–10:45

Moderator

Mailin Fauchon

Panellists

Cecile Terraz, Supply Chain Director, Plan International; Nadezda Griffin, Team Lead, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean Team, USAID / Bureau for Humanitarian Aid / Supply Chain Management Division; Pierre Salignon, Head of the Humanitarian and Stabilisation Operations Centre, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Marco Panigalli, Head of Unit Capacities and Operational Support, DG ECHO, European Commission.

Executive summary

The session focused on the need for a strategic approach to logistics to support more efficient and effective delivery of aid and to reduce the carbon footprint and environmental damage of aid delivery. Speakers underlined the centrality of logistics in every humanitarian programme and discussed the need to consider the supply chain right at the start of the delivery of aid, rather than only when problems emerge later or at the end of the line. The panel focused on the role of donors, highlighting existing initiatives on humanitarian logistics and discussing potential avenues for further donor investment. In particular, it was mentioned that further engagement from all actors in mutualisation, sustainability, localisation and the greening of the supply chain would be worthwhile.

At least half of humanitarian funding goes to the supply chain itself, which is essentially the backbone of operations. This supply chain could have a double humanitarian impact, said Ms Terraz. In addition



to the response to needs, we can help even more by using the businesses of people in need to provide supplies for people in need. Working with NGOs along the supply chain, with operations based on existing relationships with local suppliers, could be the new and sustainable way of working, with 'women-owned businesses' notably a central part of this localised supply chain model.

Harmonised procurement rules on the donors' side could help partners to deliver good quality and value for money. Humanitarian partners need flexibility to support the delivery of complex products, such as medicines, for which very different rules exist across different territories. In general, more flexible funding would allow partners to dedicate funds to upgrading their supply chain as a whole. It could also allow partners to reinvest savings from mutualisation initiatives (such as the Hulo cooperative project that offers logistical resource pooling to NGOs) in more innovative supply chain systems.

Mr Panigalli stressed that the questions of flexibility and procurement rules are considered under EU rules, which frame the margins of manoeuvre, and that a critical mass of more sustainable supply chain logistics was being created through DG ECHO's dedicated funding, including for projects supported by France and the United States, among others.

The EU is also the driving force behind work to create a better, more efficient supply chain in collaboration with Member States, said Mr Salignon. Recent successful EU-led projects include those set up to deliver aid in response to humanitarian crises via the EHRC in Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and co-funding of humanitarian logistics initiatives such as the Hulo cooperative. France stressed that the issue of a more strategic supply chain is essential not only for humanitarian actors and donors, but also, above all, for the affected populations in need of assistance.

A specific logistics policy launched by DG ECHO aims to better connect donors and improve the supply chain: 'Logistics is not only about bringing items from A to B,' said Mr Panigalli. 'Logistics should also be more efficient, effective and greener.' Greening humanitarian logistics should include, for instance, using less plastic for packaging, cutting transport emissions and promoting sustainable warehouse practices among companies involved throughout the pipeline, said Ms Griffin. She agreed that pharmaceutical products pose particular logistics challenges for the humanitarian supply chain. However, for most other areas, there seems to be a good possibility of finding common ground for deliveries. Many promising joint initiatives are now under way, notably on the important issue of stockpiles and the preparedness phase. The United States is ready to listen to partners' concerns regarding the supply chain and to work on ways of improving the sector jointly with other donors to ensure logisticians are included in the project cycle as early as the project planning stage.

Interactions with the audience raised the issue of coordination of numerous initiatives and common ground between One UN and Hulo initiatives, concerns about compliance rules regarding local procurement that impedes humanitarian actors supplying directly from the country/region of intervention and the issue of domestic regulations to avoid administrative bottlenecks.

Fleeing for survival: forced displacement in Latin America and the Caribbean

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 09:30–10:45

Moderator

Florence Ranson

Panellists

Sabrina Lustgarten, Executive Vice President, HIAS; Carlos Zorrinho, Member of the European Parliament; Ugochi Daniels, Deputy Director-General for Operations, International Organization for Migration; Julieta Noyes, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration, US Department of State; Yavel Lanuza, Ambassador of Panama to the EU; and Andrea Koulaimah, Director - Africa, Asia, Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific, DG ECHO, European Commission.

Executive summary

The session addressed the displacement crisis in Latin America, highlighting especially the situation in the Darién Gap, protection risks, human rights violations and gender-based violence (GBV). In addition, the session was successful in raising awareness of the humanitarian situation of forced displacement in LAC, which remains relatively invisible to the international community outside the region.

Ambassador Lanuza described the many challenges faced each month by thousands of migrants of over 40 nationalities as they attempt to cross the Darién Gap between Colombia and Panama. These people are in constant danger due to the extremely harsh conditions and exploitation en route. In some years, 200 000 people pass through the Darién Gap; many are pregnant women, and 20 % are minors. This is a multidimensional problem that requires a global solution. Cooperation and concerted efforts are vital. However, additional funding is needed to keep these people safe. The ambassador said that these people are migrating not because they want to, but because the situation in their home countries is intolerable. She also pointed out that mass migrations have a huge negative environmental impact on this area, which is protected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its biodiversity.



Ms Daniels said that closer alignment is needed between the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. The Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection is a good example of this. It draws on both compacts, is anchored in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and has led to unprecedented support from 21 governments. It marks a turning point for regional cooperation on these issues and now needs to be fully implemented. The Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) is another positive example of how multiple partners can work through a coordinated approach while allowing a flexible response.



Ms Noyes stressed the need for a deep systemic change to address the root causes of displacement in the region and ensure the ‘right to remain’ in the long-term. The Biden administration has prioritised developing and implementing approaches that address the root causes of migration, such as violence, climate change and a lack of economic opportunity. It is also developing long-term solutions that include working with the international community to promote political solutions to the crises of democracy in Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela, and to stem democratic backsliding elsewhere.

In the short- and medium-terms, more humanitarian aid is needed, along with more support for integration and livelihood programmes, more efforts to open up further legal migration pathways and regularisation options within the region and increased engagement, including from beyond the region. She mentioned the implementation of the Los Angeles declaration as a priority.

In the view of Mr Zorrinho, funding, delivery and resilience are fundamental pillars of any global, national or local intervention. He highlighted that the LAC region faces overlapping crises, political, environmental and economic, with different causes. He said that one of the priorities of the European Parliament is to close the rapidly growing global humanitarian funding gap, and he is particularly aware that Colombia is largely underfunded.

Ms Lustgarten remarked that, at the end of January, a dialogue took place towards a coordinated regional perspective to strengthen the humanitarian response to the current human mobility and emergency situation in Central America and Mexico. She highlighted protection risks, human rights violations and an increase in GBV in the region. She stressed the need for an urgent response beyond the current efforts regarding further access limitations and new restrictive laws for humanitarian actors. She applauded the efforts of the Venezuela conference and expressed the need to share good practices globally. The recommendations made included the following.

- Consistent, coordinated policies within the region to guarantee the protection and security of people transiting. This includes implementation mechanisms, especially when it comes to the Los Angeles declaration and the EU–Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summit.

- More funds and resources for local NGOs and refugee-led organisations and support for national and local governments to strengthen policies and programmes that will contribute to the integration of refugees and migrants.
- Flexible financing mechanisms with multiannual and multi-country financing.
- The necessity for both humanitarian and development funding, including increased private sector financing.
- Greater coordination from UN agencies to deal with the challenges effectively.
- Avoid overlapping when it comes to regional coordination; the need to listen to the affected population and protect the most vulnerable.

Other topics discussed included looking at resilient livelihoods and providing a dignified outcome for all. The multilateral financing model needs reforming, and co-creation needs to be encouraged. The importance of collaboration between countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination was highlighted, as were the importance of including the affected people in discussions and recognising the significant contributions that migrants are making to their countries of destination around the world.

In her closing remarks, Ms Koulaimah stressed the need for a human-centred approach to these issues. She highlighted the importance of all countries involved partaking in the conversation and of avoiding duplications of coordination mechanisms and set-ups by ensuring that the provided funding is effective, including looking at current examples such as the OCHA flagship programme in Colombia. She was pleased to see much of the discussion centred around collaboration, co-creation and the full engagement of all stakeholders.



Soaring humanitarian needs and limited resources: engaging emerging donors and new sources of financing

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 11:15–12:30

Moderator

Anya Sitaram

Panellists

Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council; Per Heggenes, CEO of the IKEA Foundation; Ute Klamert, Deputy Executive Director for Partnerships and Advocacy for the WFP; Abdullah Abdulaziz Al Rabeeah, Supervisor General of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre; and Diana Janse, State Secretary for International Development Cooperation, Sweden.

Executive summary

Thinking ‘outside the box’ and rewriting the humanitarian aid funding rule book were key themes running throughout this session. The gap between needs and available resources continues to widen, and 339 million people will need assistance this year. Hence, stimulating collective engagement was called for to bridge the growing gap between humanitarian needs and funding.

Mr Al Rabeeah highlighted that the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KS Relief) had started to go beyond government funding and incorporate the private sector. He suggested that the donor group needs to be broadened, private sector involvement should be encouraged and the peace component of the nexus should be a priority. There is a need to reduce the cost of logistics and explore new approaches, such as a new form of taxation for humanitarian purposes, for example on transport tickets. Regarding in-kind relief, KS Relief was working with several NGOs on initiatives to recycle food, and it was suggested that this should be a global initiative. In addition, new partnerships are being developed with the private sector, and a law will be adopted to allow KS Relief to partner with the private sector on endowments and co-investments.

The panel discussed how to stimulate collective engagement from a broader group of countries to generate more resources. Ms Janse said there was an urgent need to expand the donor base to



step up efforts and bridge the growing gap between humanitarian needs and funding. The top 10 donors provide 80 % of the funding, a situation that is not sustainable. She mentioned the importance of reaching out to partners in Asia, Latin America and the Group of 20 (G20) and OECD countries. She highlighted the need to intensify dialogue and better engage with development actors and international financial institutions to work in the most fragile and conflict-affected states because, by 2030, two-thirds of the world's population in extreme poverty will live in these countries. She raised the importance of scaling up anticipatory action to make climate funding more accessible to fragile and conflict-affected states, such as Somalia, which is experiencing the worst drought in decades; getting out of the humanitarian silos; and increasing mediation efforts in conflict-affected countries.

Addressing the current worrying funding gap, which continues to widen, Mr Egeland said that we are still in the same situation that we were in 40 years ago, with a small group of donors contributing to most of the humanitarian funding. The 50 rich countries not sharing the burden should be called out. Mr Egeland referred to an op-ed by Pierre Micheletti (Chairman of Action contre la Faim) outlining that a contribution of between 0.03 % of and 0.07 % of gross national income from each high-income country would raise the entire amount currently needed to respond to international humanitarian crises. It is necessary to provide multi-year, predictable long-term funding for certain crises and to shrink the needs via climate change adaptation and conflict resolution.

Ms Klamert highlighted the recent diversification of funding resources, with Haiti, Pakistan and Somalia among the top donors. The WFP has developed a business model to engage with national governments, putting them at the forefront of dealing with food insecurity to generate a diversification of financial resources, including from international financial institutions. She suggested moving away from the term 'traditional donors' towards 'long-standing donors', with a political responsibility to support national governments on their commitment to deal with internally displaced persons, to build resilience and to work towards political solutions.

Mr Heggenes highlighted the impact of climate change, one of the main drivers of humanitarian crises, and the importance of continuing to invest in mitigation. He mentioned the untapped potential of the private sector, particularly concerning innovation, entrepreneurship, the ability to create jobs and economic development, especially for protracted humanitarian situations. There are opportunities to encourage further dialogue between the private sector and the humanitarian community to foster a better understanding of their respective roles and concerns. Some innovative initiatives could be replicated, such as the green financing facility aiming at minimising the environmental footprint of UNHCR's infrastructure, the humanitarian and resilience investing initiative launched at the World Economic Forum or the refugee impact bonds launched in Jordan to build economic resilience for refugees and host communities. Foundations such as the IKEA Foundation can test new approaches and practices and learn from them.

Panellists discussed the importance of continuing to partner with the private sector, including in the most fragile settings, to test innovative solutions, bring down operational costs, support locally based actions and encourage investments in climate-resilient infrastructure. It is necessary to continue thinking outside the box to test ideas and engage new sources of financing.



Protection of civilians and humanitarian civil–military coordination

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 11:15–12:30

Moderator

Jibecke Joensson

Panellists

Vianey Bisimwa, Regional Director, Sahel, Centre for Civilians in Conflict; Lt. Gen. Cornelis Johannes Matthijssen, Former Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); Cosmin Dobran, Director, Integrated Approach for Security and Peace Directorate, European External Action Service; Edem Wosornu, Chief, Response Support Branch, Coordination Division, OCHA; and Rory Keane, Head of Office, United Nations Liaison Office for Peace and Security, Brussels.

Executive summary

Panellists discussed key lessons learned and best practices from engagement with military and peace agencies. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought war to Europe's doorstep, and international countries have undergone the largest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War. Speakers reflected on adapting to a turbulent, complex reality in which development aid is increasingly turning into humanitarian aid and the protection of civilians (PoC) is a priority.

Peace and security actors must continuously update tasks and learn lessons, accepting that it is impossible to protect everyone, everywhere, all the time. This means reflecting on both responsibilities and possibilities for the PoC, including the responsibilities of the host state. Failure to protect civilians or to meet international peacekeeping expectations also carries high reputational risks. Therefore, a prevention and pre-emption agenda in the context of the PoC remains of the utmost importance.



Against this background, Mr Keane underlined that the success of the PoC mandate was based on collaboration and effective dialogue with the humanitarian community. In this context, there were three priorities for the UN peacekeeping operations: protection through dialogue and engagement with local communities and aid workers, physical protection, and the overall establishment of a protective environment. At the same time, he cautioned that community engagement had limitations, so all interventions needed to be based on very solid analyses.

The UN is now developing a new agenda for peace. It will reflect on how to grapple with new realities and how better to factor the protection agenda into peacekeeping missions (including community engagement, linking better early warning with early action and the UN's capability to implement this).

'The world is changing. Traditional military forces are no longer what we see,' said Ms Wosornu. Instead, conflict and crisis are often fuelled by gangs and other NSAGs. In addition, a natural disaster is often overlaid by a complex military crisis. This means that agencies such as OCHA have had to adapt their practices globally. Twenty years ago, OCHA and the UN Department of Peace Operations had different priorities, but now the two departments are on the same page. 'I feel like Mr Keane has stolen my speaking notes,' Ms Wosornu joked. 'This shows the excellence with which we are now working. We have to understand one another's terminology.' Underlining the change in the humanitarian CMCoord, she noted that humanitarian principles were now constrained, and the space where the principles become blurry needs to be carefully watched. As the main best practice on the PoC agenda, she mentioned the need to maintain consistency in local, regional and national dialogues with the armed actors and to aim to use the same terminology, especially on what humanitarian aid is. Developing a joint training programme for PoC actors that is tailored to the region is also essential.

Mr Dobran highlighted that the EU common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions and operations today focus on increasing capabilities and capacities and training partners in the field. At the same time, as seen in Ukraine, CSDP missions will probably equip partners through the European Peace Facility (EPF), rather than just provide training and advice. IHL remains the core of the training activities. The EU military staff is developing thematic guidelines on IHL to support colleagues deployed on



CSDP missions, going beyond the tenet of ‘do no harm’. The EPF support also includes safeguards, a compliance framework regarding IHL and the ‘do no harm’ principle. The EU champions humanitarian CMCoord, maintaining an effective liaison between DG ECHO and EU CSDP actors. The EU sees human rights and IHL’s due diligence policy as a key tool to influence the behaviour of national forces with a methodology for risk management and mitigation. The main lesson learnt, which the EU draws from its past support, is the importance of being able to follow up on training and monitor the armed forces’ behaviour, rather than allowing gaps to develop.

The complexity of a peacekeeping mandate is very hard to appreciate from the outside. While protecting civilians will always be important, ‘peacekeeping’ is a misleading term since there is often no peace to keep, said Lt. Gen. Matthijssen. In addition, the proliferation of NSAGs, increasingly using improvised explosive devices and complicating the allegiance of local communities, puts national armed forces in a situation in which it is impossible to protect civilians, for instance in Mali. He underlined the benefit of protection through presence on the ground, but stressed that a lot has to be done to improve early warning in the Malian context. In addition, with the spread of disinformation and misinformation, humanitarians and peacekeepers face the same field complexity, which can be better addressed through coordination. He highlighted that misperceptions between the two were still a challenge. To overcome this, both communities need more opportunities to get to know each other (for instance, through training). Agreement on common ways of working, particularly in regional cooperation and technical information sharing, is another area where more humanitarian CMCoord is required, with proper attention from the leadership.

‘I need to look angry to make sure that humanitarian actors will not tell the government what to do in the CMCoord meetings,’ said Mr Bisimwa, explaining a persisting mutual misunderstanding about military and humanitarian missions and mandates. To address this, not only the humanitarian community but also security/peace actors need a proactive approach to allow humanitarians to understand them better and reinforce trust. In his view, CMCoord is about how UN and EU peace and humanitarian actors come together to reflect on how they understand and respond to civilian needs. He proposed that all sides prepare a joint communication strategy, clarifying responsibilities and respective mandates to the local community and allowing locals to provide feedback. For most people in a crisis area, it is not easy to understand who is there to do what when it comes to finding help. He warned against waiting until after the event to build trust in humanitarian and military interventions. He underlined that, when working with third-party forces, the EU and the UN should put a stronger emphasis on civilian harm mitigation and encourage the payment of amends when there are civilian casualties.

Stepping up the commitment to conflict-affected children: working across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 11:15–12:30

Moderator

Ali Al-Jaberi

Panellists

Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Malta; Virginia Gamba, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Alain Déléroz, Director-General, Geneva Call; Belén Martínez-Carbonell, Managing Director, European External Action Service; and Inger Ashing, CEO, Save the Children International.

Executive summary

Minister Borg conveyed that Malta was proud to be entrusted with chairing the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, 2023–2024. Malta would build on the work of its predecessors, review progress made in countries where parties had committed grave violations against children in armed conflict and draw up recommendations to promote the protection of affected children.

Minister Borg called for closer coordination between humanitarian, development and peace efforts, to achieve collective outcomes in the short-, medium- and long-terms. It was particularly harrowing that children were being killed, wounded and traumatised by the military aggression in Ukraine. This was further aggravated by the forced relocation of thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia. Moreover, it was deplorable that, in this day and age, children were still being used as an instrument of war. Education was reaffirmed as an important pillar of prevention, and the Safe Schools Declaration, the Paris principles and commitments, and Vancouver principles were endorsed.

Ms Martínez-Carbonell stated that the EU remained deeply dismayed at the unacceptably high levels of grave violations of children in armed conflicts around the world. The EU would review the guidelines that were adopted in 2008 and their implementation plan from 2010. Since the guidelines were adopted, the UN mandate has expanded from focusing on the recruitment and



use of child soldiers to cover five more violations. These would be included in the updated guidelines that should be finalised by mid 2024. Specific focus areas were as follows:

- child protection and children's rights in prevention approaches, including tackling root causes that may drive children to join armed groups;
- the role of education in prevention and reintegration efforts;
- enhancing child and youth participation in mediation and post-conflict reconstruction efforts, and a strengthened focus on attacks on schools and hospitals;
- combating the climate of impunity and providing clear action-oriented support to ensure evidence, information and accountability;
- ensuring the gender dimension of the guidelines, including conflict-related sexual violence and GBV, sexual exploitation and abuse, and trafficking;
- prevention through stronger IHL advocacy and ensuring that the children and armed conflict agenda is fully integrated into all peace, security and CSDP missions.

Ms Gamba stated that protecting children in armed conflict was not only a legal obligation and a moral imperative, but also a strategic investment for everyone. If the rights and needs of conflict-affected children were not properly addressed, this risked undermining sustainable peace and perpetuating cycles of violence. A holistic approach was needed to ensure that boys and girls were protected and enjoyed their full rights through complementary development, humanitarian and peacebuilding interventions. This was particularly true for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups.

She welcomed this revision of the EU guidelines. The revision was an opportunity to reflect on how the needs of conflict-affected children could be addressed more holistically and how EU development, humanitarian and peacebuilding interventions could better complement each other to achieve sustainable solutions for children.

The issue of conflict-affected children touched upon all phases of the conflict cycle, from early warning and prevention to long-term development. Ms Gamba believed the revision process would provide crucial momentum to consult with key child protection experts, collect lessons learned and build a practical and operational framework with measurable goals.

Ms Ashing stated that working in the HDP nexus was vital to move away from the current siloed approach in funding, policy and advocacy. She pointed out that child protection in emergencies was chronically underfunded, and the response focused too much on the immediate release of children and not enough on their reintegration. Ms Ashing stressed that the problem was not over once the child was released; much more work was needed in terms of mental health and psychosocial support, and fighting stigmatisation.

Mr Délétroz explained how Geneva Call engaged with armed groups and de facto authorities. Currently, over 500 such groups are operating in the world. He conveyed that it was vital that all parties involved worked outside their silos and within the triple nexus. Geneva Call stressed the importance of two key concepts: prevention and reintegration.

During the discussion, one of the challenges identified was the need for a holistic approach, for example, offering children access to education and vocational training to give them and their families a livelihood. In addition, the economic issue was raised: sometimes, children were ‘better off’ financially with an armed group. Therefore, there was a call to be more holistic, creative and practical. For example, some countries paid parents a monthly fee to send their children to school when the only other option was for the children to be given money by an armed group.

There was also a call for a gender-sensitive approach to children associated or formerly associated with armed groups and armed forces. In this regard, the need to disaggregate the data by sex and gender was raised. In addition, the issue of flexible funding and long-term grants was highlighted in relation to the need for comprehensive end-to-end solutions for children at policy and programme levels. The imbalance of humanitarian aid was pointed out: Ukraine was very well funded, but Burkina Faso, Yemen and other forgotten crises were not, which was described as ‘a catastrophe for the credibility of the humanitarian actors in the world’.



Saving lives with limited resources: the need to prioritise

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 14:15–15:30

Moderator

Florence Ranson

Panellists

Wesal Abdullah, Program Coordinator of Arab Women Organisation of Jordan; Christos Christou, International President of Médecins Sans Frontières; Juliet Parker, Director of ALNAP (the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian action), Barry Andrews, Member of the European Parliament; and Carin Jämtin, Director General, Sida.

Executive summary

This session looked at securing greater commitment to transparent and accountable prioritisation of humanitarian action by directing resources towards the most acute needs. The panel detailed why prioritisation remains essential as it enables humanitarian aid to reach those most in need. Moreover, with the bigger funding gap, prioritisation was deemed more needed than ever. Reasons for the gap were cited as COVID-19, which had struck the poorest hardest, the climate crisis and the Russian invasion of Ukraine; the invasion resulted in an increase in needs elsewhere, which has raised prices everywhere. But the audience was reminded that, with all this going on, the humanitarian system is still delivering and being effective.

It was also highlighted that, from a donor perspective, it is important to have accountability towards beneficiaries and people in need. The discussion also focused on how donors and humanitarian organisations can best prioritise their work in the face of today's overwhelming needs and limited resources. This brought the panel to discuss how prioritisation can be most effective.



There was also discussion about response plans that look at needs in an organised manner and provide more information to partners and donors. Prioritisation also necessitates collaboration and the comparison of knowledge to expand shared understanding. By comparing and exchanging data it could potentially identify the most severe demands in a comparable manner around the globe.

It was stressed that funding is not keeping up with the growing needs. Moreover, there are gaps in funding between the best- and worst-funded appeals, which are growing, resulting in the concentration of resources in certain areas in the humanitarian sector.

More cooperation was a theme running throughout this session. The panel discussed how humanitarian needs are growing and why funding needs to keep up with the change. Currently, there is an increased concentration of resources, 40 % of funds went to just five countries, and 57 % of funds came from five donors, with the United States being the primary donor. This leaves some of the world's most severe crises underfunded.

But the nature of different crisis types and how they compete for attention strongly influence aid flows. Donor fatigue was mentioned in relation to protracted crises (for example, Syria and Yemen). Donor fatigue was also noted in the context of repeated sudden-onset crises such as Haiti. Slower-onset crises – food security and hunger – typically receive less attention unless there is the siren call of famine.

The panel also discussed how the politics within and between countries could affect who gives funding and where it is allocated. When there is such a small number of donors representing the bulk of international humanitarian assistance, donor countries' politics can strongly affect how much humanitarian aid is provided and where it goes, for example pressure on donors regarding domestic needs when there are economic challenges at home. Support to host refugees in donor countries decreases the available funding to address needs and vulnerabilities elsewhere.

But there is competition between various crises. For example, Syria is a place that requires more than private funding. But Ukraine has been more accessible. Prioritisation means elevating specific issues; it is important to debate this topic and to raise the question of how humanitarian organisations prioritise their work. For example, those who work directly with women's groups and people in need, such as the Arab Women Organization of Jordan, which responds to the needs of women and girls on the ground, have shifted the power to local actors, who deliver a more effective service and response.

Some countries (such as north-west Nigeria) are neglected, and others (such as Ukraine) get much more attention than countries such as Afghanistan. The panel echoed similar thoughts



that the severity of needs must be considered and wanted to draw attention back to Afghanistan because of the country's substantial humanitarian crisis. But it was highlighted that humanitarian actors have to be transparent about the choices they have had to make and why they made those choices.

One idea that was thought to be important was for donors to offer flexible funding so that humanitarian actors could act based on what they knew and what they were good at. People also thought that taking action ahead of time was necessary. This theme was brought up in previous sessions focusing on saving lives, investing more in efficiency and considering chronic conditions. Furthermore, the challenges of separating humanitarian issues from political ones were discussed.

Finally, the session evaluated what happens with the much-needed work on preventing and anticipating crises and the resilience of affected communities. It concluded that we must agree to target scarce humanitarian funds more narrowly so they go towards life-saving activities.

The panel agreed that if we do not have an overarching aim to find the root cause, we will not reduce poverty or meet humanitarian needs worldwide. Of course, long-term development cooperation has to be used to tackle the root causes, but there are also immense challenges to face, such as climate change and the lack of information when a crisis occurs.



Boosting synergies for humanitarian action and civil protection in crisis response

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 14:15–15:30

Moderator

Anya Sitaram

Panellists

Farhan Khan, Country Director – Pakistan, Country Director – Cesvi Pakistan; Hans Das, Director for Emergency Response and rescEU, DG ECHO, European Commission; Carla Greiber, Deputy Director in the Department for Humanitarian Action, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark; Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, Director-General, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB); and Edem Wosornu, Chief, Response Support Branch, Coordination Division, OCHA.

Executive summary

Examples of successful cooperation between humanitarian action and civil protection, and how this could be used in other contexts, were discussed in this session. Speakers also considered how other actors, such as Member States and regional disaster management groups, manage and contribute to the interactions between humanitarian action and civil protection. There was a broad panel and audience agreement on the benefits of these interactions if used to focus on simplifying the delivery of aid to civilians.

Continuing a theme from an earlier panel, Ms Petri Gornitzka said that, to people in a crisis zone, standing among destroyed buildings, hoping for food and medicine, distinctions between military and humanitarian aid were of little interest. Where resources are scarce, breaking the silos between different roles or responsibilities would make it easier to take opportunities to bring about change and develop leadership. ‘We must take the individual in need as our starting point, not the bureaucracy,’ she explained. This requires ‘a truly joined-up approach among the actors providing assistance’. This should include more local partners. A cost-efficiency analysis is necessary as, in practice, some local partners have difficulties working because of a lack of resources.

This collaboration would make it easier to benefit from local expertise. Pakistan, for instance, is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world when it comes to climate change, said Mr Khan, with every extreme weather event seemingly bigger than the last. Many of the challenges faced in rebuilding communities following climate crises, such as distributing water, can be overcome by



using the strengths of local NGOs, building on their years of experience. But where regional and local aid workers can reach out to those in need, they do not, for instance, have the capacity or equipment to purify water, which is where international collaboration is needed.

A survey of the audience online and on-site showed that most people felt that priorities to enhance synergies between civil protection and humanitarian action should be supported by stronger leadership for a coordinated response and structured collaboration in areas of mutual interest, such as risk reduction and greening.

Ms Wosornu agreed that most people do not mind who helps them as long as assistance is delivered. Assistance delivery has been improved over the last 30 years to meet needs and demands, but there is still a gender imbalance that does not match the situation on the ground. While the majority of people in need of assistance are likely to be women and children, most humanitarian action and civil protection workers are still men. In 1993, the male-to-female ratio for most missions was about 80–20. Today, it has typically increased to only 69–31. She also points out the need for stronger emergency centres and stronger leadership.

‘Complementary’ collaboration between different actors is also needed to implement a safe and sustainable exit strategy, added Ms Griebner. Despite being the final stage of the operation for many people involved, the exit strategy should be discussed right at the start. This means pulling resources together and building bridges between humanitarian action and civil protection.

The ‘marriage’ between the cross-sector strengths of humanitarian action and civil protection is becoming part of the DNA of European humanitarian support, said Mr Das. “Particularly in the acute emergency phase, there are significant synergies, provided each side focuses on what it can do best. We have to work together to manage an emergency. This way of working has been successfully developed and showcased in Ukraine, Pakistan, Türkiye and Syria, to name a few countries. In Ukraine, for instance, highly specialised equipment was mobilised through civil protection rather than humanitarian action because an understanding of ‘cost-efficiency and synergies’ showed this was the most effective approach.”

The challenges of humanitarian negotiations and principled response: how far are you ready to go to save lives? The case of Yemen

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 14:15–15:30

Moderator

Ali Al-Jaberi

Panellists

Carl Skau, Deputy Director-General, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Marzia Montemurro, Research Director, HERE Geneva; Maya Ameratunga, UNHCR Representative in Yemen; and Fatima Sharaf Al-Deen, GBV Area of Responsibility Co-Coordinator, Yemen Women Union.

Executive summary

Ms Montemurro introduced a report from HERE Geneva entitled 'Principled humanitarian programming in Yemen: a prisoner's dilemma'. It looks at the challenges faced by humanitarian actors in implementing a principled humanitarian response. Access challenges have created an environment where humanitarian actors tend to be pitted against one another and are thus confronted with complicated dilemmas. Ms Ameratunga said that these serious access challenges mean that humanitarian actors working inside Yemen have to be courageous and tenacious to stand up for the principles daily. These principles include doing no harm, being inclusive and non-discriminatory, communicating with gender sensitivity and using culturally appropriate means to address the needs of women and children. Unfortunately, these are open to interpretation as organisations deal with multiple authorities in an unstable political environment.

Some of the key challenges faced by a local organisation in Yemen were described by Ms Sharaf Al-Deen. A lack of funding limits their ability to scale up programming, meet the needs of survivors and support frontline responders. A lack of access to information and resources makes it difficult to effectively plan and implement response efforts. It limits the availability of medical, psychological and legal support services for survivors of GBV. As to what local organisations need from the international community in order to better deliver aid, she mentioned flexible funding, technical support, training and mentoring. International organisations can partner with local organisations to deliver humanitarian aid in a complementary and efficient manner. Local organisations could be better



recognised and represented in the decision-making process within the humanitarian system by, for example, including them in cluster meetings.

The donor community is working hard to address these multiple challenges, said Mr Skau. Together with DG ECHO, the senior officials' meeting process has been launched to better coordinate international and local NGOs, the UN family and donors. Speaking with one voice has enabled some of these challenges to be addressed and overcome in the past, such as the levy imposed on humanitarian aid, underlining the importance of a united stance by the international community. The pooled funding mechanism is a flexible mechanism to improve the localisation agenda.

Ms Ameratunga brought up the increasing restriction to movement through 'Mahram' requirements, which seriously impede access to women and girls, particularly those in situations of heightened vulnerability. Sometimes localised solutions are possible, depending on the understanding of authorities, but, overall, the situation has deteriorated further in the past year. The de facto authorities justify Mahram by saying it is not an issue of discrimination, but reflects culture and religion, protects women and gains community acceptance. The national staff object to being targeted as humanitarian workers with measures that do not apply to the general community.

They say that special requirements for women should be the choice of themselves and their families, and not of the state. As a member of the humanitarian community, Ms Ameratunga recalled that UNHCR's goal is to deliver humanitarian assistance in a culturally appropriate manner. This requires female staff to engage with female community members. She hopes that the humanitarian community's engagement can provide solutions with flexibility and pragmatism. Ms Montemurro added that principles are ideals, not rules, and must be operationalised collectively, requiring coordination among all actors. This, in turn, needs coordination mechanisms to be set up effectively, such as the senior officials' meeting in Yemen.

A call was made for the humanitarian community in Yemen to continue to work closely together, to discuss challenges and find a collective way forward. The panel discussion raised further points of interest:

- the need for concrete recommendations on how to build trust and create space that allows for clear, transparent information sharing to enable a coordinated response;
- the need for creative leadership despite lacking presence in Yemen;
- principles are more than ideals; they are a pragmatic framework to manage the perceptions of all actors in Yemen, including belligerent parties;
- compromising on the principles undermines the ability to negotiate;
- international actors, notably donors, need to visit Yemen and engage with authorities, including the de facto authorities, on humanitarian issues; engagement does not imply recognition of the de facto authorities;
- the de facto authorities in Yemen are largely isolated from the rest of the world; the more they are exposed to messaging from outside the country, the better;
- it is time for humanitarians to come together and be strategic in their discussions on Yemen;
- having united resources enables greater leverage;
- be conscious of new, emerging areas of work, such as mine action, and durable solutions in view of the upsurge of interest among displaced persons wanting to return to their homes.

Strengthening synergies between humanitarian and development actors in protracted and complex humanitarian crises

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 16:00–17:15

Moderator

Ali Al-Jaberi

Panellists

Sarah Cliffe, Executive Director, Center on International Cooperation, New York University; Charlotte Slente, Secretary-General of the Danish Refugee Council; Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships; Achim Steiner, UN Development Programme Administrator; and Franck Bousquet, Deputy Director, International Monetary Fund.

Executive summary

This high-level session explored current and new modalities for engagement by development actors in protracted and complex humanitarian crises. This included where traditional modes of engagement with national authorities are not feasible regarding addressing and reducing humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerabilities; preserving institutional capacity; and identifying peacebuilding opportunities.

Different modalities were discussed, such as providing a menu of options for more localised modalities depending on the degree of risk presented and the willingness of authorities to compromise. Other options included ring-fencing programmes, NGO contracting under service agreements (for example, in Afghanistan), regional programmes and the recommendation to use more local capacity. Clarity in dialogue around complex matters such as conditionality was needed.

The panellists spoke about relationships with domestic taxpayers and overcoming silos in development, humanitarian and peacebuilding activities; about being people-centred, not losing people's agency and using our available assets smartly in these situations; about spillover costs and the need to have a different way of



working between humanitarian and development actors grounded on an understanding of basic services; and about how people on the ground do not distinguish between humanitarian aid and development aid, and the need to redefine basic services to include macro functions and to be modest in the role of international financial institutions in these situations.

The discussion covered ongoing work on the triple nexus and how we can break down silos. For example, with reference to an event in Yemen, breaking down silos was discussed in terms of how we design conditions, red lines and rules for dialogue, with both OCHA and local organisations giving a strong sense of the value they attach to bilateral donors visiting and engaging with national counterparts. There was a discussion about whether 'nexus financing' might be needed, with a consensus that there is no need for a siloed financing pot; instead, the disincentives for collaboration in the current financing systems could be removed.

New mechanisms are needed to sustain basic services over time in complex crises. In order to operate in a country such as Afghanistan, planning and responding together is vital, as is learning to work in alignment with people in troubled countries. There also needs to be cooperation and coordination between emergency and structural aid through a nexus approach and with humanitarian aid based on humanitarian law. The audience heard how the European Commission is moving forward with a principled approach through the humanitarian community on a project where women are allowed to work and benefit.

Reflecting on the situation in Afghanistan, the panel agreed that things should have been done differently. A menu of options for the country could have been outlined in advance on what could be done for dialogue and aid. The absence thereof led to several months of interrupted bilateral aid while donors identified a way forward. The panellists called for a common approach among international actors in Afghanistan.

Final thoughts on this session outlined how we need to work on better prevention and better detection. Anticipating a crisis by combining data was seen as the best cooperation when data is put together. The panel spoke about prevention, noting that methods of analysis are now available that can detect crisis-prone countries, thereby making it possible to work in a preventive fashion and not just respond to an emergency when it happens. A shift is needed. Joint planning involving both humanitarian and development aid is fundamental.



Protection in urban warfare: reducing risk to civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers in conflict

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 16:00–17:15

Moderator

Florence Ranson

Panellists

Hamza Al-Kateab, CEO, Action for Sama; Alma Taslidžan, Disarmament and PoC Advocacy Manager, Humanity and Inclusion, Handicap International; Laura Boillot, Programme Manager for Article 36 and Coordinator of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW); Omar Mekky, ICRC Regional Coordinator for Arab-Speaking Countries; and Noel White, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the UN and other International Organisations at Geneva.

Executive summary

This session aimed to raise awareness of the humanitarian consequences of urban warfare, including the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWiPA). Speakers considered how to address the complex protection challenges for civilians and civilian infrastructure, including the ‘reverberating’ or unintended consequences of an attack. The session focused on the momentum created by, and potential follow-up to, the Political Declaration on EWiPA, signed in November 2022 as a result of long negotiations led by Ireland.

Densely populated areas are now the main battlegrounds in armed conflicts, but data to understand and appreciate the long-term physical and psychological impact of urban warfare is lacking. The complex



web of infrastructures in cities is further stabilised by the near impossibility of safeguarding zones even when a conflict is over. For instance, some 30 % of the Ukrainian territory, or 300 000 square kilometres, has been estimated to be potentially contaminated by unexploded weapons.

EWiPA can cause a large number of immediate civilian deaths and injuries, in addition to damage to civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. Longer-term direct impacts on human minds and bodies include depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, forced displacement and lifelong disabilities.

Stronger policies, both during and after conflict, should be built on evidence showing the impact of weapons on civilians. For example, when explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 90 % of the victims are civilians. This consistent pattern across conflict zones shows the importance of strengthening the evidence base for urban military operations.

A better exchange of information and data, along with technical and tactical experience, is important for both the immediate and the long-term PoC. Strengthened international cooperation is needed to underpin this collection of data. Good data exchange requires new multidisciplinary processes to be put in place, involving all military, humanitarian, government and local actors.

An excerpt from the documentary film *For Sama* illustrated what it means when a hospital is attacked. The use of explosive weapons against hospitals causes significant psychological and physical harm; Mr Al-Kateab said people want essential services, including hospitals, to be easily accessible, but, in East Aleppo, civilians know that living close to a hospital, school or even bakery is dangerous. During this war, 83 % of child deaths occurred in hospitals.

Particular focus is needed on the ‘reverberating’ or ‘domino’ effects of attacks in cities. Under IHL, indirect effects should be considered by military commanders as part of the planning of military operations before an attack is launched.

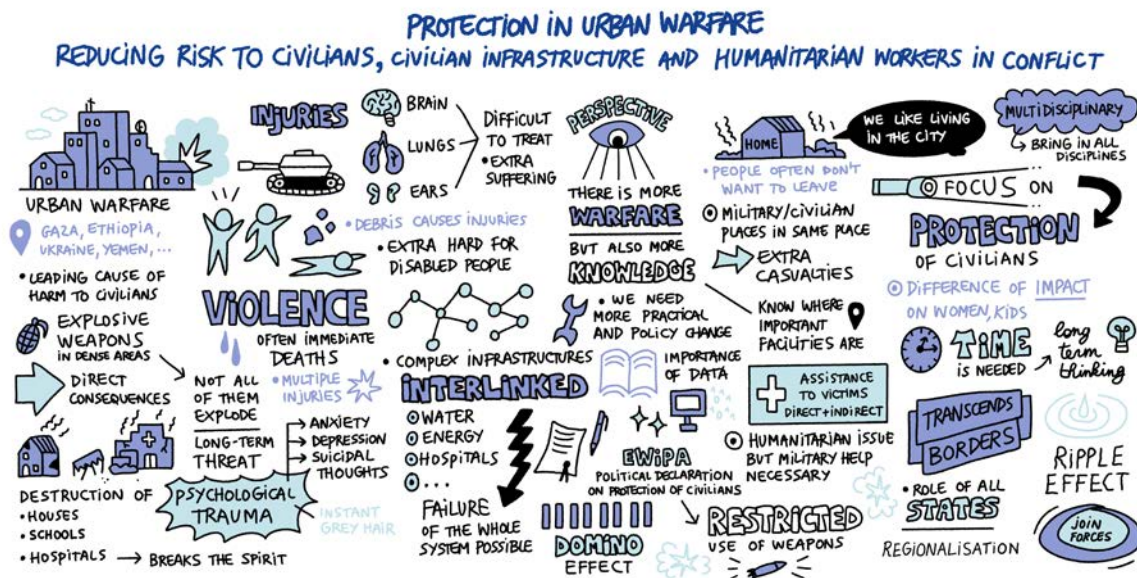
In an urban environment, it is extremely difficult for an attack to have a military target without indirectly affecting civilian infrastructure. For example, an attack on one system might cause several systems to fail because of interconnections between water and power networks and civilian and military infrastructure use. In urban areas, objects often have a dual civilian–military purpose.

States and military officials need to work together and take practical steps to understand these interconnections. This could include an assessment of collateral damage and lessons learned, and

endorsement of the EWIPA political declaration. The declaration offers a golden opportunity for states to create new best standards of behaviour when it comes to rebuilding and reconstruction.

The declaration recognises the significant humanitarian issues that arise with explosives and sets a forward-looking agenda. The document is still open for signature. The declaration is not, however, the end of the process, meaning it is now important to focus on its implementation. Alongside all efforts to understand and reduce risk to civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers in conflict, the declaration must be continuously reviewed and assessed.

Moving forward, the declaration can be used as the basis for broader humanitarian assistance for 'conflict-affected' civilians. This life-saving assistance and long-term rehabilitation must be holistic, gender sensitive and non-discriminatory. It must also closely involve local communities to best help local people identify and respond to the impacts of urban warfare.



Making better use of science to respond to climate-induced disasters in a humanitarian context: the role of early warning systems

Tuesday, 21 March 2023, 16:00–17:15

Moderator

Maria Zuber

Panellists

Kai Gatkuoth, Technical Coordinator, Disaster Risk Reduction Unit, African Union; Tom De Groot, Deputy Head of Unit, European Commission Joint Research Centre; Anil Pokhrel, Chief Executive, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority; Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR); and Ansherina Talavera, Program Manager, CARE Philippines.

Executive summary

Ms Mizutori said that humanitarian needs in 2023 are estimated to be 17 % higher than last year, but are not matched by funding levels. The need to invest in DRR, to prevent and prepare better and to reduce humanitarian needs has never been clearer.

Of all risk reduction measures, EWSs are proven to save lives and reduce disaster losses. Yet half of the world's countries and two-thirds of small island developing states and least developed countries still lack multi-hazard EWSs. To correct this, the Early Warnings for All initiative aims to ensure that no single person is left out of early warning coverage by 2027. The UNDRR and the WMO have been tasked with leading a global mobilisation effort to accelerate and bring together collective efforts towards this goal. It consists of four pillars:



- enhancing risk knowledge, led by the UNDRR;
- hazard detection and forecasting, led by the WMO;
- warning, dissemination and communication, led by the International Telecommunication Union;
- preparedness to respond, led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

A number of challenges lie ahead. One is around the availability of reliable data. Mr De Groeve said that ways to anticipate up to 6 months ahead are needed, with not only quantitative but also qualitative ways to look ahead. A lot of development is needed on AI, high-performance computing, etc. Smarter and multi-hazard warnings are required, as is data on the impact on different sectors. Disaggregated data for gender and disabilities should be generated and delivered correctly to end users.

Another challenge is ensuring that all four early warning elements are equally supported and taken forward together. Traditionally, most attention has been directed at detection and communication, the most visible aspects of early warning. However, more needs to be done on building up knowledge as the basis for risk-informed decision-making and enhancing local preparedness for early action. Panellists also mentioned the challenge of securing the funds necessary to implement all the activities envisaged under this initiative. The initial budget over 5 years is estimated to be USD 3.1 billion. A call was made to integrate funding for this initiative in new humanitarian appeals, to more quickly operationalise and complete this initiative and protect communities from avoidable disasters.

Looking at a national example, Mr Pokhrel estimates that Nepal needs around USD 600 million over the next 6–8 years to have EWSs in place for the whole country. Therefore, they are looking to communicate multiple hazards using multiple media, such as radio stations and SMSs, in the various languages of the country. He underlined that one of the most significant barriers in this case is language, as often multiple languages are spoken in one region, and sometimes they are different from that of the partners. Multi-language networks such as Refugees in Effective and Active Partnership can help overcome this obstacle.



Mr Gatkuoth said that the Africa multi-hazard early warning and early action programme had been set up but faced a number of challenges. Capacity is one challenge, as around 50 000 observation stations are needed across the continent. The available data tends to be fragmented, is not disaggregated and is underutilised. Technology to ensure interoperability between different entities to enable that information to be used for decision-making is lacking. Moreover, development in Africa is continuing to take place in risk-prone areas, and risk assessment activities are often ‘internationalised’ – in other words, lacking participation from local communities.

An EWS saves lives, but should cover preparedness and anticipatory actions, and protect development gains. Ms Talavera gave two examples. First, it can help farmers save their crops and livestock in advance of an event. This requires farmers to be supported to gain the knowledge, skills and access to information so they can use an EWS to adjust their farming practices. The second example is housing. An EWS should help ascertain how strong houses need to be to withstand a flood, earthquake or similar event. This, too, requires a significant investment. Both examples show that humanitarian and development actors need to work together across the HDP nexus. However, an EWS should not be confined to a specific country, but should be managed transboundary and region-wide, as risk does not respect borders.

It is essential to invest in regional, national and local initiatives; therefore, local actors need to be supported in building and improving their capacities. A people-centred approach is considered essential, to empower local communities, address the last mile and ensure the success of EWSs. Local data should be fed into existing systems at regional and global levels to maximise resources. Collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, and climate change actors, is needed, along with access to financing. Any EWS should also be fully sustainable.

SUMMARY

The European Humanitarian Forum 2023 took place on 20 and 21 March at the EGG conference centre in Brussels. The second edition of the event, which was organised by the European Commission (DG ECHO) and Sweden in the framework of its Presidency of the Council of the EU, gathered more than 1 800 participants from over 75 countries, and attracted more than 12 000 views of the live-streamed sessions.

Through 22 panel discussions, the forum put forward innovative solutions to address the global challenges of the humanitarian sector, with a key focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of aid, the increasing gap between needs and available resources, the impact of climate change and the shrinking humanitarian space.

At the opening ceremony, EU Member States, together with the European Commission, announced planned humanitarian funding of EUR 8.4 billion for 2023, as a concrete expression of global solidarity and of the EU's leading role in humanitarian action.

EHF 2023 was composed of the following events:

- 5 warm-up sessions at DG ECHO regional office level;
- 3 global/HQ warm-up sessions;
- 48 EHF panels and humanitarian talks;
- an exhibition with 14 stands;
- over 80 bilateral meetings;
- 5 side VIP events.

During the EHF closing session, the audience listened to a powerful music performance by Tusse, a musician and goodwill ambassador for UNHCR Sweden, and a TED-style talk by the journalist Veronica Fernandes of Rai News 24 in Italy; these guests gave insights into their own personal stories and experiences.

The third edition of the EHF will take place in 2024, and will be co-organised with Belgium, in the framework of its Presidency of the Council of the EU.



TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM: REPORTS ON WARM-UP SESSIONS

In the run-up to the EHF in March 2023, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) organised a series of global and regional warm-up events aiming at informing the forum on key humanitarian questions. Regional warm-up sessions were organised by DG ECHO's field network. The objective of these regional consultations was to set the scene with a strong local perspective ahead of the forum and to critically inform the discussions at the forum in March. Each of DG ECHO's five regional offices gathered local experiences and testimony feeding into specific sessions of the forum.

Global warm-up events gathered key speakers on highly anticipated topics – Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and climate change. They comprised three public warm-up sessions and one expert round table, all directly informing various sessions of the forum.

The results and takeaways of all the warm-up sessions were made available to panellists and the wider audience via the EHF website ahead of the forum.

Regional warm-up session – Asia and the Pacific

Factoring in the consequences of climate change
in humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific

Background

The contents of this paper were gathered during discussions held at the 2022 Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week. This event took place in Bangkok, Thailand, between 9 and 14 December 2022 and was co-organised by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, the Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Network, Community World Service Asia and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In addition, this paper reflects the dedicated consultation event titled ‘Factoring in the consequences of climate change in humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific’ held on 16 November 2021, co-hosted by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies and the ECHO regional office in Bangkok.

Key requests to the European Humanitarian Forum

- 1. Invest in comprehensive risk analysis and in building the evidence base.** The changing risk landscape requires an integrated approach centred on distinct risk drivers and their impacts on the vulnerabilities faced by communities, including displacement. This should be driven locally and should be more efficiently incorporated into the humanitarian programme cycle, including a clear focus on the evaluation stage of the programme.
- 2. Promote the centring of communities in climate response,** at all stages from risk analysis to programme design and implementation. The youth is an essential demographic to engage with in that regard. A gender and inclusion lens should also be included.
- 3. Balance financing on climate action and better coherence and connectivity of financing.** The alignment of the ‘loss and damage’ mechanism with existing humanitarian funding streams should be codified, while acknowledging the priorities identified by those in need. More funding opportunities should be made available to fragile country recipients, with an emphasis on the adaptation pillar, which is essential in many places affected by conflict.
- 4. Strengthen investment in understanding displacement,** and integrate it into climate adaptation and disaster risk management plans. The Asia-Pacific Disaster Displacement Working Group represents to this end a developing example of multi-stakeholder cooperation platform.
- 5. Enable mobility as a climate adaptation strategy,** through legal and policy frameworks representing affected people’s right to choose their coping strategies, and by supporting the proactive development of safe migration pathways by states.
- 6. Invest in greening humanitarian operations** by operationalising both ECHO’s minimum environmental requirements and the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations.
- 7. Improve connections between development, peace and humanitarian communities of practice** by actively contributing to the toolkit of responses promoted by the Nansen Initiative’s protection agenda and to the outcomes of the mid-term review of the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction.
- 8. Document and amplify existing good practices** by continuing the facilitation of experience-sharing platforms such as the present consultations.

Other conclusions

- **The current humanitarian system is not fit to address the impact of climate change on (escalating) humanitarian need.** The 2022 Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week highlighted the fact that gaps are present in the early warning systems (EWSs) in the Asia-Pacific region. A lack of comprehensive and coherent EWSs negatively affects the process of managing responses to the compounding effects of climate change. At the same time, states in the region have invested in EWS components, which are ready to be used and will benefit from even further investment efforts. Better contextualisation of humanitarian action can be done by building on traditional practices and knowledge, which requires a mindset shift from ‘capacity building’ to ‘capacity strengthening’ of local organisations and institutions. The latter are on the front lines of climate risk preparedness and response. On 16 November 2021, when asked ‘Is the current humanitarian system suited to deal with the effects of climate change?’, all 20 participants responded ‘no’ or ‘not sure’.
- **Change in the risk landscape.** The risk landscape in the Asia-Pacific region is changing. While it was acknowledged that changes and progress are being made, inadequate analysis of how climate change affects risk, vulnerability and target populations, and the asynchronous interaction between development/humanitarian/resilience systems, means that the sector is not currently able to meet the humanitarian needs resulting from unmitigated climate change and environmental degradation. We are often dealing with multiple, simultaneous, cascading hazards and compound risks that our systems and governments are not adequately prepared for. Climate change amplifies risk and vulnerability, as it combines with other drivers of crisis such as poverty, insecurity, discrimination and conflict. Particular attention needs to be paid to conflict-affected populations with a low capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Collectively, much more needs to be done in the humanitarian sector and more broadly with other stakeholders to unpack and clearly understand how conflict and climate change interact. The immediate consequences of these complex risks can include system breakdowns and reversal of development gains. A one-size-fits-all humanitarian approach is no longer fit for purpose. The humanitarian system alone cannot address these needs; consequently, there is a need to engage in a more meaningful triple-nexus analysis and approach. Systemic resilience requires a sound governance model, equal partnership, effective use of technology and a way to sustain the building of resilience.
- **Disaster displacement.** Climate change affects mobility flows. For many of those who are internally displaced in the region, the nature of the displacement is cyclical and seasonal, posing new challenges to both themselves and the humanitarian community. Many are also in urban areas and move for a multitude of reasons, seeking livelihoods and improved access to services. Understanding the underlying causes and drivers of mobility is key to identifying adequate solutions and partnerships. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that migration is a coping strategy by itself, to (1) enable people to either stay in their homes, when this is what they desire, or move elsewhere before disaster strikes and (2) receive protection if they are displaced and (3) have their rights and dignity respected at all times. For migration to be a form of adaptation to climate change, states should proactively develop safe migration pathways and appreciate the multiple benefits they can generate. For instance, seasonal and long-term migration can enable families to diversify their livelihoods and broaden their networks for financial security, while simultaneously alleviating demographic and resource pressures at home. In doing so, such pathways can enhance the resilience of those who move, and that of those who stay behind.

- **Need for better coordination and harmonisation across the triple nexus.** The discussion around climate change has long been on the agenda; however, it was noted that conversations often happen on multiple platforms, in parallel, and are rarely joined up. While the widespread interest in tackling the issue is welcomed, there is still the challenging question of how to best collaborate in a way that meets the needs of affected populations.
- **Neutralising the negative environmental externalities of humanitarian action.** National policies need to be harmonised to promote green humanitarian action. Environmental challenges arising from the imperative to save lives should be tackled in the planning phase so that they are not left for recipients to deal with. A first step would be to mainstream local knowledge to ensure that communities' coping mechanisms are factored into all humanitarian decisions. Purchase carbon credit offset certificates for emissions linked to humanitarian and development initiatives. However, look at ways to reduce the humanitarian footprint before purchasing further credits. Invest in promoting resilient infrastructure among essential services and new development in collaboration with private sector and government partners should be more systematically explored.

Regional warm-up session – Latin America and the Caribbean

Understanding the specific access restrictions to affected communities and promoting humanitarian diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean

Background

The Latin American and Caribbean context, with organised crime and gangs operating both locally and transnationally, is experiencing an exacerbation of regional complexity in terms of humanitarian access, with enormous humanitarian consequences. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2022 there were more than 18.5 million forcibly displaced people in the region, including populations fleeing from pervasive violence, armed conflicts, socioeconomic crises and impacts of climate change ⁽²⁾. Fourteen out of the 20 most dangerous countries in the world are in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and one of every five displaced people lives in the region. Despite this climate of violence, the IHL normative framework does not apply to most of the situations in the region.

Over 30 participants from humanitarian organisations operating in the region participated in the regional consultations, which took place virtually on 27 January 2023. Among them were representatives of OCHA, the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Danish Refugee Council, Save the Children, Oxfam and HIAS. Fora of humanitarian organisations, the International Crisis Group and the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation also participated.

Key requests to the European Humanitarian Forum

1. **Stronger humanitarian diplomacy expertise on the ground** is required to tackle organised crime and gangs.
2. **Increased financial and human resources support** is needed in order to strengthen operational flexibility and the capacities of humanitarian actors to negotiate access with authorities and with key stakeholders at both national and local levels. This will require the active involvement of additional senior and experienced staff to produce the necessary toolkits and to train exposed humanitarian staff on access negotiation and on how to best tackle organised crime and gangs.
3. **A stronger and more adapted advocacy by the EU** will increase the visibility and awareness of the most pressing humanitarian access constraints, especially in those contexts where IHL does not apply. Stronger engagement with governments on humanitarian exceptions is also required.
4. **Supporting the development of a dedicated regional mechanism** would benefit contextualised joint analyses of access constraints. Such a platform would complement and build on existing platforms in dealing with access constraints at regional level, supporting local and national joint analyses of risks, access obstacles, engagement options and strategies. It would also serve as a platform to facilitate experiences among humanitarian partners, and strengthen their access-related technical capacities. The mechanism would not duplicate any of the work done by the access working groups that already exist in LAC. A first pilot exercise would ideally be conducted in the coming year.

2) Humanitarian Implementation Plan 2023

Other conclusions

- Many humanitarian actors feel that they are not sufficiently equipped to deal with the challenges posed by organised crime and gangs where the traditional chains of command of armed groups may not exist, and in contexts where IHL does not apply. Hence, there is a need for a **joint understanding** among humanitarians on how to engage with these groups, including on their modus operandi (i.e. urban or transnational activity), so as to improve humanitarian access to people in need.
- **Humanitarian principles** continue to be fundamental to humanitarian action. Adherence to them generates trust, facilitates access and helps humanitarian workers safely carry out their work. However, traditional access and acceptance approaches are failing in the region and there is an urgent need to generate new strategies to overcoming current access constraints. A joint and contextualised analysis, based on shared experiences, best practices and tools, is thus required. To achieve this, **mutual trust and information sharing** among humanitarian actors is key.
- The challenges and dilemmas faced by the regions are similar to a great extent. Nonetheless, **access strategies need to be tailored** to each specific local context to maximise their efficiency.
- **Directly exposed humanitarian staff require more training on humanitarian principles and on humanitarian diplomacy** so as to generate mutual trust and improve engagement options with authorities, civil society, and organised crime and gangs. Given the high rotation of staff, constant training opportunities are required so as to sustain engagement efforts.

A dedicated **regional mechanism** could be relevant in fulfilling the following tasks.

- Provide tools for contextualised national and transnational joint analysis of access constraints and risks and support the design of access, risk mitigation and advocacy strategies.
- Address access obstacles related to the transnational nature of organised crime and gangs, monitor existing and potential restrictions and advocate for humanitarian access.
- Serve as a platform to support countries with methodologies, information (including applicable legal frameworks) and lessons learned on how to tackle organised crime and gangs, including good practices from other regions. Deliver training on humanitarian diplomacy for humanitarian staff working in relevant situations on how to tackle organised crime and gangs.
- Help overcome national political and sovereignty-related barriers by approaching governments at regional level that punish engagement with these groups. Advocacy-wise, the regional level has the added value of reducing engagement risks with some of the states.
- The mechanism would support and complement, not duplicate, efforts at national and local levels.
- There is a need to thoroughly define the **added value** of such a mechanism, together with its corresponding **terms of reference**, in order to avoid duplication or information gaps.
- Given the geopolitical issues at stake in the region, **political advocacy must be dissociated from humanitarian assistance**, especially when engaging with national governments.

Regional warm-up session – the Middle East and Eastern Neighbourhood

Soaring humanitarian needs and limited resources:
engaging non-traditional donors and new sources of financing

Background

On 18 January 2023, the Middle East and Eastern Neighbourhood regional warm-up session took place on the EU premises in Amman. More than 120 participants from 50 institutions, including representatives of local and international civil society organisations and UN agencies, government representatives from the international community and delegates from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, had the opportunity to brainstorm on innovative financing to support humanitarian needs. Representatives of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine⁽³⁾, Syria, Türkiye, Yemen and regional officers from Europe and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) attended and debated along two main questions.

- How can **additional sources of funding**, beyond traditional humanitarian donors, be mobilised, especially in protracted humanitarian crises?
- To what extent can **innovative financing instruments** from the private sector and international financial institutions be the drivers to frame new strategic partnerships with mutual interests?

Key conclusions

Do humanitarians have the full expertise to engage and find common ground with bankers, insurers and financial advisers? In other words, if financial support to a humanitarian budget is perceived as an investment in human capital and societies, are we all speaking the same language? Given that the aim is not only to attract philanthropists or charitable donations, how can we **formulate win-win scenarios** for for-profit and non-profit actors, for private and public institutions, in full respect of humanitarian principles? Asking these questions will be essential in order to engage further with the opportunities outlined below.

- The option of **joint think tanks** in which humanitarian know-how could inform private sector investments serving people in humanitarian need was explored during the consultation. There are already a few such innovative initiatives in the Middle East, in which international humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are partnering with banks and governments to advise them on the social impact of infrastructure investments serving host communities and refugees.
- **Partnering with private sector companies** to connect job offers with unemployed vulnerable individuals is an innovative approach to promoting economic inclusion and creating pathways to sustainable livelihoods. By linking job market demand with the supply of specialised low-skilled labour, this approach can help to address both the social and the economic challenges facing communities affected by humanitarian crises. While partnering with private sector companies can be an effective way to address the economic challenges facing vulnerable populations, it is important to ensure that such partnerships are structured in a way that aligns with humanitarian principles and values. This includes ensuring that vulnerable individuals are not exploited or subjected to unfair labour practices and that the partnership is structured in a way that prioritises the needs and interests of the affected communities.

3) This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

- **Humanitarian impact bonds** are a potential way forward in a protracted crisis setting such as the Middle East and North Africa. Such complex financial instruments could allow private investors to support humanitarian initiatives by providing immediate liquidities towards structural, longer-term projects while engaging traditional institutional donors on a pay-by-result approach, after a first development phase. While the proof of concept still needs to be showcased from the very few pilot projects being implemented worldwide, such approaches could have the potential to share the risks and the accountability burden between the different actors involved in a humanitarian response.
- **Risk financing insurance** is an innovative financing tool that could support humanitarian organisations in managing and transferring the financial risks associated with delivering aid by providing coverage for losses that may occur during a humanitarian crisis, such as damage to property, loss of goods or interruption of services. There are a few different types of risk financing insurance that can be used in humanitarian settings:
 - parametric insurance, which provides pay-outs based on predefined triggers such as a specific level of rainfall or earthquake magnitude;
 - index-based insurance, which is linked to an index such as food prices or economic activity and pays out when the index falls below a certain level.

By providing a financial safety net, risk financing insurance can help humanitarian organisations to better manage their financial risks and ensure that they are able to continue providing essential aid during crises. This can be especially important in contexts where the risks of delivering aid are high, such as conflict zones or areas prone to natural disasters.

In conclusion, while innovative financing mechanisms offer exciting opportunities to expand the humanitarian budget, it is important to ensure that they are structured in a way that supports localisation and strengthens the capacity of local organisations. By doing so, we can build a more inclusive, effective and sustainable humanitarian response system that truly reflects the needs and priorities of affected communities.

Regional warm-up session in Dakar

Addressing access impediments through humanitarian diplomacy

Background

Some of the main factors impeding access in the region include insecurity targeting humanitarian workers, declining acceptance of humanitarian aid, growing misinformation against humanitarian actors, mistrust from the national authorities, persistent or increasing bureaucratic and administrative impediments, national and international counterterrorism regulations and increased reluctance of several countries to apply IHL. Concrete steps related to humanitarian diplomacy ⁽⁴⁾ are urgently needed to address them.

Sixty-six senior humanitarian professionals, across 13 African countries, from international and national NGOs, UN agencies and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, together with institutional donors, virtually met on 7 and 8 February 2023 in the lead-up to the EHF to discuss how to best address access impediments through humanitarian diplomacy.

Key requests to the European Humanitarian Forum

1. **The EU and its Member States should promote inclusive and participatory frameworks to foster dialogue on access challenges and IHL implementation** between African continental and regional organisations, authorities, the UN, NGOs, donors and diplomatic focal points, including on issues such as conflict classification, the impact of counterterrorism regulations on humanitarian assistance, and bureaucratic and administrative impediments, specifically through the following methods.
 - **At country level.** Humanitarian diplomacy at this level should be enhanced by the creation of national and subnational coordination structures, placed under governmental leadership, and including the UN Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator systems, local authorities, community leaders and diplomatic and NGO focal points.
 - **At regional level.** The African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the East African Community and the Communauté Économique des Pays des Grand Lacs (Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries) should foster further discussions on access concerns including IHL implementation, the impact of counterterrorism regulations on humanitarian assistance, and bureaucratic and/or administrative impediments.
 - **At international level.** A mechanism should be set up with a dedicated humanitarian agenda, bringing together the global senior humanitarian leadership (e.g., the members of the IASC) and a group of volunteer diplomats.
 - **At all levels.** Humanitarian leadership generally and the leaders of the abovementioned established mechanisms should work to ensure efficiency, cohesion and synergies between the different levels.

2. **The EU, its Member States and the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) should ensure legislative frameworks are conducive to humanitarian assistance** and reflect IHL and international human rights law, specifically through the following methods.

4) In the absence of a United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) definition of humanitarian diplomacy, the ICRC and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies definitions were used in the warm-up sessions.

- **At country level.** The EU and its Member States should leverage diplomatic resources to ensure that recipient countries' legislative frameworks explicitly allow for principled humanitarian engagement and dialogue with all actors, including non-state armed groups (NSAGs), through:
 - humanitarian exemptions in the counterterrorism legislations and regulations;
 - strengthened accountability towards IHL and support for creative solutions to address humanitarian access impediments (crediting work by the European Commissioner for Crisis Management, Mr Lenarčič, on upholding IHL worldwide).
- **At regional level.** The UNOAU, the EU and its Member States should promote further engagement of the African Union to assist states in harmonising legislation on counterterrorism (based on the humanitarian exemption clause in the African Union's model counterterrorism law).
- **At international level.** The EU and its Member States should strengthen their compliance with IHL by introducing permanent and well-framed humanitarian exemptions in the EU sanctions regimes, and in Member States' national sanctions regimes, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2664.

3. Institutional humanitarian donors should support initiatives aiming at enhancing coordination on access issues and facilitating the safeguarding of humanitarian space, specifically through the following methods.

- **At country level.** Humanitarian donors should increase resources to strengthen coordination on humanitarian access (and related costs should be considered as direct programme costs), including on:
 - civil–military coordination (CMCoord) capacity in contexts with a predominant presence of armed actors, and innovative coordination mechanisms of engagement with NSAGs and non-traditional actors;
 - access and 'do no harm' analyses;
 - dedicated access to human resources, and training to improve negotiation skills and knowledge of humanitarian principles, delivered by independent humanitarian organisations.
- **At regional level.** Humanitarian donors should support dedicated resources for collective and mutualised efforts towards humanitarian access: development of joint monitoring tools and regional/cross-border analyses; joint training / training of trainers, or specific coaching on negotiations; and joint advocacy efforts.
- **At international level**
 - field visits by high-level humanitarian leaders are key to support advocacy efforts at country level to alleviate access constraints;
 - humanitarian leadership should develop guidelines and tools to support humanitarian country team (HCT) efforts in coordinating engagements with NSAGs and non-traditional actors.
- **At all levels.** Humanitarian, development, peace and/or stabilisation initiatives should be conducted in a coherent manner, not jeopardising the safety of populations, humanitarian space and/or access. To this end, joint conflict analysis should be undertaken with the aim of reaching a common narrative acceptable to the different actors (crediting the 2023 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Development Assistance Committee (DAC) recommendation on the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus).

4. The EU, donors and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator should engage and push for greater accountability of all actors for more principled humanitarian action, specifically through the following methods.

- **At country level.** Declining acceptance of, mistrust of and growing propaganda towards humanitarian actors were also identified as important access obstacles. The quality of the approaches in terms of ‘accountability to affected populations’ and ‘communication with communities’ should be strongly questioned and improved.
- **At international level.** The EU should set up an inclusive follow-up mechanism to track progress on the EHF 2023 recommendations and commitments.
- **At all levels.** The humanitarian leadership and institutional humanitarian donors should push for greater accountability within the humanitarian system, especially with regard to effectiveness, results, data management, and communication and advocacy, including in relation to the role of UN Resident Coordinators / Humanitarians Coordinators and OCHA on access issues and IASC requirements for HCTs and the HCT compact.

Regional warm-up session in Nairobi

Localisation: enabling equal partnerships with local responders

Background

While the grand bargain commitment of ‘making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary’⁽⁵⁾ has made noticeable progress and efforts over the preceding years in bringing forward the localisation agenda, more remains to be done in the pursuit of a meaningful and equitable partnership.

Over 40 representatives of local and international humanitarian organisations, UN agencies, and local, regional and global networks operating across the continent participated in a consultation hosted by the ECHO regional office in Nairobi on 24 February 2023, representing nine countries of the continent.

Key requests to the European Humanitarian Forum

- **Donors should provide funding as directly as possible, and support the active participation of LNAs in consortia-type models**, through the inclusion of all members in project design and steering committees, the swift and direct transfer of funds from international actors to LNAs and the earmarking of envelopes dedicated to the core institutional and structural capacity of LNAs (including for coordination and advocacy functions).
- **Donors should promote the design of pooled funds that would enable LNAs to access donor funds more directly** and reduce transactional costs and delays. This would also promote unmediated dialogue between donors and LNAs, including on the prioritisation of funding allocations.
- **Donors should further develop clear guidelines and targets** with regard to the inclusion of local actors in the projects they fund and to promote and monitor the diversification of local sub-grantees in order to avoid the risk of concentration within only a few strong LNAs.
- **Donors / international agencies should support the simplification and harmonisation of due diligence processes for local actors**, via the establishment of a ‘clearing house’ or a due diligence passporting.
- **Donors / international agencies should enforce a fair practice of indirect cost allocation** between the intermediary partner and the implementing partner as a key to channel unearmarked funding, which is essential for the proper functioning of the organisation and for meaningful capacity investments in LNAs.
- **Donors / international agencies should support the implementation of a risk-sharing framework – including for security risks –** between international and local actors and incentivise international and national actors to develop mutually fair mitigation measures at all stages of the programming cycle.
- **Donors / international agencies should support the establishment of digital regional platforms** for coordination and information sharing between LNAs and international actors, aiming at facilitating capacity building, learning and coordination, and supporting interaction with LNAs at international level.

5) Grand bargain signatories’ commitments, 2016 (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/more-support-and-funding-tools-for-local-and-national-responders>).

- **Donors / international agencies should demand more systematic inclusion and participation of LNAs in coordination structures** by advocating strongly for revisiting current power dynamics in the humanitarian coordination architecture and by ensuring that LNAs' receive the necessary support (capacity building, financial) to meaningfully contribute to the coordination structures, as part of the capacity investment plan.

Other conclusions

Indirect cost recovery and overheads: supporting and building on IASC recommendations

- Start to informally provide overheads and/or share indirect cost recovery with partners.
- Prioritise generating organisational buy-in to the issue.
- Widely publicise the issue of providing overheads to LNAs.
- Create opportunities for LNAs to advocate donors and to advocate alongside them.
- Develop organisational policies on overheads for local partners. The starting point for these policies should be a commitment to cover all of the costs incurred by partners.

Consortia models: shaping a strong local response ecosystem

- **International actors must have multi-year strategies for capacity investment / mentoring of LNAs** based on capacity and gap assessments. These must be budgeted for and translated into the capacity-building plan.
- **Clarity on the added value of each consortium member should be ensured.** Consortia must build on the added value of each member and work as a mutually accountable partnership. The contributions of local actors should be clearly highlighted in the memorandum of understanding.
- **Advisory groups are a relevant step to ensure decision-making is shared equally.**
- There is a demonstrated added value of **funds dedicated to strengthening systems**, processes, training, security management and core capacities.

Shifting from a risk-transfer to a risk-sharing mindset

- **Risk-transfer analyses and mitigation strategies** should be part of international organisations' programming cycle and they should be jointly designed with local partners while covering all aspects of risk management (fiduciary, operational, principled action, mental health burden, etc.).
- International actors must **increasingly be held accountable for risks related to bureaucratic and financial transfer delays that are then transferred to LNAs.**
- **LNAs must be involved throughout the project cycle**, not only at implementation stage. Notably, they must also **contribute to the risk assessment and the mitigation measures plan**, as theirs might differ from those of the international actors. The risk management framework needs to encompass the differential risks faced by both international and local actors.
- Switching from a mindset focused on controlling to one concerned with building trust could be facilitated by the establishment of a partnership under common minimum requirements.

Due diligence and passporting: harmonisation and reality check

- Due diligence processes need to acknowledge the **heterogeneity in institutional and organisational skill sets** across local partners and must adapt accordingly to avoid unnecessary bureaucratic impediments.
- Reflect on options to harmonise due diligence so that the burden of this process is not the heaviest on LNAs.
- Due diligence assessments need to improve on their intentionality and capture different added values of local organisations, with a view to invest in the capacity of the local actor (which needs to be budgeted for).

Coordination mechanisms: accelerating the power shift

- While there have been improvements, the **under-representation of local actors in coordination bodies** remains a significant challenge and is associated with multilayered hindrances such as the lack of resources, language barriers, unbalanced information sharing (e.g. on funding opportunities), legal limitations and a general tendency to consider the contributions of local NGOs as non-strategic.
- Donors and international actors should allow for a **paradigm change** that alters the current power dynamic. Donors / international actors should adapt to local capacity and context and avoid leading an action from their standpoint.

Global warm-up session: looking back – 1 year into the Ukraine conflict

Background

This outcome paper delves into key areas of discussion and recommendations highlighted in the warm-up session ‘Looking back: 1 year into the Ukraine conflict’. The event was held virtually on 28 February 2023, with more than 130 participants attending, both in person and online. It was co-organised by Egmont – The Royal Institute for International Relations (hereafter referred to as the Egmont Institute) and DG ECHO in the lead-up to the 2023 EHF in March.

The warm-up session investigated the lessons that can be drawn from the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine as a result of Russia’s invasion through analyses and interventions from an expert panel represented by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), DG ECHO, the UN, the International Crisis Group, Médecins Sans Frontières and Caritas Ukraine.

Panellists spoke about the challenges of maintaining a strict principled humanitarian approach in an ongoing conflict, securing humanitarian access throughout Ukraine and supporting and strengthening partnerships with Ukrainian actors. Discussions covered the issue of applying the humanitarian principle of neutrality alongside the European provision of both humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance, and providing cross-line assistance to those most in need. Panellists also examined the current barriers to humanitarian access, while addressing the funding, coordination and leadership challenges that national and local Ukrainian relief groups have reported.

The following conclusions highlight the need for transparent dialogue between policymakers, international and local humanitarian organisations operating in Ukraine and donors, in order to provide assistance in a more effective, transparent and sustainable manner.

Humanitarian principles

- The provision of different forms of assistance in Ukraine has proven complex throughout the response. The EU has provided humanitarian, political, financial and military assistance in clear support for Ukraine, which has raised questions – and still stirs debate – over the necessity of neutrality as an absolute principle. As the perception of international organisations’ neutrality across all parties to the conflict increasingly affects the delivery of assistance, there is a growing ethical call for donors to acknowledge geopolitical motives and better differentiate their discourse between humanitarian and political assistance to Ukraine.
- Furthermore, there is a need to clarify requirements and standards in terms of neutrality and humanitarianism on a local level. Networks of local volunteers and Ukrainian civil society organisations have been requested to adhere to humanitarian standards regarding the differentiation between assistance to civilians and assistance to armed forces. The international community should adhere to these same requirements. A transparent dialogue on both the international and the local stages is needed to reconcile possible double standards, particularly with an emphasis on local organisations that prioritise the solidarity approach in the provision of various forms of assistance.

Humanitarian access

- International organisations – both UN agencies and international NGOs – face different degrees of risk in expanding humanitarian access along, and on both sides of, the front lines. While access to territories controlled by the government of Ukraine is generally unhindered, many international organisations report security risks on the front lines. International NGOs remain committed to providing assistance on both sides of the front lines on the basis of need; however, access remains the main barrier. While international organisations have pursued greater partnerships with local organisations working on the front lines, there remain questions of motives as to whether these partnerships are intended to advance effective localisation or are a pathway for international actors to mitigate risks and duty-of-care constraints.
- Many local organisations are indeed equipped to enter hard-to-reach areas across Ukraine, particularly within 20 kilometres around the front lines. International NGOs and UN agencies should strengthen their collaboration and operations with local groups in order to provide effective, immediate and locally led assistance. However, there remains a need for a platform to better address and ultimately mitigate the ethical risks related to operations co-conducted by actors with a very different mindset towards humanitarian principles.
- While delivering assistance across all territories remains a key priority, humanitarian organisations describe a reluctance from donors to support cross-line humanitarian activities, which has meant that communities in Russian-controlled areas have not received sufficient humanitarian assistance. The lack of access to these areas first and foremost originates from a lack of meaningful engagement among parties to the conflict to address the humanitarian imperative, sometimes leading to a wait-and-see approach on the part of donors and other stakeholders. Attempts by humanitarian agencies to provide cross-line assistance will be hindered until the parties commit to real and humanitarian-centred diplomatic efforts.

Strengthening local partnerships

- Local Ukrainian organisations face constraints in accessing funding opportunities from international donors. Complex criteria for vetting, compliance and due diligence have presented challenges for local groups in accessing funding.
 - The Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) is a key pathway for directly funding local organisations that face capacity and resource challenges in receiving international funds. The UHF could serve to improve the sustainability of the response, as local organisations remain in great need of continued funding 1 year into the conflict. The UHF could serve as a platform to identify, vet, strengthen and align capacities with local relief groups, and support donors' capacity to identify and engage with Ukrainian organisations.
- There is a need for greater support and empowerment of local organisations within the humanitarian coordination structure and for strengthening a local partnership, rather than simply talking about localisation. UN agencies and International NGOs should invest in learning and capacity building with local organisations to prioritise their attendance, representation and decision-making within these structures, such as within the cluster system and the HCT.

Global warm-up session: reconnecting emergency responses to long-term adaptation needs

Background

This outcome paper presents the recommendations elaborated during two warm-up consultations held in February 2023 on the effects of climate change co-organised by the Egmont Institute and DG ECHO in the lead-up to the 2023 EHF.

Specifically, this paper reflects the discussion during the public session on ‘Climate-induced crises: taking stock of current risks and responses’, which involved the Federal Government of Somalia, Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS), the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and over 160 online participants. In addition, the recommendations below summarise the conclusions of the hybrid expert round table on ‘Exploring the climate finance ecosystem’, gathering over 10 organisations, including OCHA, the UN Climate Secretariat, the ICRC, Groupe URD, Development Initiatives, Climate Action Accelerator, the European Investment Bank, the Overseas Development Institute, the European Centre for Development Policy Management, the Migration Policy Institute and the European Policy Centre.

The following recommendations are directed at policymakers in the EU and its Member States, humanitarian and development organisations, and multilateral financial institutions and climate funds. Overall, the results of the consultations highlight the urgent need to **reconnect emergency humanitarian responses with long-term adaptation needs, and to do so by optimising the existing complementarity between mandates, funding instruments and implementation capacities across the humanitarian and development sectors.**

Joint recommendations to the European Humanitarian Forum

- 1. Mobilise additional climate finance.** Given the risk levels inherent to climate adaptation and resilience, particularly in fragile settings, public sources and grant mechanisms will and should continue to represent a large portion of the resources to be mobilised. At the same time, private sources and public-private partnerships have an untapped potential that should be explored further. More broadly, funding anticipatory action through humanitarian funding is not sufficient or sustainable. Instead, funds should come from complementary sources through enhanced cross-sectoral synergies (see point 3).
- 2. Channel existing and newly mobilised finance more effectively.** In addition to increasing the volume of climate finance, it is important to ensure that it reaches local communities in conflict, post-conflict and in fragile settings through tailored adaptation projects. To this end, climate finance should be delivered via flexible instruments including appropriate risk indicators, institutional risk assessment procedures and risk mitigation programmes.
- 3. Optimise complementary resources and capacities across the humanitarian and development sectors.** To build resilience in the face of multidimensional climate-related risks, it is crucial to overcome the current siloed approach to humanitarian and development programming.

The largely untapped potential for collaboration between these two sectors should be optimised through the following actions at EU and Member State levels.

- 4. Political mandate.** A mandate is required to implement the HDP nexus, starting with the delivery of humanitarian aid and investments in long-term resilience to climate shocks, including in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- 5. Governance.** Development and humanitarian donors should work hand in hand from the initial planning to the final implementation stages through country-focused, context-specific interinstitutional actions. Specifically, these actions should involve cross-departmental / ministerial / Directorate-General collaboration and happen on the basis of a clear allocation of tasks. In this sense, a common language and proactive communication on opportunities for collaboration, constraints and challenges are essential. Still, they are not sufficient on their own. Instead, we need appropriate governance structures leading to collaborative – and not only collective – outcomes for long-term adaptation and resilience building. In this respect, the mapping initiated by the IASC on how HDP nexus approaches are implemented at country level represents a potential milestone ⁽⁶⁾.
- 6. Funding.** Strengthen coordination between donors to make sure that humanitarian funding is in line with long-term development interventions. At the same time, long-term resilience investments should be embedded in humanitarian action given the global context of cascading crises.
- 7. Awareness.** Promote a common understanding of multidimensional climate risks across sectors and by all HDP, climate and finance actors by clarifying how the humanitarian and development budgets can be complementary.
- 8. Invest in local capacity to improve impact and effectiveness.** Local actors should be empowered to own and steward their own resilience-building process. This can be achieved by mobilising not only large-scale climate finance, but also small grants that can be used to fund local groups and civil society organisations. In this respect, community, diaspora and private sector funding can contribute to building capacity locally and improve impact at a local scale. In addition, localisation and partnerships with local actors should be embedded in all stages of adaptation and resilience-building actions. In the long term, in fact, adaptation interventions should have the goal of empowering local leadership and communities, and not only of enhancing their resilience through top-down interventions.

6) <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/humanitarian-development-collaboration/iasc-mapping-good-practice-implementation-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-approaches-synthesis>.

Global warm-up session: disaster risk reduction and climate change – sustainable early warning and early action

Background

This warm-up session was organised on 10 March 2023 in cooperation with Czechia, its UN mission in Geneva and the EU delegation in Geneva, assisted by the Egmont Institute. It was the third in a series of three consultations on the effects of climate change organised in the lead-up to the 2023 EHF.

The discussion focused on challenges and opportunities for implementing disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and building efficient and sustainable EWSs in fragile contexts, in line with the priorities of the former Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU. Around 120 participants joined the session online; 15 participants attended in person.

The main discussion points are outlined below.

- The UN Early Warnings for All initiative spearheaded by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has drawn attention to the fact that access to EWSs should not be a privilege but a universal right.
- Despite this, access to EWSs is still highly unequal, particularly in fragile contexts. While evidence from the Sendai framework mid-term review has highlighted that the risk of death due to natural disasters is trending down globally, over 70 developing countries show an opposite trend due to a persistent lack of capacity to reduce risk and anticipate and prepare for disasters.
- Fragile states with low public finance struggle the most to build adequate capacity for early warning and early action, which require, among other things, a reliable governance system.
- Overall, building efficient and sustainable disaster risk management, including EWSs, in fragile contexts represents an important test for the capacity of multilateral governance, development and humanitarian actors and the financing system to deliver effective responses at the appropriate scale.

Recommendations

- **Bridge the capacity gap.** This can be done in part by continuing to mobilise financial resources to build efficient EWSs:
 - getting the financing through the whole system – from global, through regional to local recipients and solutions;
 - public and private financing is necessary, including sustainable investments.
- **Promote a multichannel approach.** It is crucial to use all available communication channels to alert people at risk, taking into account the local context and the fact that warnings conveyed through multiple channels are more likely to be acted upon:
 - mobile networks, broadcast technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) are particularly effective tools;

- access to and use of these tools should be supported through closer cooperation with governments, telecommunication authorities, regulators and ICT ministries to establish regulatory systems that speed up early warning processes;
- communication at the local level should always be inclusive and target the most vulnerable, including those forcibly displaced.
- **Improve the collaboration between humanitarian and development actors.** To overcome the specific challenges of fragile states, it is crucial that the allocation of tasks ensures that warnings reach vulnerable populations who do not have access to EWSs; this includes risk awareness campaigns and education so that people react with the appropriate behaviour when they receive an alert message:
 - more broadly, coordination between governmental and non-governmental actors is fundamental in contexts where governments are non-cooperative or lack the capacity to deliver on DRR priorities;
 - relatedly, it is important to overcome the fragmentation of financing instruments and ensure that finance acts as a catalyst of cross-actor collaboration.
- **Continue to support localisation.** The following can help to achieve a greater level of localisation:
 - more balanced financing across the EWS chain and the collection of localised climate-related data;
 - greater coordination with humanitarian partners on the ground to ensure the last-mile delivery of information to, and response of, vulnerable communities;
 - diversification of the type of infrastructure to ensure greater long-term sustainability (i.e. low-cost stations can still provide accurate information; furthermore, their maintenance is more sustainable for local governments and they can be more easily managed relying only on local capacities);
 - investment in flexible local governance systems that can deliver on short-term needs while, at the same time, adapting to an evolving context (including, for example, bringing local governments in as soon as the local context allows).

EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM AGENDA

DAY 1 - 20 March 2023			
TIME	AUDITORIUM	AQUARIUM	STUDIO
08:00 - 08:50	REGISTRATION AND WELCOME COFFEE		
09:00 - 10:30	OPENING CEREMONY - Auditorium		
10:30 - 11:00	COFFEE BREAK - Riverside area		
11:00 - 12:15	Russia's war in Ukraine: protracted crisis and challenges of principled humanitarian action	Leading by example: One year into the Donor Declaration and charter on Climate and Environment	Localisation: The guidance on the promotion of equal partnerships with local responders
12:15 - 14:00	LUNCH - Riverside area		
14:00 - 15:15	Responding to an unprecedented global food crisis and averting famine	Putting IHL at the heart of external action: Ensuring accountability	Safeguarding principled humanitarian action from the unintended negative impact of sanctions and counter-terrorism
15:15 - 15:45	COFFEE BREAK - Riverside area		
15:45 - 17:00	Unlocking efficiency through flexible funding: Responding to new needs and changing operational contexts	Reaching those who suffer most: Understanding severity of needs	Addressing access impediments through humanitarian diplomacy
17:15 - 18:30	PLENARY SESSION - Auditorium The situation of women and girls in humanitarian crises: How to uphold the humanitarian principles whilst preventing a humanitarian catastrophe? The case of Afghanistan		
18:30 - 20:00	NETWORKING COCKTAIL - Riverside area		
DAY 2 - 21 March 2023			
TIME	AUDITORIUM	AQUARIUM	STUDIO
08:00 - 09:20	REGISTRATION AND WELCOME COFFEE		
09:30 - 10:45	Mitigating climate-driven disasters: Scaling up resilience and anticipatory action	Fleeing for survival: Human mobility and Forced displacement in Latin America and the Caribbean	What can donors do to support a more effective and efficient humanitarian supply chain?
10:45 - 11:15	COFFEE BREAK - Riverside area		
11:15 - 12:30	Soaring humanitarian needs and limited resources: Engaging emerging donors and new sources of financing	Stepping up the commitment to conflict-affected children: Working across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus	Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination
12:30 - 14:15	LUNCH - Riverside area		
14:15 - 15:30	Saving lives with limited resources: The need to prioritise	Boosting synergies for humanitarian action and civil protection in crisis response	The challenges of humanitarian negotiations and principled response. How far you ready to go to save lives?The case of Yemen
15:30 - 16:00	COFFEE BREAK - Riverside area		
16:00 - 17:15	Strengthening synergies between humanitarian and development actors in protracted and complex crises	Protection in urban warfare: Reducing risk to civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers in conflict	Making better use of science to respond to climate-induced disasters in an humanitarian aid context: The role of Early Warning Systems
17:30 - 18:00	CLOSING SESSION - Auditorium		

■ ACCESS
 ■ CLIMATE CHANGE
 ■ FUNDING GAP

HUMANITARIAN TALKS SESSIONS AGENDA

DAY 1 - 20 March 2023			
TIME	CINEMA ROOM	RIVERSIDE 1	
08:00 - 08:50	REGISTRATION AND WELCOME COFFEE		
09:00 - 10:30	OPENING CEREMONY - Auditorium		
10:30 - 11:00	COFFEE BREAK - Riverside area		
11:00 - 12:00	Ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian and medical personnel in armed conflict - Moving from words to action	Destroying essential services is killing innocent people –can we stop it now?	
12:15 -14:00	LUNCH - Riverside area		
13:30 - 14:30	Averting, Minimizing and Addressing Disaster Displacement: Partnerships and Integrated Approaches for Action and Support	Uprooted minds: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Displacement	
14:45 - 15:45	Expanding anticipatory action: crises and conflict, diseases outbreaks, food insecurity	Humanitarian Leadership in a fractured world	
16:00 - 17:00	How to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict settings: Turning IHL commitments into action	From commitments to Action: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Response	
17:15 -18:30	PLENARY SESSION - Auditorium The situation of women and girls in humanitarian crises: How to uphold the humanitarian principles whilst preventing a humanitarian catastrophe? The case of Afghanistan		
18:30 - 20:00	NETWORKING COCKTAIL - Riverside area		
DAY 2 - 21 March 2023			
TIME	CINEMA ROOM	RIVERSIDE 1	RIVERSIDE 6
08:00 - 09:20	REGISTRATION AND WELCOME COFFEE		
Schedule: Humanitarian Talks	Localization of the Humanitarian Response in Ukraine	Advancing digitalisation in humanitarian settings: the case of health care and employability of refugee youth	The unintended negative impact of sanctions and EU restrictive measures – [Contemporary] challenges for humanitarian organisations
10:15 - 11:15	From a Humanitarian to a Development-led approach; what is needed to achieve nationally own and locally led solutions to internal displacement?	Nexus "Cash" (Efficiency) in Anticipatory Action and Social Protection	Shifting the Architecture of Nutrition in Humanitarian Contexts
11:30 - 12:30	Better humanitarian responses to sexual and reproductive health and rights in crises	Ukraine crisis one year on: What does the data say about humanitarian conditions?	Addressing the triple nexus and climate security challenge
12:30 -14:15	LUNCH - Riverside area		
13:45 - 14:45	Starved from Life: Protecting Children from the Effects of Hunger Crises	Bridging the nexus gap: the role of innovative finance in the humanitarian sector	Collaboration for expanded refugee outcomes: evidence-based targeting and inclusion
15:00 - 16:00	Leave no one behind: rallying forced to direct climate finance to places affected by conflict and fragility	Lost in Transition: Lessons from humanitarian-development aid response transition planning in Iraq and Libya	Next-generation humanitarian partnerships: pushing the agenda on quality funding and localisation
16:15 - 17:15	Humanitarian access impediments: the reality of the frontline	Managing food crises differently: enhance humanitarian investments in agricultural livelihoods	Gang violence, humanitarian access and protection challenges: the case of Haiti
17:30 -18:00	CLOSING SESSION - Auditorium		

■ ACCESS
 ■ CLIMATE CHANGE
 ■ FUNDING GAP

The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the opinion or the position of the European Institutions, the Swedish Presidency of the Council or the organisations that took part in the event.

