RECOMMENDATIONS

from the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT
IRISH CONSULTATION • Dublin, 2 July 2015

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FOREWORD

The number of people affected by humanitarian crises has almost doubled over the past decade, and all indicators suggest that this trend will continue. Climate change, population growth and other demographic trends, protracted and recurring disasters, together with new conflicts are increasing the level of global humanitarian need. We are now at a stage whereby most crisis responses are significantly under-funded. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon has called for a World Humanitarian Summit that brings the humanitarian community together to find new ways of working to save lives and reduce suffering around the globe. This Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process will contribute to this search for a new humanitarian agenda.

Ireland's history, especially the experiences of An Gorta Mór – the Great Famine – colonialism and the struggles for independence, together with the more recent troubles in the North of Ireland, have all served to shape the Irish people and culture. These experiences are constant reminders of our potential vulnerabilities on the one hand and the necessity for a global humanitarian system that is principled and supports the needs and wants of disaster affected people on the other. As the old Irish proverb states – Aithnítear cara i gcruatán – a friendship is known in hardship.

Alongside this history of disasters and crises, Ireland has established a strong and committed humanitarian community. We have earned a reputation as a country that has cared for the very poorest of our world; a reputation which has been achieved through the work of our missionaries, aid agencies, political leaders, defence forces, and the generous support of the Irish public. The Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process engaged with this community and also contributors to the humanitarian sector, including the diaspora, private sector and academia, to arrive at recommendations for an improved humanitarian system to establish new ways of working together to reach out to all disaster and crisis-affected people. The key message that emerged from the Irish consultations is that 'affected people should be at the centre– and humanitarian action should support affected peoples to be actors in shaping their own survival and recovery'. There are calls for more and better targeted funding, enhanced global response capacity, and a (re)alignment of and more investment in disaster risk reduction and early warning, early response processes. These recommendations in this document build on the strengths of the existing system and propose change, innovation and creativity to make it fit for purpose in the future. This improved system should also actively engage with the Irish public who are always generous in supporting disaster-affected communities.

Taking a lead from the Irish saying, ní neart go cur le chéile – there is no strength without unity - it is our hope that these recommendations will be pursued collectively and developed by the wider Irish humanitarian community – NGOs, the private sector, the Defence Forces, civil society, diaspora, academia and government departments. Furthermore, we will actively share our experience and learning to inform the greater global humanitarian system to enhance collaboration in the delivery of principled humanitarian action.

Finally, we acknowledge the input and commitment of a vast range of individuals and organisations throughout this consultative process and we hope that it lays the foundation for more effective and accountable humanitarian action on behalf of the Irish people.

Steering Committee of the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process to the World Humanitarian Summit, July 2015

This document presents recommendations to guide Ireland's contribution to improve humanitarian action. It is the result of an extensive consultative process that engaged the wider Irish humanitarian community over a ten month period. These recommendations will be presented and discussed at the Irish Humanitarian Summit in July 2015 to improve our collective efforts to address growing humanitarian needs.

Background and rationale

The Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process was prompted by the United Nations Secretary General's World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) initiative[1] that seeks to bring the global community together to commit to new ways of working together to save lives and reduce suffering around the globe. This WHS will take place in Istanbul in May 2016 and is being preceded by an extensive two year global consultation process to gather the perspectives, priorities and recommendations of all stakeholders on what must be done to make humanitarian action fit for the future. The Irish humanitarian consultations are feeding into this global process and will seek to ensure better co-operation within the wider humanitarian community in Ireland.

The rationale for an appraisal of the humanitarian system stems from the fact that the number of people affected by humanitarian crises has almost doubled over the past decade, and is expected to keep rising. Today, more people are affected by conflict and disaster, more frequently, and for longer than in previous decades. Humanitarian action must continue to evolve to keep pace with our rapidly changing world and meet the needs of millions of people now, and in the years to come.

The situation is further complicated by consistent pressure to expand the humanitarian mandate. The humanitarian focus now extends beyond disaster and crisis affected people to include engagement in disaster prevention and recovery. The following statements give an indication of the challenges currently facing the global humanitarian community:

- The highest number of displaced people since World War II was reached in 2013 with 51.2 million people displaced[2], and the average period of displacement in protracted crises now lasts 20 years;

- Attacks against civilians, including extremely high rates of sexual and gender based violence, particularly against women and girls, continue to be common-place in many disasters;

- Due to issues of insecurity and/or denial of access, there is a lack of humanitarian presence in many conflict zones, and a corresponding denial of access to humanitarian relief for disaster-affected communities;

- Between 2003 and 2012, there has been a fourfold increase in major attacks on aid workers globally. In 2013, 155 aid workers were killed, and 141 kidnapped[3];

- The number of deaths through conflict has grown by 40,000 in just one year - from 123,000 in 2013 to 163,000 in 2014[4]. As of 2014, there are an estimated 300,000 child soldiers involved in conflict;

- Humanitarians are routinely responding to crises that result from political failures;

- The world is still fighting the Ebola crisis in West Africa, the first global health crisis of this scale in modern times;

- The impact of extreme weather events, now more frequent and intense as a result of climate change, continues to affect many regions, in particular Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and is eroding developmental gains;

- Over the past 40 years, the urban population in lower income and fragile countries has increased by 326%, with nearly one billion people - or a third of the developing world's urban population - living in slums, and half of the world's displaced populations living in urban areas. As has been seen in various recent urban emergencies, traditional emergency response strategies are ill-suited to congested urban environments;

- The UN's global humanitarian appeal has increased by 550% from the $3.4 billion requested in 2003 to the $18.7 billion requested in 2015, and remains chronically under-funded, especially in some of the more acute and neglected crises. Approximately 65% of the appeals for funding were met in 2013; with significant variation in the level of funding given to country appeals[5];

- The humanitarian system is over-stretched and over-stressed. It requires a re-appraisal of its *modus operandi* and a re-think on how it functions;

- The logic for Ireland's active participation in this reform process is based on a number of issues largely associated with its rich culture and tradition of humanitarian giving, and a collective commitment on behalf of the Irish humanitarian community to build a more robust humanitarian system.

At the national level:

- The range of Irish humanitarian actors has grown[6] both in terms of numbers and the scope of their actions. This community is no longer limited to a small number of Irish NGOs, the Red Cross and the government;

- Irish NGOs have internationalised, and many INGOs are well-established in Ireland;

- There are emerging actors already making valuable contributions to humanitarian action including the private sector, diaspora, the defence forces, academia and others;

- Where once Irish missionaries were the dominant actor in providing the conduit between the Irish people and highly vulnerable people globally, they are now joined by a vastly expanded Irish humanitarian community to fulfil this role. This community has an ethical and a moral responsibility to ensure continued professionalism in the delivery of humanitarian aid to affected people;

- Irish humanitarian actors have a strong tradition of active participation in regional and global networks as well as national and international educational and awareness raising programmes; and

- Ireland's history of conflict, peacebuilding, famine and migration, together with its missionary experience and extensive diaspora networks, provides a unique perspective that filters through to the mandates and actions of many Irish NGOs.

2   World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2014, UN OCHA: www.unocha.org/data-and-trends-2014
3   Aid Worker Security Report, Humanitarian Outcomes, 2014: https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents/report/summary
4   Project for the study of the 21st Century, "Death Toll in 2014's Bloodiest Wars Sharply Up on Previous Year, March". http://projects21.com/2015/03/17/death-toll-in-2014s-bloodiest-wars-sharply-up-on-previous-year/

5   World Humanitarian Data and Trends (UN OCHA, 2014) http://www.unocha.org/data-and-trends-2014/
6   The huge growth in the number and range of actors engaging in humanitarian contexts in the post-Cold War period was a global phenomenon, and Ireland was no exception. This growth was boosted in Ireland by the favourable economic conditions in the late 1990s and into the 2000s.

To this end, Irish humanitarian actors have a responsibility to contribute to both shaping an improved global humanitarian system and to influencing its realisation through participation in regional and global networks. The emerging challenge is to develop a humanitarian system that better serves the needs of disaster threatened and affected people through placing the people, their society, organisations, and local and national authorities, at its centre. This system needs to be creative in developing new policies and practices to engage meaningfully in protracted and recurring disasters and to prevent or reduce the impact of future disasters. It needs to be innovative in applying new science and technology to humanitarian action and in developing new legal and policy frameworks to address current humanitarian challenges. It also needs to be forward thinking and open to change to exploit the many successes in areas such as disaster risk reduction, improved early warning systems and increased capacities of national governments and local actors. Finally, established humanitarian actors need to engage more effectively with new humanitarian stakeholders, in line with the valuable concepts promoted by ICVA's Principles of Partnership (PoP), to establish improved systems to engage with development and peace-building actors.

Aim and Consultation Process

The aim of the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process is to develop agreed recommendations and suggest undertakings to guide Ireland's contribution to improved humanitarian action. A Steering Committee was established with representation across the main stakeholder groups (government, NGOs, diaspora, private sector and academia) to guide the research process. The research methodology employed is described in detail in the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process Phase 1 Synthesis Paper. The Consultative Process can be summarised as follows:

Phase 1:	Each stakeholder group reflected on contemporary humanitarian challenges and offered their views on key future humanitarian issues. A position paper was written for each group that helped shape the issues under review in phase 2;
Phase 2:	Was comprised of a series of focus group discussions with representation from all Irish humanitarian stakeholder groups and was organised around the issues that emerged from phase 1. The findings from these discussions are presented in this document as recommendations and suggested undertakings;
Phase 3:	The Irish Humanitarian Summit. This event will seek commitment to realise the recommendations and suggested undertakings and to discuss an agenda for their realisation; and
Phase 4:	Will involve documenting the key findings from the Irish Humanitarian Summit to feed into the WHS consultative process.

The emerging recommendations and suggested undertakings are presented in six thematic areas:

- Put disaster-affected people at the heart of humanitarian responses;

- Reaffirm the commitment to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the humanitarian principles, particularly in conflict contexts;

- Localise preparedness and responses where politically and culturally appropriate;

- Systematically integrate protection and gender-based violence initiatives in norms, policy and practice;

- Improve disaster risk reduction, community resilience and early warning; and

- Support greater coordination and consultation.

A number of recommendations cut across several thematic areas: funding/resources; gender; innovation and creativity; and security.

Funding

Funding was identified as a fundamental issue that permeated the consultative process – beginning as one of the key rationales for change, but also identified as key to transforming the current *modus operandi* of aid delivery. The importance of funding is evidenced by the many initiatives being invoked to encourage innovation and change, not least the UN Secretary General's initiative in May 2015 to establish a high level panel on humanitarian financing to examine ways to bridge the gap between rising needs and the resources available to meet them. In the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process, there was much discussion on: the realignment of aid funding towards disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction; engagement with emerging donors; advances in cash transfer mechanisms and building more robust humanitarian financial systems; and improving funding mechanisms to empower local actors and facilitate more meaningful partnerships.

Gender

Gender equality is a critical consideration in humanitarian action. Men and women have different and specific vulnerabilities during crises, and these must be understood and addressed by all of those working in humanitarian action. Women and girls are disproportionally and uniquely affected by disasters and armed conflict and the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls is in itself a life-saving action which needs to be an essential part of every humanitarian operation. Women and men in target communities must be involved in all stages of humanitarian action; including in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation phases. However, we recognise that power relations are not equal and that women's participation is often curtailed by division of labour, male control over their mobility and strict gender norms that prohibit them from participating in decisions. Women and girls have a critical role in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, and governance; equitable, durable and sustainable peace and reconciliation cannot be built without their active inclusion and engagement.

Humanitarian Innovation and creativity

Humanitarian innovations create new or improved products and services, processes, positions and paradigms through improvements and adaptations. They are aimed at improving humanitarian effectiveness, cost-efficiency and better outcomes on a transactional, incremental or transformative scale. The Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process encouraged the embracing of the innovative spirit, particularly in addressing issues of communications with the affected people, use of local knowledge and know-how, newer response modes (such as cash transfers), risk analyses and mitigation, and as the space to foster collaboration with other sectors including academia and the private sector.

Security

Staff security is a growing challenge for humanitarian organisations. 2013 saw a record number of attacks on aid workers. The *Aid Worker Security Report 2014*[7] reported 251 attacks affecting 460 aid workers, with 155 killed, 171 seriously wounded, and 134 kidnapped. 75% of all of these attacks occurred in five countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, South Sudan and Syria. While the provisional data for 2014 shows some improvement, the number of aid workers accessing disaster affected people in some of the world's most difficult operating contexts has further reduced, with a consequent reduction in the ability of highly at risk populations to access aid. Humanitarian responses are dependent on sustained access to at risk communities and – in conflict contexts - require full compliance with IHL on the part of all combatants.

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7   https://aidworkersecurity.org/sites/default/files/Aid%20Worker%20Security%20Report%20
2014.pdf

THEMATIC AREA

1:

Put disaster-affected people at the heart of humanitarian response

Affected people are both victims of disasters and the prime agents of responses to them. The importance of ensuring that affected people are at the centre of humanitarian response is widely recognised and has been made explicit in numerous policies, codes and standards; yet the tendency has been to view affected populations as 'beneficiaries' of humanitarian action, rather than as actors in their own relief and recovery.

The concepts of participation and accountability are increasingly being applied at all levels of the humanitarian discourse in a bid to enhance the appropriateness, relevance and connectedness of humanitarian action. Consultation and participation mechanisms are also increasingly built into programmes and are starting to be more widely invoked by donors as a precondition for funding. However, this recognition has not necessarily led to their practical implementation, due to many and varied reasons such as: problems of access and security; lack of understanding, knowledge or skills to support their application/implementation; and they are frequently overlooked due to a sense of urgency to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance.

There have been great advances in developing mechanisms to consult with affected people, especially during assessment phases, and including the use of new and innovative tools (mobile phones, social media, etc.). However, a number of problems persist, including the extent to which this information influences decision-making and/or is taken into account beyond the project level; and how information is relayed back or made available to communities.

Who participates and whose knowledge and opinions count in agreeing programme design, implementation and evaluation are key considerations. Enhancing the active engagement of affected people will not happen by accident. It will require a change in mind-set and the allocation of resources to build capacities on both sides: the giver and the recipient. Meaningful participation implies a paradigm shift of humanitarian stakeholders acknowledging and accepting that they are participating in a population's project, rather than the population participating in the organisation's project. Creating the conditions for participation which empowers affected people requires time, skills and resources. This is a fundamental understanding of the concept of subsidiarity.

Subsidiarity

The concept of subsidiarity states that humanitarian actions should be a support to the efforts and capacities of affected people to help them cope in times of crisis and to assist them in their recovery in a manner that enhances their resilience to future shocks and stresses. Humanitarian actors must respect the culture and capacities of affected people and recognise that the affected people are the central actors in their own survival and recovery. Subsidiarity serves as a constant reminder that humanitarian response, whether local or external, is best developed with and for affected people.

RECOMMENDATIONS
for the World Humanitarian Summit:

- Ensure gender equality in participation, representation and decision making to promote inclusive engagement of all affected people in the consultation processes.

- Commit to upholding and promoting recognised standards[8] on participation, empowerment methodologies and accountability in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes, and to developing innovative approaches for their translation into action.

- Use or develop innovative tools and approaches for establishing a meaningful dialogue with communities and people affected by crises, ensuring that information flows from and back to them.

- Reinforce the use of participatory approaches in policy-making at the level of programme / project evaluation.

- Capture learning from development experience in consultation, participation and accountability and adapt good practice to humanitarian assistance.

SUGGESTED UNDERTAKINGS
for the Irish Humanitarian Community:

- **Academia/government:** include participation, accountability and communication in programming, training and/or education curricula for humanitarian actors and increase research in the area of participation and accountability.

- **Private sector/academia/humanitarian actors[9]/government:** explore the application of platforms that allow communities of affected people to provide feedback and to evaluate humanitarian initiatives that affect/involve them, building on examples of good practice[10].

- **Humanitarian actors:** systematically include participation, engagement, empowerment, and impact indicators in all programmes, inclusive of gender, race/ethnicity and social class.

- **Private sector/academia/humanitarian actors/government:** Incentivise recognition of and compliance with the Core Humanitarian Standard and create incentives for the systematic incorporation of participation and accountability at all stages of programme design, implementation and evaluation.

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8   Including the Core Humanitarian Standard; IASC Commitments to Accountability to Affected Population and Operational Framework and Sphere.

9   In the case of suggested recommendations in this document, the term 'humanitarian actors' is used to refer to those actors whose core functions are operationally and financially related to humanitarian action.

10 The Social Collective M&E platform is an example of a cloud and mobile-based framework and database solution for youth empowerment programmes. The framework helps organisations collect, store and manage social impact data in order to build richer databases (http://www.thesocialcollective.co).

Putting affected people at the centre

During the response to the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan, humanitarian agencies invested more in accountability to affected people (AAP) than ever before, with the aim of (a) helping agencies better understand social issues, to provide appropriate assistance, and (b) helping local people and organisations better understand agencies, to manage their own recovery. Plan, World Vision, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) with UKAID carried out research into what this investment achieved. Agencies set up many different communication mechanisms. Some worked well, such as responding to individuals' concerns and a collective approach to summarising feedback. However, local people were reluctant to talk openly to agencies or to criticise them. They were highly aware of agencies' power to direct/withhold assistance, in ways that were mediated by community leaders. Affected people described their relationship with agencies as distant. Agencies invested in technological approaches, while local communities preferred face-to-face contact. Agencies did not generally make changes as a result of feedback. The term accountability was difficult for people to translate.

THEMATIC AREA 2:

Reaffirm the commitment to IHL and the humanitarian principles, particularly in conflict contexts

There is broad acknowledgment across the humanitarian community that the four core humanitarian principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence) need to be maintained and protected. Humanitarian actors, while accepting the need for change, strongly affirm that the core humanitarian principles serve to guide action and provide humanitarian actors with a sense of identity and purpose. Given the increasing complexity and protracted nature of crises and the dilemmas faced by humanitarian actors in accessing disaster-affected populations, the principles are the constant reference point around which engagement is possible. No humanitarian actor should, under any circumstances, relieve those who rightfully have the duty to protect or the imperative to act. Violence, vulnerability and the failure of belligerents to comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and the absence of political solutions to conflicts, should be identified as primary problems and addressed first and foremost. In this regard, more comprehensive and often political solutions to conflicts should remain a priority. As is evident in a number of current crises, more effort must be put on conflict and crisis prevention and resolution. Greater political and diplomatic efforts are needed to prevent and respond to large-scale conflict. The humanitarian system is over-stretched largely because of conflict. For every Typhoon Haiyan and Nepal earthquake, we have a South Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Central Africa Republic, etc.

A key outcome of the Irish Humanitarian Consultation Process has been agreement that the concept of subsidiarity should underpin all aspects of humanitarian response to complement the four existing humanitarian principles. The concept of subsidiarity states that humanitarian actions should, where possible, support the efforts of affected people to cope in times of crisis, to recover, and to build a better future. It serves as a constant reminder that humanitarian actors must respect the capacities of affected people and recognise that they are actors in their own survival and recovery. This must include men, women, boys and girls, minority groups, youth, the elderly, those with disabilities, and other members of the affected communities who may be further marginalised during a crisis.

The safeguarding of, and adherence to, the humanitarian principles has to go beyond humanitarian actors. While stakeholders may not uphold/endorse the humanitarian principles in their own right, all joint/integrated/collaborative missions need to allow humanitarian actors to uphold, and be seen to uphold, the core humanitarian principles.

RECOMMENDATIONS
for the World Humanitarian Summit:

- All actors engaged in humanitarian action should affirm their compliance with IHL in conflict contexts and their commitment to the humanitarian principles in all responses.

- Promote systematic training of combatants on IHL and increase investment at governmental level for conflict prevention and resolution initiatives.

- Greater political and diplomatic efforts are needed to prevent and respond to large-scale conflict.

- Include the concept of subsidiarity as a core humanitarian value.

SUGGESTED UNDERTAKINGS
for the Irish Humanitarian Community:

- **Humanitarian actors:** reaffirm and strengthen policies on the core humanitarian principles; provide staff with regular updates on IHL and core humanitarian principles and challenges in their application in contemporary crises; all organisations/agencies that seek to identify themselves as 'humanitarian' need to strive to maintain 'institutional space' to act in accordance with humanitarian principles.

- **Government:** actively engage in regional and global fora to progress large scale conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms.

- **Humanitarian actors/government/academia/diaspora:** collaborate through advocacy, policy and media engagement at national and global levels to ensure that the concept of subsidiarity is adopted and adhered to by the international humanitarian community.

- **Academia:** include core humanitarian principles in ongoing training and research. Provide a suitable learning environment to realise recommendations. Establish a dedicated forum for developing the concept of subsidiarity and what it means in practical terms for the humanitarian system.

Conflict: Principles and IHL

As a child, during the Lebanese civil war of the mid 1970s, I was stuck to the TV news every evening to watch the images coming out of Beirut. I was captivated by the courage of Lebanese Red Cross paramedics, waving nothing but a Red Cross flag, driving into crossfire, to rescue the dead and injured. How was it possible that such an incredibly important, humanitarian act could take place in the midst of conflict? Neutrality is never easy, and often difficult for parties to a conflict, or civilians caught up in conflict, to understand or believe - but it is essential and critical. As a delegate, I have had the privilege of mediating prisoner of war transfers, visiting people detained during conflict and delivering Red Cross messages across battle lines to families who had all but given up on ever hearing from their loved ones again. --Extract from interview with Red Cross Delegate--

A Syrian member of GOAL's staff, tells how the conflict has affected her and her family

"Before the crisis, we had a good income, a house and a car. I lived in a big city and worked with my husband. Then, without reason, the army detained my husband. He was imprisoned for 11 months. I had to leave my job and move in with my family. I lived in fear that my children would grow up without their father. When he was released, my husband left his work, afraid of being detained again. We moved away, to another city in northern Syria. I applied for a job with GOAL 20 months ago, and was accepted. We now live just like we used to, without being dependent on anyone."

"It was very difficult to leave our first house, we lost everything. It is not easy to live like a stranger in your homeland. But I believe this situation will eventually change. My children keep me going. I don't know if I will ever see my wider family again. They were a great source of comfort during the worst times; they comforted my children when their father was detained."

THEMATIC AREA 3:

Localise preparedness and responses where politically and culturally appropriate

International legal frameworks dictate that the default position in responding to disasters is through the national authorities. International humanitarian assistance is required if and when the authorities are unable or unwilling to provide humanitarian assistance to people in need, but its delivery is always conditional on the permission of the national authorities.

The international community, while acknowledging that some states may not give equal attention to large segments of their populations - or may even actively block assistance to them - must resist the urge to bypass the authorities and, instead, must work with them to help affected communities to recover from the immediate disaster and to enhance their resilience to future disasters.

In recent years, engagement with national and local authorities in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)[11] and community resilience[12] programmes has offered new entry points for the humanitarian community to engage in disaster preparedness and mitigation. All evidence suggests the need for earlier engagement to build capacities and trust between relevant actors.

In those cases where the state authorities are unable or unwilling to address suffering within their borders, and actively prevent the delivery of humanitarian assistance, there is an urgent need for a mechanism that will prevent further suffering and allow early intervention. The obvious contemporary case for this is Syria.

A strong localised response demands presence, good contextual understanding of the situation, effective systems, resourcing and appropriate capacity – at the community, national and regional levels. At community and national levels, support to local organisations and governments should not be limited to the delivery of activities. It should also focus on capacity building (to include establishing an enabling environment) and, through enhanced coordination with the development sector, strengthening systems including good governance.

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11 Disaster risk reduction is defined as the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events.

12 Resilience is defined as the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.

Decentralising humanitarian planning and response, including areas such as early-warning, DRR and preparedness, is gaining momentum, but is not sufficiently widespread. In many cases, including the recent Nepal crisis, enhanced preparedness at a municipal level, could have led to a more timely and effective response, overcoming issues of access and lack of infrastructure. Decentralised actions can also be a key and innovative tool for community empowerment, as they may help to break down isolation and promote a bottom-up approach including the participation of women and minority groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS
for the World Humanitarian Summit:

- Establish appropriate structures (entry points) at different societal levels, linking decentralised development cooperation programmes and reforms with humanitarian programmes.

- Establish longer-term relations with local government and non-government actors before a crisis and continue these relationships during and after the crisis. Such relationships can provide a solid basis for discussion and engagement on humanitarian principles amongst humanitarian actors.

- Increase and strengthen local capacity building and empowerment efforts to ensure a mutual exchange of knowledge, expertise and know-how between local and international actors.

- Promote and facilitate south-south and regional collaboration, including municipalities and local civil society actors through professional exchange programmes and joint training and research initiatives.

- Document and promote bottom-up approaches to innovation (through enhanced recognition of its potential benefits and through increased investment in research).

- Especially in complex contexts, ensure that staff are aware of good risk and security management practices that may allow them to sustain their presence to continue to deliver programmes in times of extreme need.

SUGGESTED UNDERTAKINGS
for the Irish Humanitarian Community:

- **Government/humanitarian actors:** Adapt and/or strengthen funding mechanisms so that funds can reach local actors.

- **Humanitarian actors:** Contribute to discourse amongst international humanitarian actors (NGOs, UN, and the Red Cross/Crescent Movement) around how best to strengthen partnerships with local actors and contribute to capacity development which allows humanitarian and financial resources to be channelled to them directly.

- **Government/humanitarian actors:** Advocate with other donors and with regional and national NGOs for scale up of networks and funding mechanisms which have proven effective in fostering partnerships, learning and civil society capacity, for example, the Start Network and Start Fund[13].

- **Government/academia:** Develop and provide concrete recommendations for streamlining funding policies and mechanisms across donors and the INGO community based on emerging good practice, to make them more accessible to local actors.

- **Diaspora/ government/ humanitarian actors: build the capacities of diaspora to** involve them in dialogue, identifying, where appropriate ahead of time, the most affected and vulnerable groups during a crisis.

- **Humanitarian actors:** work closely with community-based organisations to engage and involve them in shaping participatory programmes.

- **Humanitarian actors:** ensure that security management systems commensurate with the local level of threat are in place and are adaptive to changes in the local context. Staff should be trained to an appropriate level in security management. All organisations should seek to implement established good practice guidelines in relation to risk management[14].

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13 The Start Network is a consortium of 24 leading NGOs working together to strengthen the humanitarian aid system. The consortium works in three areas: Start Fund (financing for emergency response); Start Build (strengthening civil society capacity); and Start Beta (creating platforms for partnerships and learning) (http://www.start-network.org).

14 See, for example, the 'Irish Aid Guidelines for NGO Professional Safety & Security Risk Management', 2013

Localised Response

Irish Aid and ActionAid through child sponsorship fund an ongoing programme in Nepal, which has built the capacity of the local team and local communities.

ActionAid has trained and supported women-led Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Committees throughout Nepal. These DRM Committees were deployed immediately after the earthquake and have assisted ActionAid in completing their rapid needs assessments as well as selecting the vulnerable groups targeted as programme beneficiaries and participants.

Thanks to this local ability, ActionAid was able to respond immediately, mobilising its wide network of local staff, partners, women's rights volunteers and youth groups to deliver emergency supplies to those most in need.

THEMATIC AREA 4:

Systematically integrate protection and gender-based violence initiatives in norms, policy and practice

Over the past fifteen years, there has been an increase in norms and policies addressing the protection of civilians and the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict zones. An increasing number of organisations which were not specifically or legally mandated to protect civilians have integrated protection into their work, either as stand-alone projects or mainstreamed throughout their actions. Yet, over the same period and in most humanitarian crises, protection of civilians has, at best, been reactive, integrated or strengthened only after severe human rights violations and human suffering have taken place, often in contexts where these violations could have been prevented through early action. In addition, protection programmes are consistently under-funded in UN humanitarian appeals.

While there is a need to ensure that the protection of civilians is prioritised and properly addressed within different legal frameworks and norms (in particular in peacekeeping missions), the application of protection norms and policies needs to be further researched, developed, implemented and evaluated, taking into full account how communities and populations protect themselves.

Protection activities undertaken by humanitarian actors should not, under any circumstances, relieve those who rightfully have the duty to protect or the imperative to act.

RECOMMENDATIONS
for the World Humanitarian Summit:

- Support dialogue, exchange and capacity building on protection and the prevention of gender-based violence at the local level. In particular, support discussion on the needs and experiences of civilians themselves so that they are reflected at policy and operational levels of humanitarian interventions.

- Systematically provide training on protection and gender-based violence to civilian and military staff in UN and regional peacekeeping missions at the onset of their deployment, and ensure accountability and transparency on gender-based violence with emphasis on zero-tolerance of abuse among humanitarian actors.

- Prioritise addressing impunity and bringing perpetrators to justice at all levels and across all actors, engaging with affected communities, including using models for local/traditional justice systems.

- Integrate gender-based violence prevention and response as a priority at the core of intervention planning. Provide funding for GBV programmes immediately without waiting for data, recognising that GBV occurs in every emergency.

SUGGESTED UNDERTAKINGS
for the Irish Humanitarian Community:

- **Humanitarian actors/government/academia/diaspora:** Explore options for building excellence in training and research in protection and gender-based violence, building on the advocacy efforts of the Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence and in collaboration with international expertise.

- **Humanitarian actors:** Demonstrate in all strategic and operational plans for humanitarian engagement that protection is a primary need and response. Increase and strengthen programming on gender and protection in humanitarian crises.

- **Government:** increase targeted humanitarian funding for protection and GBV to incentivise more and better quality programmes.

- **Humanitarian actors/government/academia:** Ensure training on protection and GBV for all staff.

PROTECTION AND GBV

Louise Nyiranolozi (42) has fled fighting in DRC five times. Her family was living in hiding in the bush when her husband and three children got sick. They all died in the same week. Today, Louise and her remaining children (two sons, three daughters and a three-year-old girl she rescued on the roadside) live in a camp for those displaced in eastern DRC.

As part of her work with the Oxfam-supported women's protection forum established to prevent, mitigate and respond to a range of risks prevalent in conflict settings, including sexual and gender based violence, Louise now counsels other women whose lives have been affected by the conflict. "Working for others is my talent and my nature," she explains. "I have learned a lot with the women's forum, and the women trust me and listen to me." Among the women she has helped is Sylvie Mapendo, a 25-year-old mother of four whose husband died while they were living in Buporo. "She is young and has been through the same things as me. I tell her, 'yes, it's hard, but it's possible to survive'."

THEMATIC AREA 5:

Improve disaster risk reduction, resilience and early warning

Largely driven by climate change, the frequency and impact of 'natural' disasters is increasing. Some strategies exacerbate rather than address the challenges posed by natural weather events. When considering the nature and impact of disasters, there is a tendency to pay less attention to the impact of the multiple, less visible, but far more frequent smaller scale events which, cumulatively, are highly destructive, undermining many of the socio-economic gains derived from development interventions.

Despite the broad acknowledgement that DRR is the responsibility of development actors, it has largely been driven by the humanitarian sector. Based on the increasing frequency and impact of disasters, humanitarian actors have argued that disasters should not be seen as a brief dip on the curve to development but a danger to the process itself[15], and that sustainable development is unobtainable unless their impact on communities, particularly vulnerable communities, can be reduced. Humanitarian actors have argued that understanding risk, vulnerability and capacity should be central to the identification, design and delivery of all development interventions. The approach has partially been overtaken by the concept of community resilience, but the reality remains that a substantial degree of DRR interventions continue to be funded from humanitarian budget lines. Given the limited level of funding made available for DRR interventions[16] relative to the scale of needs, either the humanitarian budget lines need to be increased or a much greater share of DRR programming should be funded by the development budget. Most humanitarian actors argue for the latter. This is not only to protect humanitarian budget lines, but as a practical acknowledgement that DRR, strengthening community resilience and early warning systems cannot be funded or developed in short-term funding cycles.

There are vast and growing numbers of people living in urban slums, and in conditions in which multiple hazards could result in large numbers of fatalities. The current lack of attention being given to DRR in slum areas must be addressed. Greater efforts must be made to make communities more resilient to predictable hazards and to incorporate Build Back Better strategies into post-disaster stabilisation and recovery interventions, while integrating these into development programmes as early as possible in the recovery cycle.

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15 World Disaster Report. IFRC 2001
16 Various studies have shown that DRR financing has been both modest and largely derived from humanitarian budget lines. The amount spent on DRR is just 0.4% of total international aid, and has come largely from humanitarian budgets. This needs to change.

RECOMMENDATIONS
for the World Humanitarian Summit:

- Advocate and support national governments to prioritise planning and investment in participative and people-centred DRR and preparedness initiatives, including through advocacy with donors providing support to national governments.

- Integrate and increase the availability of development funding at municipal level, including for capacity building, planning and response, within national action plans and budgets.

- Review development funding mechanisms to ensure that funds can be channelled to national and local actors for emergency mitigation and preparedness activities and establish targets for funding local capacity and NGOs across the donor community.

- Use available/new technology to strengthen identification, assessment and monitoring of disaster risks and to enhance early warning.

- Advocate for joint/shared risk analyses that include acute shocks and chronic stresses and are kept updated and used for programming and policy responses.

SUGGESTED UNDERTAKINGS
for the Irish Humanitarian Community:

- **Humanitarian actors:** provide capacity development on DRR, community resilience and early-warning to local actors to ensure capacity remains beyond the short term.

- **Humanitarian actors:** examine and apply tools for assessing risk, hazards and vulnerabilities that can be replicated and contextualised to develop joint context analyses (such as the Irish National Risk Register and the OECD-DAC resilience analysis).

- **Humanitarian actors:** engage with other sectors such as livelihoods, human rights and gender, migrant and refugee rights, to establish bridges between complementary activities.

- **Government/humanitarian actors:** support longer term commitment and flexible funding instruments, where feasible, to allow context-specific responses to adapt to local realities, changing contexts and increasing local capacity at different points in time.

DRR, Resilience and Early Warning

Africa is rapidly urbanising. 38% of Africa's population were estimated to be living in urban settlements in 2010, and this figure is expected to rise to 50% by 2030. However, surveillance systems and response indicator thresholds are based on and designed for rural populations. Concern Worldwide is leading on a new Urban programme (Indicator Development for Surveillance of Urban Emergencies) that addresses this gap by identifying suitable indicators and thresholds to predict and avert urban food security crises. Working initially in the Nairobi slums , the programme has collected a wealth of data across sectors that has been analysed, and a suite of key indicators has been identified that can be used to trigger early and appropriate responses. The next step is to work with actors to set thresholds for these responses. Building on this success, Concern Worldwide plans to expand the project to Mogadishu, Addis Ababa and to many other urban contexts across the 28 countries in which they are working.

THEMATIC AREA 6:

Support greater coordination and consultation

Coordination, consultation, engagement and sharing information are crucial concepts that should enable actors to better address the needs of vulnerable groups and respond to emergencies more effectively and efficiently. Effective humanitarian coordination should bring together relevant local, national, regional, and international actors and ensure a common understanding of the urgent needs and response gaps.

Great efforts to improve coordination between humanitarian stakeholders have been made over the past decade, with, notably, the establishment of the cluster approach in 2005 and improved leadership as an intended result of the Transformative Agenda since 2011. While the cluster approach in many countries welcomes national and local NGOs, its *modus operandi* frequently limits local NGO engagement, and the level of information is not always appropriate for local actors. This inability to significantly engage local actors severally limits the potential to capitalise on valuable local knowledge and insight, and to establish entry points to local and national systems.

While coordination mechanisms have led to an increase in the effectiveness of humanitarian action, a number of challenges persist. These include problems of capacity to engage in coordination mechanisms and the barriers to effective participation due to, *inter alia*, the amount of time and resources required for organisations to participate – something that has often lead to the exclusion of local actors. In addition, coordination systems have rarely, if at all, been integrated to enhance accountability to affected populations.

Collaboration between international humanitarian actors can, in many instances, be hindered by increasing negative competition for humanitarian funding. Competitive tendering and other such processes need to be designed in a manner that is progressive rather than wasting already limited resources. The Irish public looks to the humanitarian community to help address the growing global needs. Frequently, there are multiple messages from disparate humanitarian actors that convey a degree of competition rather than complementarity or coherence. While there are very positive collaborative efforts between Irish organisations, they do not get sufficient media attention. The Irish public needs to hear how Irish agencies work together on a regular basis in sharing information and resources, joint programming, shared logistics, flights, etc. The challenge is for the Irish humanitarian community to build and nurture trust with the Irish public while contributing to collaborative efforts to meet the needs of affected populations more effectively.

Finally, insufficient efforts have been made to promote and strengthen south-south and regional collaboration. Regional networks with broad representation should be promoted to ensure sharing of experiences and know-how.

RECOMMENDATIONS
for the World Humanitarian Summit:

- Support and strengthen existing coordination mechanisms, in particular the cluster approach, so that they are effective – including at sub-national levels - and are accessible to national and local actors.

- Improve consultation processes with local communities and their representatives in coordination structures. Ensure that ethnic minorities, women and women-led organisations are meaningfully engaged and given an equal opportunity to participate in such mechanisms.

- Strengthen international coordination standards and principles and develop benchmark indicators against which to evaluate collective action.

- Support and strengthen initiatives aimed at mapping agency presence on the ground, using new and innovative technology that is accessible to all relevant stakeholders.

- Improve coordination between humanitarian, development and other sectors both for humanitarian response and DRR/community resilience initiatives. The recommendations must go beyond a conceptual suggestion to sketching an actual action – the 'what' must be supported by the 'how', especially when recommendations are not new and have been highlighted as weaknesses in many different places.

- Increase human and financial resources for NGOs – international and national - to engage as cluster co-leads.

SUGGESTED UNDERTAKINGS
for the Irish Humanitarian Community:

- **Humanitarian actors/government/academia/diaspora/private sector:** collaborate to establish joint mechanisms across a range of programming activities and share information with the public. Respect for, and affirmation of, the Principles of Partnership would greatly facilitate this process.

- **Humanitarian actors:** Explore options to expand existing coordination to facilitate stronger consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the diaspora, the Irish Defence Forces and the private sector.

- **Private sector/academia/NGOs/diaspora:** Map Irish humanitarian actors and improve coordination on local, national and global humanitarian issues. Build the capacity of the diaspora to participate in forum of coordination and consultation.

- **Humanitarian actors/government/academia/diaspora/private sector:** Establish an Irish Innovation Forum for Humanitarian Action, mobilising the Irish private sector, academia (greater collaboration between higher education institutions as well as improved engagement with the larger Irish humanitarian community) and government and non-governmental actors to work together on a regular basis.

- **Humanitarian actors/government/academia:** collaborate with Southern researchers for joint research programmes.

Coordination and Consultation: Humanitarian System

In coordinated responses, Caritas actively engages in the UN cluster system which enables it to draw on the expertise and learnings of other agencies (and conversely share its own). It guards against duplication and helps to standardise the response of all agencies. The provision of joint Caritas programme information to clusters improves transparency and helps to drive accountability within responses.

After Typhoon Haiyan, for example, Caritas Philippines collected and collated Who, What, Where information for all Caritas partners working directly or supporting projects in the Philippines. This information was provided to UNOCHA to allow for better NGO coordination of activities, improved mapping of needs and identifying gaps in assistance. At the same time, Caritas offered the cluster system their knowledge from years of experience working and building community networks in the Philippines.

Trócaire is a member of Caritas Internationalis, a global network of 164 Catholic Church organisations. Caritas partners from around the world work closely together to plan and preposition supplies, assess needs, pool resources and deploy skilled humanitarian personnel to support emergency programmes.