

Dutch Humanitarian Aid: now and in the future

A sector consultation in preparation of the Netherlands
Humanitarian Summit (2015)



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This report is based on interviews and workshops with representatives of Artsen Zonder Grenzen, CARE Nederland, Cordaid, HealthNet TPO, ICCO &Kerk in Actie, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, afdeling Humanitaire Hulp en Wederopbouw, het Nederlandse Rode Kruis, Oxfam Novib, Save the Children, Stichting Vluchteling, War Child and ZOA. This report was discussed during a Round Table meeting with those organizations on 3 October, 2014. This Round Table discussion will be part of the Dutch Humanitarian Summit on February 12, 2015.



The Dutch Humanitarian Summit is an initiative of: CARE Nederland, Cordaid, HealthNet TPO, Humanity House, ICCO &Kerk in Actie, NCDO, het Nederlandse Rode Kruis, Oxfam Novib, Save the Children, Stichting Vluchteling, University Groningen, War Child and ZOA.

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Executive summary

The number of humanitarian crises has seldom been so high as in the Summer of 2014. Ukraine, Syria, Gaza, Iraq, Lybia, South Sudan, Central African Republic, the Ebola Virus, and so on. Without the efforts of humanitarian organisations, the level of casualties and damage would be much higher. The co-occurrence of all these crises also unveils the complexities and challenges of aid and how these change in different types of crisis. Security issues often stand in the way of aid delivery; human and financial resources are scarce and may not be optimally deployed, political forces around the crisis can paralyze aid efforts and in some cases the very principles and effectiveness of humanitarian aid have become an issue.

The questions forwarded by these crises play a role in the preparation of the Dutch humanitarian summit that 12 organisations convene on 12 February 2015, in the Hague. In the Summer of 2014, the participating organisations have had workshops and interviews with the authors of this report, in order to detail the everyday problems encountered in their work. This report summarizes the outcomes of these workshops and interviews.

The Dutch Humanitarian Summit aims to formulate lessons and visions for the future of the humanitarian sector in the Netherlands, and recommendations. This report intends to support the directors and management of the participating organizations in formulating concrete objectives and the agenda for the Dutch Summit. The Dutch Humanitarian Summit also aims to prepare for the international World Humanitarian Summit, organized by the United Nations in 2016 in Istanbul, with the objective of defining changes in humanitarian aid and preparing aid for the future.

Eleven aid organizations will participate in the Dutch Humanitarian Summit as well as the department of Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction of the Directorate of Stability and Humanitarian Aid of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Chapter 2 of this report describes briefly the Dutch humanitarian field of activity and the diversity of the organizations involved. Organisations differ in their scope (developing countries or focused on crisis areas only) and mandate (humanitarian or broad); their international embedding with practically all organisations being part of a larger constellation; and their implementation mode: through partners, direct implementation or a combination of both. Diversity leads to specialisation and complementarity and can be a major strength of the system. A fundamental question for the Dutch Humanitarian Summit relates to the organizations' common agendas for improving humanitarian aid in the future taking into account the uniqueness and diversity of the group.

Chapter 3 introduces a typology of crises with their most important characteristics and the questions which play a role in humanitarian aid. The typology consists of five types of crisis: high-intensity violent conflicts; fragile settings; refugees and displaced; disasters triggered by natural hazards; and biological, chemical and nuclear disaster. The Chapter brings out that the specific developments and problems of humanitarian aid today depend strongly on the type of crisis. The different categories of crisis are not clearly demarcated and may strongly interrelate. Where types of crises hinge or overlap, most friction occurs regarding the financing, support, approaches and practices of aid. The most important issues brought up in this Chapter are:

- How can humanitarian aid better take into account the different types of crises?
- Is the humanitarian capacity – worldwide and in the Netherlands – sufficiently equipped for the different types of crises?
- How can access to people in need be improved, especially in crises with high intensity violence?
- What is the role of the humanitarian community in biological, chemical and nuclear disasters?

Chapter 4 describes a number of themes that have been identified regarding the implementation of aid, i.e. the access to people in need; questions with regards to principles and approaches of aid; linkages between relief, reconstruction and development; the role of national governments in crisis response; and gender in humanitarian aid. For each of these themes, three to four current issues are being discussed. The most important issues in this Chapter are:

- Access to people in need, mainly in crises with a high intensity of violence, and the role of local partners.
- The humanitarian diplomacy competence of humanitarian actors to negotiate with local institutions to get access to people in need.
- The role of principles and different approaches in response to crises, where approaches can be complementary, yet may at times be contradictory. Certain approaches are more appropriate for certain types of crises. Especially where the types of crises overlap or coincide, tensions may arise around different approaches.
- The role of faith-based organizations, which can often operate in an effective manner, but may also bring about specific risks.
- The ability to quickly adapt by switching between relief and reconstruction programming is important in many situations, yet remains complex as it also requires adaptive action in the institutions of donors and coordination mechanisms.
- The continuation of funding mechanisms, especially with regard to gaps between relief and development.
- The role of government in crisis areas where the type and phase of the crisis plays a role as well as the ways in which organizations deal with critical observations and experiences with the government.
- It is, and remains important, to negotiate gender in the right manner in humanitarian aid. Gender blindness or the wrong approach can have negative consequences for the position of women.

Chapter 5 deals with themes concerning the organizations and coordination of international aid, i.e. the role of the United Nations; the role of international NGOs; the financing of aid; the so-called new players; and humanitarian standards. The international system is important to the Dutch organisations, as practically all of them are embedded in international constellations, which co-determines their principled and implementing decisions. Local populations also often perceive the international presence as a amorphous system, and as a result they will judge individual interventions on the basis of their images of and experiences with the ensemble of aid organisations. The main issues are:

- Coordination has significantly improved, but the role of the United Nations may be evaluated with regard to the different political roles: the combination of coordinator and implementer of aid and the efficiency of aid.
- The development of large organizations, many embedded in international networks, has many advantages for integrating aid efforts, yet may also constrain the flexibility and adap-

tive capability of the sector.

- The flexibility of humanitarian aid needs to be secured through financing so that aid can adapt in all types of crises to the changing circumstances.
- The gap between policy and practice in humanitarian aid deserves attention; a large number of tools and guidelines are not widely known and implemented.

Chapter 6 discusses themes relating to the relation between Dutch humanitarian organisations and Dutch society, i.e. the Dutch government policies; collaboration and advocacy; constituencies and public support; and supervision of aid. Despite their diversities, Dutch organisations are seen as a sector, in the eye of the media and the public, and hence there are different issues with regards to the positioning of aid in Dutch society. The most important issues in this Chapter are:

- The Dutch humanitarian policy is more differentiated in recent years between attention to reconstruction and protracted crises. The scope of humanitarian aid in case of natural disasters now includes disaster preparedness, while disaster risk reduction is considered to fall under the broader agenda of development cooperation.
- There are questions about the choice of funding of the Dutch policy. The Minister of Foreign Trade and Aid has recently announced some policy changes and made additional budget available for humanitarian assistance by NGOs.
- Dutch organizations consider the need to individually and collectively improve their competence regarding humanitarian diplomacy.
- Sometimes, there is tension between profiling individual organizations and strengthening the popular support-base of humanitarian aid in society.

Supervision of humanitarian aid has not yet received systematic attention.

Chapter 7 concludes the report. The last 20 years has seen many developments and improvements in humanitarian aid. Especially in cases of natural disasters, aid has vastly improved. In a number of countries the national response capacity has been strengthened and much has been achieved in the domain of disaster risk reduction. The international humanitarian system has become more effective in saving lives, visible amongst others in sharply reduced mortality during natural hazards and extreme drought. Coordination mechanisms have developed and – with the aid of new technologies – aid is more premised on local capacities and the resilience of affected populations.

There are also problems and issues of concern. Many problems are related to the context of humanitarian crises. Logistical challenges are often huge, many situations are characterised by wicked problems or experience daily or frequent violence. There are also concerns that are related to the sector. This may include negative side-effects of improvements, such as for example the discussions that are raised about the central role of the UN, that has been strengthened 10 years precisely to remedy the fragmentation of aid.

Aid must be premised on the specific context and the type of crisis (open conflict, fragility, refugees and displaced, natural disasters or biological/ chemical/ nuclear disasters). Especially at the junctures of different types of crises and modes of aid, most critique on aid comes out. This is often related to organisational politics, bureaucracy and a lack of flexibility.

There has been much innovation in the past years through the development of new technologies and new partnerships, for example between humanitarian organisations and the private

sector. Much may still be gained in these two domains and innovation will therefore feature prominently during the Dutch humanitarian summit, as well as the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

Based on the workshops and interviews with the 12 organisations, the following issues are most relevant to table during the Netherlands Humanitarian Summit.

- Access to people in need in highly violent conflict situations and the extent in which the international and local humanitarian agencies are equipped to work in these circumstances.
- The coordination of aid, including the role of the United Nations that has multiple roles in coordinating, implementing and financing aid, while the humanitarian bodies of the UN also have a direct link with its political and military components.
- How can the linkages between relief, rehabilitation and development in different types of crises be improved? How can organisations better switch operations when the context changes in such a way that they make optimal use of local capacities and resources? How can humanitarian donors improve the continuity between relief, rehabilitation and development?
- How can international humanitarian organisations improve their strategies and practices of respecting the sovereignty of national governments and seeking collaboration within the parameters of their mandate?
- How can Dutch organisations strengthen their public support in the Netherlands and how can they continue their honest discussion about quality of aid with each other and the public at large?

Many staff in Dutch organisations expressed in the workshops and interviews the need for more sector-wide discussion and learning facilities. This raises the question whether it is timely and feasible to set up a knowledge centre for humanitarian aid in order to enhance the learning capacity of the sector.

The World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 aims to prepare the humanitarian sector for the future. It is anticipated that humanitarian needs will increase, as a result of conflict, natural hazards, climate change and continuing population growth. In many countries, these growing needs will largely be dealt with by increased response capacity of national government and civil society. But not everywhere. There will always be countries and crises where direct assistance of the international humanitarian community is vital. It will thus remain highly relevant to invest in an international humanitarian sector that centres on the promotion of human dignity and is professional, effective, accountable and learning.



1

Introduction

The summer of 2014 proved immensely challenging for the humanitarian world.

The number of humanitarian crises has rarely been as high as in the summer of 2014: Ukraine, Syria, Gaza, Iraq, Libya, South-Sudan, Central African Republic, the Ebola-virus, and so on.

This reality calls for huge humanitarian effort and without the actions of humanitarian organizations the number of victims and the damage inflicted by these crises would be much higher. At the same time, these crises show how complicated it is to get access to people in need and the challenges presented to the humanitarian system by the different types of crises in the world. Insecurity is a problem for humanitarian aid; human and financial resources are low or not being used in the most optimal way. The political sphere in a crisis can paralyze aid and in some cases questions are being raised on the principles and effectiveness of aid.

The summer also shows that humanitarian crises have different forms. The challenges they create for the politics and practice of humanitarian aid are many and various.

- In Ukraine a superpower captured the humanitarian role and a major question arose about the political and military interventions of aid convoys were?
- The Ebola crisis exposed the eroding healthcare system in West-Africa and the lack of response capacity for this type of epidemic.
- In Syria, access to people in need is a major problem. Humanitarian efforts to negotiate access with the Assad regime or with fighting parties like 'Islamic State' is full of dilemmas and can be harmful for aid workers.
- In Gaza, a short period of extreme violence led to demand for reconstruction and it seems that the solution of the Palestine issue – one of the oldest refugee problems in the world – is becoming more remote again.
- The Central-African Republic and South Sudan are protracted crises where periods of emergency alternate with periods of development and institution building without being able to prevent the next outbreak of violence.
- Countries like the DRC, Somalia and Afghanistan got little media attention this summer. They pale amidst the immediate emergencies but humanitarian action continues unabated. Acute needs are the order of the day while international organizations also try to contribute to the complex problems of healthcare and other services in the context of fragile state building.

The practices in current crises raise difficult questions, which will be important in the preparation for the Dutch Humanitarian Summit on 12 February 12, 2015 which will be organized by 13 Dutch organizations. The Dutch Humanitarian Summit is part of a process of reflection, discussion and change concerning the fundamentals and practice of humanitarian aid. Prior to the Summit, the participating organizations have discussed in workshops and interviews¹ with the authors of this report the issues they encounter in their day-to-day work and how they view the future of their humanitarian work. This report reflects this round of discussions with the organizations.

The workshops were based on a discussion paper covering international literature on trends in humanitarian aid including humanitarian principles, the role of national governments, the transition of emergency aid towards development, access to crisis areas and new donors.² The agenda in the workshops was open and gave space to those questions which were relevant and timely for the organization concerned. Besides gaining new insights for this report, the workshops were also meant to enhance reflection within the organizations. One of the objectives of the process towards the Dutch Humanitarian Summit is to contribute to discussions within organizations about their humanitarian policy, their effectivity, the challenges they face for the future of humanitarian work, and the way they deal with those challenges.

The Dutch Humanitarian Summit aims to formulate lessons and visions for the future of the humanitarian sector in the Netherlands, and recommendations. This report intends to support the directors and management of the participating organizations in formulating concrete objectives and the agenda for the Dutch Summit.

The Dutch Humanitarian Summit also aims to prepare for the international World Humanitarian Summit, organized by the United Nations in 2016 in Istanbul, with the objective of defining changes in humanitarian aid and preparing aid for the future.³ The Dutch Summit is also relevant with regard to the 'World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction', which will take place in Sendai, Japan in March 2015,⁴ where the international framework for response action will be reviewed. The problems of fragility – countries or situations where (state) institutions are so fragile so that humanitarian crises have a permanent character or the continuing threat to fall back into crisis – will also play a role in the review of the Millennium goals in 2015.⁵

In addition to the product of workshops and interviews, this report is based on the following resources:

- A series of lectures in 2012 and 2013 about the quality and future of humanitarian aid ahead of the organization of the Dutch Humanitarian Summit⁶
- Aid and reconstruction literature
- Observations from 15-years of research into international humanitarian aid by Dorothea Hilhorst

¹ There were 8 workshops and 4 interviews with representatives of the organizations. The participation of the workshops varied from 6 to 60 persons. Besides, there has been an interview with Rene Grotenhuis, who currently is the chairman of the SHO.

² Dorothea Hilhorst and Eline Pereboom (2014). Background paper for a round of consultations with Dutch humanitarian actors in preparation of the Netherlands Humanitarian Summit (unpublished).

³ Specific objectives of this international Summit will be defined in regional consultations, see www.worldhumanitarianissummit.org. The Netherlands plays a significant role in the European preparation for the Summit which take place during Dutch chairmanship of EU.

⁴ For more information, see: www.wcdrr.org

⁵ For more information, see: www.un.org/millenniumgoals

⁶ Debate series *Changing Humanitarian Aid* 2012–2013, with amongst others: Linda Polman, Rik Delhaas, Thea Hilhorst, Alpaslan Özerdem, Andrea Binder, Mark Duffield, Frank Furedi, Hugo Slim and Yves Daccord

A concept version of this report is provided with feedback of the participating organizations to the Summit, as well as comments by Ed Schenkenberg, Director of HERE-Geneva.

Chapter 2 of this report describes briefly the Dutch humanitarian field of activity and the diversity of the organizations involved. Chapter 3 introduces a typology of crises with their most important characteristics and the questions which play a role in humanitarian aid. One of the main findings of the workshops and interviews is that different types of crises evoke different problems with humanitarian aid. Chapter 4 describes a number of themes that have been identified regarding the implementation of aid. Chapter 5 deals with themes concerning the organizations and coordination of international aid, and Chapter 6 describes themes relating to the relation between Dutch humanitarian organisations and Dutch society.



2

Diversity of Dutch Humanitarian organizations

Eleven aid organizations will participate in the Dutch Humanitarian Summit as well as the department of Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction of the Directorate of Stability and Humanitarian Aid of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Just like other countries in Western-Europe and Northern-America, the Netherlands has many organizations engaged in international development and a number of these also engage in the field of humanitarian aid. It is a diverse company. In addition to the obvious differences like size and background of the organizations, there are several parameters of diversity in humanitarian organizations.

2.1 Specialism in crisis areas and/or specific humanitarian mandate

- A number of organizations have a broad profile and work in a broad field, not only in crisis areas. Humanitarian aid is part of a broader mandate for Cordaid, ICCO & Kerk in Actie, Oxfam Novib, and Save the Children.
- A number of organizations are specialized in working in crisis areas⁷ in which they have a broad mandate that can include emergency aid, reconstruction and development: CARE Nederland, HealthNet TPO, Stichting Vluchteling, War Child, ZOA.
- A couple of organizations are specialized in working in crisis areas and have a specific humanitarian mandate: Doctors Without Borders and the Netherlands Red Cross.

⁷ Some organizations are part of a network that in itself is broadly oriented, while the Dutch part has a 'crisis profile', like CARE Nederland.

Profile/Mandate	Humanitarian	Broad
Crisis Areas	Artsen Zonder Grenzen, Het Nederlandse Rode Kruis	Care Nederland Healthnet Tpo Stichting Vluchteling Warchild ZOA
Development Countries		Cordaid ICCO & Kerk in Actie Oxfam Novib Save The Children

2.2 International embedding

Almost all Dutch organizations are part of greater organizational collaboration.

- A number of organizations are part of an international movement with chapters in many different countries: CARE, Caritas International (Cordaid), ICCO-Cooperation, the Red Cross, Save the Children.
- A number of organizations have sister organizations in some other (mostly Western) countries: Doctors without Borders, Oxfam Novib, Stichting Vluchteling (relationship with International Rescue Committee), War Child.

2.3 Way of implementation

There is a prevalent idea that Dutch organizations provide humanitarian aid themselves but that is often not the case: organizations frequently work through implementing partners.

- By far the most organizations work with local partners. These are the national members of an international network and/or government and/or non-governmental organizations in the implementing countries. Sometimes collaborations are only instrumental meaning that part of the work is subcontracted for reasons of efficiency and effectivity. Frequently, however, a component of capacity development forms an additional objective.⁸
- A number of organizations implement projects directly: in the Netherlands, primarily Doctors without Borders and HealthNet TPO. This does not mean that there is necessarily a majority of westerners involved in the implementation of these projects. At Doctors without Borders, besides the international staff there is also a large local staff and the organization collaborates in certain areas with local (governmental-) clinics. At HealthNet TPO, the whole staff is preferably local.
- A number of organizations combine both ways of implementation. For example, Cordaid works mostly via the local Caritas or other development organizations and also has the capacity, if needed, to implement projects directly itself in case of emergencies. ZOA im-

plements projects itself but actively seeks partners for implementation and capacity development purposes. The Dutch Red Cross works with sister organizations in many countries and also has the possibility to add small-scale expertise to these national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies.

2.4 Concluding

The Dutch field of work is - like in other countries - very diverse. This can be valuable in practice, because it can lead to specialization and complementarity. A fundamental question for the Dutch Humanitarian Summit relates to the organizations' common agendas for improving humanitarian aid in the future taking into account the uniqueness and diversity of the group.

⁸ Gemma van der Haar, Dorothea Hilhorst (2009). *Partners in crisis: Peer review of partnership in crisis-related interventions*. PSO/Wageningen Universiteit.



3

Typology of crises and the specifics of aid in these crises

When organizations were being asked during workshops and interviews about their approaches and issues with humanitarian aid, the usual answer was, ‘that depends on what crisis we are talking about’.

Humanitarian budgets are being used for several ends. These vary from acute crisis to many years – sometimes decades – of support for the care and maintenance of refugees, for financing all kinds of aid to fragile states, for institutionalising support to disaster prevention, risk reduction and preparedness. General discussions about the principles and quality of aid are often hindered by the fact that proponents have different scenarios in mind. In this chapter a number of these scenarios are introduced.

3.1 Open conflicts

History chapters about modern humanitarian aid regularly begin with the battlefield of Solferino in 1859 where Henry Dunant witnessed a heavy bloody battle. He contributed to the medical healthcare for wounded soldiers and was inspired to initiate international humanitarian law and the protection of war victims (Geneva Conventions) and the foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Some decades later, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) was established. The humanity principle of alleviating life-threatening suffering wherever it may be found is the foundation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement. Together with the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence, it is the basic principle of humanitarian aid. Up to today, humanitarian aid and the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence are associated primarily with aid in open, violent conflicts.⁹

⁹ See www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct

In the course of the 20th century the humanitarian field has been expanded. In the first half of the 20th century many humanitarian organizations were established, mostly in direct response to a crisis. Many of these agencies subsequently included a development mandate after the decolonization process and but then rediscovered their humanitarian roots in the 1980s as a result of the famine in 1984 in the Horn of Africa, amongst other reasons. After the Rwanda crisis in 1994, the first sector-wide evaluation was carried out and several quality initiatives were taken such as the establishment of the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.

In the first decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, conflicts were mainly intra-state allowing the international community to operate as a 'neutral outsider'. Since 2001, initiated by the 'war on terror', we are faced with international conflicts in which the so-called international community acts as a 'neutral outsider' or as a 'warring party' depending on the point of view. In some conflicts, this has led to distrust of humanitarian organizations and the United Nations as they were associated with the Western domination of the international response. The credibility of aid has been severely affected in some countries.

Ironically, humanitarian aid is least effective in accessing and assisting affected people in these iconic situations of open, violent conflict. Areas are often inaccessible and it can be too dangerous for people in need to reach the assistance. When it is too dangerous for aid workers, aid will be withdrawn. The problem of access in these kinds of situations is not new. There are, however, some recent developments and discussions.

Even though the lack of access to people in need in open, violent conflicts is not new, the ambition to access affected populations still remains. The trend to subcontract aid to local implementers is one of the strategies deployed to access more people in conflict areas. This is also known as 'remote control' or aid managed at a distance. While this aid can be effective, it is not undisputed, as will be discussed in section 4.1. At the same time, it is important to note that local organizations who have the capacity to deliver aid are themselves often in difficulties or on the run.

Scenarios of open, violent conflicts are often local and periodic. That means that parts of the country are subjected to heavy fighting while in other parts of the country aid is being delivered for reconstruction or development. Proportionality may be an issue. In a recent report Doctors without Borders asks for awareness for these situations. With the title 'Where is everyone',¹⁰ the report states that in the worst conflicts few organizations provide aid while the humanitarian system responds inertly and inadequately to the logistical complexities. While this is ascribed partly to contextual issues, the report raises questions about the efficiency and independent decisiveness of aid. One of the examples is the situation in Goma in Eastern-Congo, where an intensification of violence of rebel group M-23 led to the evacuation of aid organizations just when people needed aid more than ever.

¹⁰ Médecins sans Frontières (July 2014). *Where is Everyone? Responding to emergencies in the most difficult places.*

3.2 Fragile settings¹¹

A number of countries have an official peace agreement and an internationally accepted government, while conflict continues at a low level or flares up regularly. Governments in these countries are often not willing or able to realize basic services for the population. These are fragile settings, or even fragile states.

Fragile settings often represent a permanent humanitarian crisis. Development perspectives are difficult to identify. These are settings where (with variation) the government does not function well, *and* civil society is weakened, *and* all poverty indicators are in the red, *and* the fertility rate is very high, *and* urbanization accelerates, *and* criminality is abundant. Progress with the Millennium Goals, seen in many parts of the world, bypasses these countries. There is always the risk of relapsing into conflict.

Fragile settings demand a multiplicity of types of aid, varying from emergency aid, to development, to support for institution building. Multi-mandated organizations switch between direct support of the most vulnerable groups to institution building. They often deal with 'wicked problems': vicious problems which are practically unsolvable and where solutions often evoke new problems.

In these situations, aid stands little chance of success in scaling up or bringing about sustainable change. This can feed into the increasing critique on development cooperation. Arguments in favour of maintaining a high level of aid in fragile settings (where 'do no harm and try doing good' is often the leitmotif) include the high level of vulnerability leading into immediate humanitarian needs, and the risks to renewed conflict which can have all kinds of spill-over effects regionally and internationally.

The vicious nature of the problems does not mean that aid cannot do better than it does. There are some recurring aid 'traps' in these kinds of situations. Aid organizations tend to underestimate, no matter how difficult the situation is, the capacity of local actors to offer appropriate solutions and function in the best possible way within their own ways of coping. Aid organizations also tend to focus on implementation of projects without a holistic view and without investing in coordination mechanisms beyond basic information exchange. Organizations sometimes duplicate work when they simultaneously see the same needs arising. Organizations can be inert, and lack flexibility to switch modes between unconditional relief and other types of support. Aid can often be more effective and lessons learned in monitoring and evaluations are not always followed-up. Accountability to the local population and local institutions can be vastly improved.

Some of the critiques on aid seem to recur over decades. However, there are progressive developments in aid in fragile settings. Compared to the 1990s, aid is more often focused on existing institutions and resilience of the population¹² so the likelihood of sustainable change is garnering more strength. Coordination systems have been improved, and governments have more space to take and maintain initiative and define their own development agenda.¹³

¹¹ This paragraph is derived from the presentation of Gary Milante of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI, about social-economic development in fragile settings, during the final conference of the IS-academy 'Human Security in Fragile States', September 11th 2014 in The Hague.

¹² See Hilhorst, D, I. Christoplos and G. van der Haar (2011). *Reconstruction from Below. Magic Bullet or Shooting from the Hip? In: Third World Quarterly 31(7): 1107-1124*

¹³ See for example G7+ Busan (2011). *New Deal for engagement in fragile states.*



3.3 Refugees and displaced persons

Care for refugees and displaced persons is part of humanitarian budgets and is considered as humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid in conflict areas – as described above – is highly difficult and in practice, aid is often provided to people who flee from the open conflict.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) stay in their own country and fall under national law with corresponding civil rights. Directives were formulated to deal with the protection and care of IDPs in 1998.¹⁴ Refugees, on the other hand, cross the border and fall under the law of the host country and the Refugee Convention of 1951.¹⁵ Within the United Nations, the UNHCR is the first responsible body for refugees and IDPs. Humanitarian organizations are in practice not always aware of the working principles of the Refugee Convention and how the Convention is related to humanitarian principles or human rights agreements.¹⁶

IDP problems are often more difficult when there are multiple displacements where people fleeing from violence arrive once again in insecure areas and have to flee again. Issues of IDPs are complex, because IDPs establish camps in some countries but also often stay in the periphery of cities. Some of them wait to return home at the end of the conflict, while others decide to stay in the city. That is how displacement intertwines with rapid urbanization in fragile settings. It is not always clear what roles humanitarian action plays in these complex problems and in which ways the government can realize basic rights of these people together with the international community.¹⁷

Humanitarian aid has been criticized for many years, because it did not take into account the resilience of refugees and IDPs and hence did not build on the initiatives of target groups. Even where aid agencies want to break through this situation, they are often constrained by national laws that forbid refugees from undertaking (economic) activities. Currently, however, we see many developments for dealing more effectively with refugees, partly triggered by technical progress. Instead of distributing goods, for example, agencies often provide cash or vouchers so that refugees can decide what they need.

Where refugee movements become massive, aid is confronted with huge logistical, organizational and financial problems. Because camps are often the only place where aid can be provided, there can still be an oversupply of aid organizations locally.

An important issue is the difficulty of the humanitarian system to provide care to refugees who do not register in a camp but are hosted by the local population. It is an efficient and dignified proposition to support these people without accommodating them in camps, but in practice it is very difficult. Practical objections are mixed with political restrictions and perhaps unwillingness in the system. Willing organizations with roots or history in the area, propose creative or

¹⁴ OCHA (1998). *The Guiding principles on internal displacement*.

¹⁵ UNHCR (1951). *Convention and Protocol relating to the status of refugees*. Palestinian refugees do not fall under this Convention because there was a special UN agency established for them which still coordinates aid for Palestinian refugees. For more information, see the website of UNWRA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) www.unrwa.org

¹⁶ This was a point of discussion in the workshop with Stichting Vluchteling.

¹⁷ This question is being raised by several organizations at this moment, including the ICRC, and is the subject of the doctorate/graduation research of Raimond Duijsens, officer with the Red Cross, as part of the 'IS-academy Human Security in Fragile States'.

low-level solutions but are unable to realize those solutions on a large scale.¹⁸ Related to this, discussions within the communities themselves in the host country are important. The care of refugees or IDPs is a heavy burden on the resources of those communities which consequently are also in need of support by the humanitarian organizations.

The approach to the problems of refugees is complicated by the protracted nature of a number of crises, where refugees stay in camps for years or even decades. It is inhuman to deprive these refugees of the chance to develop through education and employment. Authorities in long-running camps, like Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya continuously face the question about which type of services need to be provided through what kind of modalities.

Structural solutions of long-lasting refugee situations are complex and political. Political decisions or negligence result in large populations that cannot go back to their own land for generations. Host countries may not be willing to give refugees a (temporary) residence status with concomitant citizen rights and the international community restricts hosting in Europe and other Western countries as much as possible. To what extent do humanitarian organizations perceive lobbying for structural solutions as their responsibility?

3.4 Disasters triggered by natural hazards

Disasters triggered by natural hazards are often referred to as ‘natural disasters’. This is misleading, because it suggests that natural hazards cause disasters. That is not what happens. A natural incident only becomes a disaster when many people are exposed to it, when they are vulnerable to the impact and when institutional response capacity is lacking. That is the case even for earthquakes which seem evidently natural but where quake-proof buildings can prevent a lot of damage.

‘Natural disasters’ occur on a large scale and differ in scope and context which is why there are different variations to this scenario.

The world community has vastly improved prevention, preparedness and response to small- and medium-scale, recurrent disasters. The Hyogo Framework for Action of 2004¹⁹ has played an important role in reinforcing national governments to make disaster prevention and – preparedness a policy priority and to improve disaster response. In more and more countries, small- and medium-scale and recurrent disasters are being absorbed by government and non-governmental institutions, sometimes with the cooperation of international development organizations residing in the country. On the part of the United Nations, the UNDP coordinates and assists the government in those cases, except with extraordinary large-scale disasters or in conflict areas where OCHA is in charge on behalf of the UN. Countries differ in the way they respond to the root causes of disaster vulnerability including underdevelopment, rapid population growth, corruption, climate change, and the extent to which the discussion of causes is politicized. Organizing action or lobbying for better disaster response or disaster risk reduction is often seen as humanitarian action, although it might also be considered as development activity or social-political activism.

¹⁸ This issue came up in the workshops with ICCO & Kerk in Actie, HealthNet TPO and Stichting Vluchteling.

¹⁹ ISDR (2005). *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities*.

Extraordinary large-scale disasters are a different story. These disasters cannot be dealt with at national level. They require massive efforts from outside. This is the type of disaster for which ‘Stichting Samenwerkende Hulp Organisaties’ (Foundation of Collaborating Organizations) opens ‘Giro 555’ regularly.²⁰

The international humanitarian system has made enormous progress in the last 20 years on first care and emergency aid in these kinds of disasters. These changes have supported life-saving aid in slow-onset disasters that slowly reach crisis proportion, like the drought in the Horn of Africa in 2011. This progress in the international response capacity is often overlooked and aid gets a lot of undeserved criticism when the Dutch public underestimates the momentous logistical challenges of large-scale aid interventions in circumstances where roads are blocked, aid workers are themselves affected, and communication lines are broken down, to mention just some of the characteristics of these situations.

After the first crisis period, usually lasting several weeks, the situation becomes more complex. The acute needs are not over, but the response falls into a certain routine. Reconstruction also starts. Reconstruction after large-scale disasters is an extraordinarily complex operation which is always politicized. Most efforts occur outside the framework of humanitarian aid like the (corruption sensitive) rebuilding of infrastructure. Humanitarian organizations focus mainly on the local level where communities try to resume daily life together and rebuild their habitats. Reconstruction is often characterized by politicization and bureaucracy. In this process, aid organizations often make mistakes because their aid supply does not complement activities people undertake themselves and a lack of accountability to affected populations may prevail. One of the crucial issues raised in the workshops is the proportionality of aid: are funds raised from the general public well distributed over emergency aid and reconstruction activities?²¹

Large-scale disasters for which a lot of money is available from fundraising campaigns are characterized by a massive response in which hundreds, if not thousands, of international organizations varying from large networks to individual initiatives, provide aid. Because they have generated their own financial resources, coordination through financial flows is difficult. This situation raises justified criticisms. On the other hand, the vast majority of aid resources are handled by a small number of large- to medium-sized organizations which usually maintain functional coordination mechanisms under the so-called cluster system. In this regard, it is appropriate to mention that most of the small-scale initiatives come from diasporas: people who originate from the disaster area contribute to the reconstruction and guarantee through their local contacts that aid is appropriate for the specific needs and conditions.

Finally, there is a large category of disasters which take place in fragile settings or conflict areas. Natural hazards do not stop at the border nor wait for peace. The Hyogo Framework for Action ascribes the primary role in disaster response to the national government. However, disasters occur often in situations where the government does not function well or where more or less intensive conflicts take place. In these situations natural hazards may lead to catastrophes because the response capacity is lacking and people in conflict circumstances

²⁰ Stichting Samenwerkende Hulp Organisaties, also known as Giro 555, is a coalition of 10 Dutch NGOs. They jointly raise money through public campaigns for massive disasters. Giro 555 also opens for conflict situations, like the Kosovo campaign in 1999, the Iraq campaign in 2001 and the Syria campaign in 2013.

²¹ This issue is put on the agenda by Doctors without Borders for years, regarding the funds of Giro 555.

become more and more vulnerable and poor. The problems of responding to disaster in these settings intertwine with the problems described above in sections 3.1 to 3.3.

3.5 Biological, chemical and nuclear disasters

In the round of discussions with the organizations in the spring of 2014, the conversation did not cover biological, chemical or nuclear disasters. This is typical for humanitarian aid in general, in the Netherlands as well as internationally. While this type of disaster can and will occur in the future and will no doubt raise humanitarian needs, this is not a subject for discussion within humanitarian organizations. There is no preparation for this type of disasters.

This summer brought the spread of the Ebola virus, a disaster caused by a biological vector. While the Ebola virus developed into a crisis, it became clear that the humanitarian world – starting with the agencies of the United Nations – had no adequate answer. On 2 September 2014, the international Chair of Doctors without Borders called upon the UN to deploy military troops to deal with this crisis.²²

The Ebola crisis raises several questions that are missing in the humanitarian agenda up to now. How can the international community respond to biological, chemical and nuclear disasters? Is this the exclusive domain of military actors? Can the military adapt to provide basic services? Do humanitarian organizations play a role in this scenario? Are they equipped and prepared for it?

3.6 Concluding

In this Chapter, five scenarios have been presented in which humanitarian aid is provided. The Chapter shows that specific development and problems of humanitarian aid are highly dependent on the type of crisis. Some of the issues raised in the next chapters are more or less relevant for the different types of crises described above.

It may be clear that the different types of crisis are not clearly separated in reality and are often mixed up. They are related to each other, like refugee care as a consequence of a violent conflict. In countries where certain areas or periods are more or less violent, aid is always moving between different objectives and ways of working. It is at the borderlines and overlap between different types of crises that most friction about finance, support, approach and practice of humanitarian aid occurs.

In which type of crisis the Dutch aid organizations operate best is not always made explicit. Some organizations have a broad scope of work, often with certain focus areas or specialisms. Other organizations retain a broad profile (perhaps to keep options open for fundraising) but are in practice highly focused and more effective in a specific type of crisis. Some organizations have indicated that they consider internally whether they would like to specialize in a certain type of crisis.²³

²² Doctors without Borders (Sept 2014). *Global bio-disaster response urgently needed in Ebola fight*.

²³ This issue was raised in the workshops with CARE Nederland, Save the Children and War Child.

The most important issues brought up in this chapter are:

- How can humanitarian aid better take into account the different types of crises?
- Is the humanitarian capacity – worldwide and in the Netherlands – sufficiently equipped for the different types of crises?
- How can access to people in need be improved, especially in crises with high intensity violence?
- What is the role of the humanitarian community in biological, chemical and nuclear disasters?



4

Humanitarian aid in practice

The interviews and workshops asked about the most relevant issues in current humanitarian aid and with a perspective to the future. Concerning the implementation of aid, the following themes emerged: access to people in need; questions about principles and fundamentals; the link between relief, reconstruction and development; the role of the national government in a crisis area; and gender in humanitarian aid. Every theme will be introduced briefly after which the most important issues arising from workshops and interviews are discussed.

4.1 Access to people in need

Current crises like Syria, Iraq, Central African Republic and South Sudan are serious examples of problems with access. Humanitarian organizations have a responsibility to a population but also to their own staff. In open, violent conflicts where the situation is highly insecure, aid also is affected. Sometimes, people are literally out of reach, for example as a result of roadblocks, often it is too dangerous and the presence of aid organizations – especially organizations originating in the United States of America or Europe – might increase insecurity.

To access people in need, some organizations work cross-border where possible, meaning that humanitarian organizations operate from neighbouring countries and provide aid across borders – without permission of the government. This is the case, for example, in Syria, where a number of organizations are working cross-border.

Internationally, there is a tendency among humanitarian organizations that have experienced that embeddedness in society results in a larger and safer space to work, more trustful relations with the population, and a more effective operation. This is the case in many of the fragile settings where conflict is less intensive and where international organizations resolve problems of access and trust (and effectivity/efficiency/sustainability) by working with local partners. When the conflict intensifies, this may still be feasible although it will be more problematic. Local partners can lose neutrality or capacity and they may not be able to scale up their services to the required level.

In extremely dangerous situations, partnership tends to be redefined as ‘remote control’. Aid is subcontracted to local implementers without the presence of international staff in the area. There are ethical objections to subcontracting aid in extremely dangerous circumstances when the argument that the situation for local people is less dangerous is not always applicable. There are also doubts about lack of transparency and control on aid in situations where aid can be misused and this might lead to increasing conflict risks. It seems that in certain situations where reference is made to ‘remote control’, this may hide the fact that it represents a continuation of longstanding and trusted partnerships, established and built in the period before the (intensification of the) crisis.

Current issues:

1. In the report cited earlier, ‘Where is everyone’, the question was raised as to whether the international community still has sufficient capacity to expand to a massive supply of life-saving services in fast-escalating situations with high-intensity violence.
2. In fragile situations, prioritization and allocation of types of aid and geographical spreading plays a role. Shifting to relief and scaling-up of operations can be hindered by inertia in the system, or politicization. The question arises whether humanitarian aid can find the right balance between where it is needed on the one hand, and where it is possible and where partners are available on the other.²⁴
3. It is important to make sure that space remains to enhance capacity of local institutions to provide humanitarian aid. There is no plausible future scenario in which there are no humanitarian crises. A number of countries will be affected more than average, as a result of their natural situation and/or the human and institutional resilience.²⁵
4. The international discussion of ‘remote control’ sometimes ignores the fact that countries had a history before the conflict, in which reliable development or humanitarian partnerships were established which can continue during the conflict. The discussion seems to be less respectful towards local organizations. The term ‘remote control’ has to be unpacked to monitor better how aid via partnerships in dangerous situations is shaped, what is achieved, and what are the positive and negative side-effects.²⁶ The aid organization of the European Union, ECHO, has developed a number of criteria regarding ‘remote control’.²⁷

4.2 Principles and fundamentals

There has been a long-term debate about whether humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence are compatible with the human rights approach used by many development organizations. Both approaches have a lot in common, because they are both grounded in international agreements (respectively international humanitarian law, and human rights)²⁸ and they both have human dignity as their basis. Elaborations of humanitarian principles, like the Sphere Standards or the Code of Conduct, are often partly based on human

²⁴ This was the point of discussion in the workshops with Oxfam Novib, as well as in the report of Doctors without Borders ‘Where is everyone?’.

²⁵ This was part of the discussion in the workshops with Cordaid, Oxfam Novib, Save the Children and ZOA.

²⁶ This was mentioned in the workshops of CARE Nederland, Cordaid, ICCO &Kerk in Actie, Oxfam Novib. An example mentioned by ICCO &Kerk in Actie concerns Afghanistan in 2001/2002, where local partners still could provide aid themselves, but international, not embedded organizations, directed people to camps.

²⁷ GPPI (2012). *Evaluation and review of humanitarian access strategies in DG ECHO funded interventions*. See also DG ECHO: dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/actions_implementation/remote_management/start

²⁸ As the previous chapter states, refugee rights can play an explicit role in this, but it was hardly referred to in the workshops.

rights. Hence, the approaches are complementary. While humanitarian aid in the short term aims to guard human dignity by providing direct aid, more rights-based approaches question the structural root causes and solutions to injustice and unrest.

Nevertheless, in practice both approaches can become conflictive. Selecting specific disadvantaged groups can (seem to) be contrary to the impartiality principle. Raising causes of conflict can be contrary to the principle of neutrality. Looking for structural solutions requires working with national and international governments, which can be contrary to the independence principle.

Difficult discussions or inconsistent practices can arise within organizations which operate both in humanitarian aid and development work. It can also lead to problems in communication and images of humanitarian aid. The principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence are in the eye of the beholder. Even if organizations operate according to these principles, they can be seen by the population as partial. It can also lead to difficult discussions within organizations and problems with coordination, which are discussed in the next section.

The discussion about principles is often only referred to as an identity issue or a choice within the organizations. However, the different crises as described in the previous chapter, call for different approaches, in which humanitarian principles are not always equally relevant.

In the workshops and interviews the following recent issues were raised.

1. There is renewed interest and support for aid organizations which – besides using a humanitarian or human rights approach – derive their identity and motivation from their religious background. There are some examples of crises where organizations with an Islamic identity could operate more effectively, sometimes even as the only option. There are also examples where certain Islamic organizations could not work because of contradictions within Islam. It is shown that religious institutions are often more resilient than governmental institutions and maintain a certain level of service delivery in a crisis. It is contrary to the humanitarian principles to mingle aid with religious activities, especially if mixed with proselytizing objectives.²⁹ As long as this basic rule is respected, religious organizations have always been an important implementing partner of so-called faith-based organizations, like Cordaid and ICCO &Kerk in Actie. Large donors also appear to regain interest in the use of faith-based systems in aid. The provision of aid by religious actors raises questions in areas which are religiously heterogeneous and where conversion or fighting between religions exists. Another issue that can arise is the burden on the religious system when tasked with humanitarian aid.³⁰
2. Because humanitarian aid is anchored in international law, organizations could negotiate access with (formal or ‘real’) authorities with reference to these bodies of law. Many conflict-affected states, for example, have ratified the convention on the rights of a child. The issue was raised in several workshops as to whether agencies have enough negotiation skills and legal competence for this type of humanitarian diplomacy.³¹
3. The principle of independence is increasingly imposed by donors who demand a counterpart contribution from the humanitarian agencies. This is only possible when organizations have

²⁹ To give a recent example: a number of religious organizations in Eastern Congo refused to offer the morning-after pill to raped women and removed these pills from the healthcare kits.

³⁰ This has been brought up during the workshop with ZOA.

³¹ This issue has been raised in the interviews with Save the Children, Doctors without Borders and came across in workshops with ZOA, CARE Nederland and War Child.



a constituency of private donors. It is unclear whether this is at the expense of humanitarian capacity.³²

4.3 The link between relief, reconstruction and development

The way humanitarian aid activities are connected with reconstruction and development is referred to in humanitarian jargon with the abbreviation LRRD: Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development.

LRRD has many dimensions. Often there is a connection at the same time, when in some parts of the country and for some target groups relief is needed, while at other places reconstruction and development is taking place. It is also associated with a timeframe in which the three elements are seen as subsequent phases, like when authorities declare that 'the relief phase has come to an end'. In reality, these phases overlap and co-inside, and frequently there is movement in the opposite direction. Some agencies respond by applying a strategy in which development activities are implemented where possible, with the assistance of relief where needed. This is the case, for example, in management of cyclic drought where pastoral communities 'between drought periods' will be made more resilient and be prepared for a better response in the next drought period.³³ It can also be seen as a way of working, in which relief is organized 'smart' and makes as much use as possible of existing capacities, resources and markets so as to disturb local development processes as little as possible.

There are also risks regarding LRRD. Compared to relief, reconstruction and development are often highly politicized and this can rebound on the provision of relief. The different cultures and implementing styles of relief and development can slow down adaptations, both in the transition to reconstruction and in a possible fallback to relief. A Dutch evaluation of LRRD concludes that, 'It is a crucial challenge for humanitarian actors to remain committed to humanitarian principles and at the same time to take development and political dimensions in international cooperation into account'.³⁴

The discussion about LRRD sometimes seems to assume that humanitarian response is easy to control and steer. In fact, there are many actors involved in service delivery in crisis who all make their own plans and maintain their own style to a large extent. Humanitarian aid often operates alongside national or private service delivery and with the aid of Diaspora populations. Service delivery in crisis is not only the field of humanitarian aid. As a result, it can happen, for example, that one organization in the same village asks for a contribution to health care which is usual in a development context, while another organization offers the same services for free.

³² This issue has been raised in the workshops with CARE Nederland and HealthNet TPO.

³³ This specific example is extracted from practice of Cordaid, but the harmonica model is recognizable in the approach of different organizations with a multiple mandate.

³⁴ IOB (May 2013). *Linking Relief and Development: more than old solutions for old problems?*

Recent issues are:

1. Where are the boundaries of aid? Where does the responsibility of humanitarian actors end?³⁵ Humanitarian organizations are accused of ‘mandate creep’ in which they assume tasks that could perhaps better be done by other organizations. On the other hand, some agencies claim added value for an integrated approach and prefer to multi-task to enable this to happen in practice. The ability to bring about integration by adjustment, coordination and a division of labor between different organizations (or different departments within a multi-mandated organization) is difficult in practice and is open to competition and misunderstandings in the sector.³⁶
2. LRRD also has a financial dimension. Donors often have a separate finance structure for relief and reconstruction. A crucial problem is the continuity of services in the transition from relief to development. In primary education it can happen, for example, that there is only relief financing for a couple of months after which the education is terminated.
3. When contributions of the general public are allocated for relief and reconstruction in large-scale natural disasters, the question arises whether the distribution of money between relief and reconstruction is proportional and corresponds with the image in the Netherlands about the use of the contributions.³⁷
4. The formulation of LRRD starts with relief, so the disaster or conflict is the starting point of the approach. This can contribute to the ‘makeover’ fantasy that neglects the fact that there were all kinds of functional institutions before and during the disaster or conflict. Some organizations explicitly adopted, as elements in their policies, the continuation of development partnerships and ways of working when responding to disasters. They experiment with new labels, such as ‘Linking Development to Relief to Rehabilitation to Development’. One aspect of this is to reinforce the capacity of development partners to provide relief.³⁸

4.4 The role of the national government in a crisis area

The role of the national government in a crisis area depends on the type of crisis.

In the case of open, violent conflict, the government is party to the conflict or hardly controls its territory. Aid organizations collaborate with the government to get permissions to reach their target groups, but they keep their distance as much as possible. Where parts of the country are controlled by opponents of the state, like the Taliban in Afghanistan, organizations consult with these ‘real’ authorities to get access. Even where governments are completely immersed in the conflict, sometimes it is possible to cooperate with (decentralized) line agencies, such as local state hospitals.

International law has increasingly opened up to subordinate the sovereignty of the state to that of addressing the needs of the population and IDPs, as in the doctrine of the ‘Responsibil-

³⁵ This issue has been raised in the interview with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, direction Stability and Humanitarian Aid.

³⁶ This issue has been raised in the workshop with Oxfam Novib.

³⁷ This issue has been raised in the interviews with Doctors without Borders and René Grotenhuis, and in the workshop with ICCO & Kerk in Actie.

³⁸ This issue has been raised in the workshops with ICCO & Kerk in Actie, Oxfam Novib and ZOA.

ity to Protect’. This is complicated in practice and the intervention in Libya, for example, shows how armed interventions need to be followed through with political solutions and adequate service delivery.³⁹

In the case of fragile settings, the international agenda moves to peace building, state building and institutional development and risks neglecting ongoing humanitarian needs. The importance of collaborating with the government is being emphasized to prevent, as in the past, parallel service delivery by international aid organizations continuing for too long with the risk of undermining institutional recovery.

With refugee care, the host government is an important actor. In refugee camps in developing countries, most governmental functions are being delegated to the UNHCR. International diplomatic efforts are focused on the maintenance of refugees and in the case of long-lasting crises, on finding long-term solutions including solutions in the host-country where refugees obtain work permits and perhaps citizenship, or third country settlement.

In the case of natural disasters, the national government has the first responsibility to respond and governments in developing countries will be assisted by the UN (OCHA or UNDP). Here we see many developments in the last decade where international NGOs – which usually found their partners in civil society – increasingly work with (decentralized) governments as implementation partners.

Specific issues:

- While there is increasing recognition for the role of government, the question of the meaning of civil society in crisis areas remains. While civil society is being used as the implementation partner, their political role as countervailing power and watchdog is shrinking.⁴⁰
- In the case of natural disasters, and to a certain extent also refugees, fragility and conflict, the emphasis is more and more on the resilience of the populations and local institutions as the starting point of aid. The emphasis on the resilience of the populations can lead to a lack of attention to structural solutions and the crucial role of the state in protecting its population.⁴¹
- In more and more countries the government has a strong controlling role towards civil society and the international community. This leads to restrictions and delays in humanitarian aid, and can lead to the inability to reach certain specific target groups. In Myanmar, the government recently prohibited aid to certain areas for example.⁴²
- The crucial role of the government in responding to a crisis hampers organizations in expressing criticism of the government. How far will agencies go in tolerating corruption or keeping quiet regarding human rights violations?⁴³

³⁹ See www.janpronk.nl/columns/dutch/misplaatste-euforie.htm

⁴⁰ This issue has been raised in the workshops with Cordaid and ZOA.

⁴¹ Mark Duffield in ‘Changing Humanitarian Aid’ 13-12-2012.

⁴² This issue has been raised in the interview with Doctors without Borders.

⁴³ This issue has been raised in the workshop with ZOA.

4.5 Gender in humanitarian aid⁴⁴

Crises have a specific impact on men and boys and women and girls based on their different positions and roles in society. The demands of these different groups may differ, as well as their capacities and responsibilities. Gender roles and norms often change under the influence of the crisis; dynamics in communities and within households therefore also change. Awareness of the importance of gender specific aid has been on the agenda for a long time, and there are some continuing international policy processes, mainly about sexual violence. It was noted that gender is not getting the appropriate amount of attention and financial resources.⁴⁵

Specific issues are:

- Attention in aid programmes may be insufficient for tackling the specific forms of violence that women and girls, but also men and boys, have to deal with in conflicts and in the aftermath of disasters. The engagement of women's organizations in crisis response is not always guaranteed and opportunities have been missed to involve women and perhaps improve their position in the period of providing aid.
- The coordination of gender issues is not well organized in the cluster approach of the UN and staff members of organizations are often not well equipped to work with gender 'lenses'.

Gender and humanitarian aid have recently received renewed attention, for example, through the new subsidy guidelines of ECHO.⁴⁶

4.6 Concluding

This chapter has dealt with some recent issues in the implementation practices of humanitarian aid. As the next chapters will show, those issues are not separate from the questions in the international humanitarian system and the working field in the Netherlands.

The most important issues in this Chapter are:

- Access to people in need, mainly in crises with a high intensity of violence, and the role of local partners.
- The humanitarian diplomacy competence of humanitarian actors to negotiate with local institutions to get access to people in need.
- The role of principles and different approaches in response to crises, where approaches can be complementary, yet may at times be contradictory. Certain approaches are more appropriate for certain types of crises. Especially where the types of crises overlap or coincide, tensions may arise around different approaches.
- The role of faith-based organizations, which can often operate in an effective manner, but may also bring about specific risks.
- The ability to quickly adapt by switching between relief and reconstruction programming is important in many situations, yet remains complex as it also requires adaptive action in the institutions of donors and coordination mechanisms.

- The continuation of funding mechanisms, especially with regard to gaps between relief and development.
- The role of government in crisis areas where the type and phase of the crisis plays a role as well as the ways in which organizations deal with critical observations and experiences with the government.
- It is, and remains important, to negotiate gender in the right manner in humanitarian aid. Gender blindness or the wrong approach can have negative consequences for the position of women.

⁴⁴ This paragraph is based on input of CARE Nederland.

⁴⁵ This issue has been raised in the workshop with Oxfam Novib.

⁴⁶ ECHO (2013). *Gender-Age Marker Toolkit*.



5

The international humanitarian system

Humanitarian organizations do not operate in isolation. As has been described in Chapter 1, organizations are often embedded in international organizations, restricting their room for manoeuvre in adapting principled choices and implementation decisions. Even though strictly speaking there is no humanitarian system, the ensemble of aid is nonetheless important because the population does not distinguish organizations but often assess aid as a whole.⁴⁷

In this Chapter several themes are described, which are, according to the workshops and interviews, current and relevant. They include the role of the United Nations, the role of international NGOs, financing of aid, and the so-called new actors, and standards.

5.1 The role of the United Nations

The role of the United Nations is very important in crisis response. The United Nations coordinates, amongst others, the humanitarian aid. Since the beginning of the 1990s, this is formalized and there is a special organization of the United Nations for this coordination, called the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA).

Because of increasing criticism on coordination in the beginning of the century, there has been a fundamental reorganization that, amongst others⁴⁸, introduced the cluster system. The lead in the clusters is taken internationally by organizations of the UN and/or the Red Cross, and in the education cluster, coordination is led by UNICEF and Save the Children.⁴⁹ Although in general, coordination is seen as improved, there are three points of criticism on the current system: there is little adjustment between the clusters, resulting in lack of integration at sub-national level; early recovery is a separate cluster when it should be a central point in all clusters; and the organization of the clusters does not always correspond with the organization of

⁴⁷ This is comparable to the way Dutch representation sees aid as a whole, see next chapter.

⁴⁸ The reorganization also gave additional power to the resident-representative of the UN, and established a special fund to be used in case of extreme shortage of finance by sudden emergencies.

⁴⁹ The organization of the clusters differs per crisis area, and in many cases clusters are locally led by multiple organizations.

national states with which actors within the clusters cooperate.

The UN has grown extensively and is also seen as heavy and bureaucratic. In recent years, more parts of the UN are increasingly focused on crisis response.

The following specific issues came across in the workshops:

- The United Nations has different roles and faces. The Security Council is a political organ, where radical decisions about conflict interventions are taken or blocked. The United Nations is responsible for peace operations, and as the mandates of those operations have increasingly expanded, it plays an active military role in the conflict. Moreover, the UN also has the role of coordination. The system enables a consistent approach towards crisis, which has advantages and disadvantages and may have large consequences for the effectiveness and level of politicisation of humanitarian aid. Although the different roles of the UN are organized separately, they influence each other and OCHA, for example, shares information with the Security Council.
- With regard to the delivery of aid, the UN also has different roles. Many financial flows are channeled through the UN. At the same time, the UN is often an implementing aid agency. This may lead to questions in specific cases about the choices of aid allocation and whether effectiveness and accountability of aid are always the prime drivers in selecting an implementation route.⁵⁰
- The UN is large and complex, and there is little transparency in the overhead costs of the system. Overhead costs are needed to enable the implementation of programmes, but are not directly benefitting the programme. With NGOs there are strict restrictions on the percentage that may be used for overheads; with the UN, this is less transparent. Donor requirements and supervision with regards to the UN are considered less rigorous than in the case of NGOs.⁵¹

The Dutch government is aware of these questions.⁵²

5.2 The role of international NGOs

The coordination of humanitarian aid has improved considerably in the last decade. NGOs are said to be difficult to coordinate. It is a popular saying that ‘everybody likes to coordinate, but nobody likes to be coordinated’. NGOs have their own identity and sometimes emphasize differences to maintain a distinct profile. This image of NGOs as ‘un-coordinatable’ is largely outdated, since there is a high degree of coordination in all crisis areas.

Concerning the coordination and the role of international NGOs, the following issues are significant:

1. The humanitarian system is highly internationalized, which means that Dutch NGOs are often part of international organizations or networks. As organisations become bigger, there are risks of becoming more bureaucratic, and they may lack the ability to adapt to quickly

⁵⁰ See for example www.renegrotenhuis.nl/wp/?p=599

⁵¹ This issue has been raised in many workshops and aid organizations are aware of the fact that they are not the right ones to ask questions about this since it might be interpreted as self-interest.

⁵² Ministry of Foreign Affairs (July 2014). *KamerbriefVerslagbezoekFilipijnen 13-14 juli 2014*.

changing or rapidly escalating conditions. It may also lead to different organizational layers and raises questions about the level of influence international organizations have on the implementation of aid, and whether they can control the quality of aid.

2. The internationalization of humanitarian aid also means that there is increasingly humanitarian capacity present in countries which are crisis affected. There is not always optimal use of these capacities.
3. What is the real meaning of coordination? In many countries it is about adjustment of activities and mutual information. There are no efforts to create a common vision or a long-term strategy. Also, attempts to find a joint answer to corruption or human rights violations are often lacking.

5.3 Finance of aid

Chapter 2 revealed that the humanitarian aid budget is used for many types of crises and activities. Hence, there are always questions on the boundaries of aid (where humanitarian aid turns into reconstruction and into development budgets?) and on the prioritization of different crises and activities.

Humanitarian budgets have significantly increased since the end of the 1980s. Although in recent years a downward trend appeared because of the international economic crisis, recent budgets have yet again reached historically high levels.⁵³ The flexibility of finances is a problem. Humanitarian budgets are largely pre-allocated to protracted crises in fragile settings and refugee situations. Therefore, a fast and adequate response cannot always be realised.

A critical trend, observed during several workshops, is that institutional donors like UN agencies and ECHO increasingly work with highly specific project tenders. Because these tenders describe the projects in detail, organizations cannot flexibly adapt to changing circumstances. Programme adaptations in these cases are subject to long bureaucratic procedures. The budgets may also be restrictive with regards to participatory approaches and hence downward accountability.⁵⁴ This is mainly the case with aid for refugees, fragile settings and reconstruction trajectories. For immediate humanitarian aid, there are funds that can be used flexibly, like the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).⁵⁵

5.4 New actors

Recently, a lot has been written about new actors in humanitarian aid. These actors are amongst others the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) which can, besides responding on crises in their own countries, also play an important role internationally. It is also about countries like Turkey and Qatar. Turkey profiles itself as an institutional donor, has played a crucial role in the care of Syrian refugees on its territory, and is the host country for the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. Qatar finances humanitarian aid, but there are also

⁵³ 22 billion USD in the last year.

⁵⁴ This issue has been raised in the workshops with CARE Nederland and ZOA

⁵⁵ See www.unocha.org/cerf/

concerns about the role of this country towards the promotion of the intolerant Islam.

In the literature, with the upcoming new actors, questions have been raised about what this means for the coordination and the principles of humanitarian aid. In the workshops, the subject of new actors did not yet play a significant role, although some organizations have received sporadic funds from Qatar.

5.5 Standards

There are several international policy institutions for humanitarian aid. The most important one is the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC), which consists of some UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations and representation of the largest NGOs. The last ones have joined forces in the Standing Committee of Humanitarian Response (SCHR). The IASC has published policies and guidelines about many aspects of humanitarian aid. While the humanitarian sector has many guidelines, few guidelines are known and implemented in practice. There is thus a gap between policy and practice.⁵⁶

There are also a number of organizations founded by large humanitarian organizations to realize improvements in the quality of aid. These are, amongst others, ALNAP, Sphere, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) and People in Aid (PiA). Most of them have developed standards, while also the Code of Conduct with ten principles for humanitarian aid is been signed by hundreds of organizations over the past 20 years. Besides problems of familiarity, implementation, and lack of verification⁵⁷ of adherence to standards, there is also the problem that they partly overlap and exist in parallel.

In addition to debates on standards, the sector has been engaged in ongoing debates on certification. Certification can be voluntary or it may be a pre-condition of funding. ECHO, for example, has adopted a form of certification to establish partnerships.⁵⁸ One of the concerns in the discussion about certification is that there might be biases built into the system that favour international organizations over national organizations, and perhaps an elite of aid providers can be created and legitimized.⁵⁹

Some trends:

- There is an initiative to join several and partly overlapping standards in the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). This is a collaboration of HAP, PiA and Sphere. The new CHS was presented in December 2014 in Copenhagen.
- In parallel, there is also an international initiative to create a system of certification. This is an initiative of the SCHR which will present a proposal before the end of 2014.

⁵⁶ This issue was raised by Ed Schenkenberg, director of HERE Geneva, during the round table discussion of October 3rd 2014 in the Humanity House in The Hague, as preparation of the Dutch Humanitarian Summit.

⁵⁷ Only the HAP standard knows a system of – voluntary – external certification.

⁵⁸ This relates to a light [?]test on the basis of data provided by the organization.

⁵⁹ This came across mainly in the workshop with ZOA.

5.6 Concluding

This chapter has mapped a number of questions which are currently relevant for the international humanitarian system.

To summarize the main issues:

- Coordination has significantly improved, but the role of the United Nations may be evaluated with regard to the different political roles: the combination of coordinator and implementer of aid and the efficiency of aid.
- The development of large organizations, many embedded in international networks, has many advantages for integrating aid efforts, yet may also constrain the flexibility and adaptive capability of the sector.
- The flexibility of humanitarian aid needs to be secured through financing so that aid can adapt in all types of crises to the changing circumstances.
- The gap between policy and practice in humanitarian aid deserves attention; a large number of tools and guidelines are not widely known and implemented.



6

The Dutch field

Dutch humanitarian organizations have their field of activity in crisis areas all over the world⁶⁰ and are embedded in the international system. In the Netherlands they are seen as a sector by the media and the population at large, and there are some questions regarding the position of the organizations in relation to Dutch society.

This Chapter contains a number of themes from the workshops and interviews that relate to the position and profiling of humanitarian organizations in the Netherlands. It is about Dutch government policy, cooperation and lobbying, constituency and public support, and the supervision of aid.

6.1 Dutch government policy

Dutch government policy with regard to humanitarian aid has changed a lot in recent decades.

The most important division dealing with humanitarian aid in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the department of Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction of the Directorate of Stability and Humanitarian Aid (DSH). The name of the Department shows that reconstruction has an important place in Dutch foreign policies and the name of the Directorate illustrates that the Netherlands has made the choice to connect relief and aid to fragile settings.

While in the 1990s, humanitarian aid was given a broad interpretation, especially under when Jan Pronk was minister of development cooperation. Subsequent Ministers have narrowed down the concept of humanitarian aid to focus on lifesaving humanitarian action. In recent years, some shifts have been made that differentiate humanitarian aid and reconstruction. In addition to the usual humanitarian budgets, financial instruments are developed like the tender for Reconstruction 2012-2015 and the tender for Protracted Crises in which subsidies are committed to selected partners for some years. It is unclear whether those financing instruments are incidental or will be sustained.

⁶⁰ Some have also a mandate to work in the Netherlands.

With regards to natural disasters, disaster preparedness falls under humanitarian aid, while prevention and risk reduction are brought under the regular development portfolio of the ministry. The DSH Directorate aims to promote these issues internally and is closely involved in a number of co-financing programmes⁶¹, focusing on peace building and the reduction of (natural) risks, and adaptation to climate change.

Questions that arose in the interviews and workshops regarding Dutch policy were:

- The choice of implementation channels.⁶² The Netherlands has taken a principled decision that aid must be needs-based and hence the allocation would be decided internationally or locally. To enhance the coordination of aid, the largest share is channeled through the United Nations. This is similar to many donors, but the Netherlands were above average up to the present time.⁶³ This adds relevance to the questions raised above on the roles of the UN.
- Flexibility: as mentioned above, much of the humanitarian budget is allocated because it is spent on protracted crises and refugee care. An additional aspect is that the Ministry has a lack of human resources to provide tailor-made financing. This can restrain flexibility in acute crises. Obviously, this also has to do with the size of the budget. In response to some of these discussions, Minister Ploumen – current minister of development cooperation – has revised the humanitarian budget and established a ‘relief fund’ of €570 million because of the ‘highly increased needs for relief and the complexity of armed conflicts’.⁶⁴ This fund is mainly for acute relief and improving of refugee care, but also for disaster preparedness.

6.2 Cooperation and lobbying

Everyone in the Netherlands is familiar with the foundation ‘Samenwerkende Hulp Organisaties’ (SHO), also known as Giro 555. This is the most important collaboration vehicle of a number of humanitarian organizations. The collaboration concerns joint fundraising, internal distribution of funds with large-scale crises and reporting of expenditures.

There is a recurring debate in the Netherlands, through media and politics, whether the SHO organizations should coordinate their work beyond fund raising. Regarding the implementation practice this seems neither desirable nor feasible. Why would Dutch organizations coordinate implementation when they already participate in the field in coordination mechanisms with all relevant actors?

Besides the SHO, there are all sorts of more or less informal alliances of the humanitarian agencies, including the Café Humanitaire, where employees of humanitarian agencies can meet over a drink and discuss ongoing affairs.⁶⁵ In the same way, the initiative of the Dutch Humanitarian Summit has emerged. There are also platforms around certain crises, like the Great Lakes meetings and there is regular consultation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and

⁶¹ Of the so-called mede financierings stelsel (MFS-II)

⁶² A specification of Dutch budget can be found at www.oneworld.nl/crisis/data-hier-ging-onze-noodhulp-heen

⁶³ It is hard to provide any exact figures. According to a report of Voice and DARA, referring to figures of the Financial Tracking System of OCHA of 2012, the Netherlands spent above average to the UN, that is 75%. The percentage available for NGOs (4%) is remarkably low, mainly because the political dialogue with DSH and NGOs is constructive, according to the authors of the report. See resources.daraint.org/voice/study_consensus_humanitarian_aid.pdf

⁶⁴ See the letter of Minister Ploumen of 19 September 2014 about the revision of the Dutch humanitarian budget and Relief Fund.

⁶⁵ Until 2012 Café Humanitaire was facilitated by PSO, after 2012 by Humanity House. It is a hub for many initiatives and discussions on humanitarian aid.

the large humanitarian organizations. A few years ago, a number of organizations established the Platform of Humanitarian Action (PHA), which aims to be a lobbying network, especially towards the Dutch government.⁶⁶

In a number of workshops it was noted that there is opportunity for more collaboration on quality discussions and on communication with Dutch politics and the Dutch public:

- The background stories of root causes, consequences and possible solutions to crises are not easily accessible to the general public (or there is so much information that they lose focus).⁶⁷ A new initiative in the wake of the process of the Dutch Humanitarian Summit is the crisis platform on the website, One World. There is enough space for aid organizations to participate in this platform.⁶⁸
- Although there is a number of organizations in the Netherlands active in humanitarian aid, for most of them it is not their core business and they are not automatically in the loop of new developments and trends.
- Regarding humanitarian diplomacy, Dutch organizations are rarely outspoken. Lobbying focuses on reinforcing international access to victims are not being organized through joint campaigns or efforts.⁶⁹ Not all organizations have in-house specialists on international rights instruments (humanitarian principles, human rights, refugee rights, etcetera) for effective humanitarian diplomacy.

Organizations can collaborate on matters in addition to fundraising by learning from each other, communicating with the general public, and raising institutional funds as exemplified by the START network in the United Kingdom. This is a platform which has broader objectives than the fundraising Disasters and Emergency Committee.⁷⁰

6.3 Public and media support

Humanitarian aid organizations put a lot of energy into creating and maintaining their public constituency. They derive legitimacy partly through their public constituency and this plays an important role, for example, in the allocation of funds within SHO.⁷¹ Organizations need to provide evidence that they are rooted in society and have a constituency.

Popular support implies societal appreciation of aid and the popular attitude and response to humanitarian aid. Public support in Dutch society regarding development cooperation in general has eroded. Up to now, public support for humanitarian aid remains strong, although there is an increasingly critical attitude to relief. The Dutch media (speaking for the public or perhaps setting the tone) are more critical about humanitarian aid mainly since the Tsunami of 2004.

One of the criticisms is the assumed competition between organizations. It seems that expect-

⁶⁶ Members: ICCO & Kerk in Actie, CARE Nederland, Cordaid, Oxfam Novib, World Vision, Stichting Vluchteling, Terre des Hommes, Save the Children, ZOA, HealthNet TPO, Dorcas, Tear, War Child

⁶⁷ This issue came up at ICCO & Kerk in Actie, Save the Children, and Stichting Vluchteling.

⁶⁸ See the One World Crisis platform at www.oneworld.nl/crisis

⁶⁹ This issue has been raised in the workshops with Stichting Vluchteling and War Child.

⁷⁰ For more information on DEC UK: www.dec.org.uk/about-dec; and for more information on the START Network: www.start-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Start-Fund-Practical-Guide.pdf

⁷¹ This is not the only criterion; besides constituency, the extent to which subsidies are received from institutional donors is a criterion.

tations of humanitarian organizations are high and even natural competition which is normal in other sectors is interpreted as not aligned with honest professional practice when it comes to humanitarian aid. Also, representation is highly influenced by performance of organizations in the aftermath of large natural disasters, whereby oversupply of organizations and consequential competition is a dominant theme.

Some considerations from the workshops:

- The need of individual organizations to create their organizational profile and constituency is a reality. The question is how this affects popular support for humanitarian aid. On the one hand, information provided by a single organization may increase public knowledge about crises and aid, while on the other people may derive from this individual advertising the image that the sector is competitive.
- The high number of organizations on the one hand, and the decreasing budgets on the other hand make competition a reality. A number of organizations face decisive reductions which detract from their operations.
- Creating or maintaining the trust of the general public is a complex matter. It is significant that it is often being suggested that SHO is not sufficiently transparent, while at the same time there are only very few downloads of their extensive reports.

6.4 Supervision of aid

One of the questions that came up during the workshops in preparation of the Dutch Humanitarian Summit concerns the supervision of humanitarian aid.

- International level supervision of humanitarian aid is thin and sector-wide accountability mechanisms can be improved.
- Supervision at the level of individual organizations is rarely discussed. Every organization has a Supervisory Board or Board of Directors, but there is no platform or exchange about the meaning of supervision in humanitarian aid. What are the issues faced by supervisory boards? What knowledge and competences are represented in supervisory boards?

6.5 Concluding

This chapter has set out a number of questions and discussed relevant issues on the position of the humanitarian aid sector in Dutch society.

The most important issues in this chapter are:

- The Dutch humanitarian policy is more differentiated in recent years between attention to reconstruction and protracted crises. The scope of humanitarian aid in case of natural disasters now includes disaster preparedness, while disaster risk reduction is considered to fall under the broader agenda of development cooperation.
- There are questions about the choice of funding of the Dutch policy. The Minister of Foreign Trade and Aid has recently announced some policy changes and made additional budget available for humanitarian assistance by NGOs.

- Dutch organizations consider the need to individually and collectively improve their competence regarding humanitarian diplomacy.
- Sometimes, there is tension between profiling individual organizations and strengthening the popular support-base of humanitarian aid in society.
- Supervision of humanitarian aid has not yet received systematic attention.



7

Conclusion

The last 20 years has seen many developments and improvements in humanitarian aid. Especially in cases of natural disasters, aid has vastly improved. In a number of countries the national response capacity has been strengthened and much has been achieved in the domain of disaster risk reduction. The international humanitarian system has become more effective in saving lives, visible amongst others in sharply reduced mortality during natural hazards and extreme drought. Coordination mechanisms have developed and – with the aid of new technologies – aid is more premised on local capacities and the resilience of affected populations.

There are also problems and issues of concern. Many problems are related to the context of humanitarian crises. Logistical challenges are often huge, many situations are characterised by wicked problems or experience daily or frequent violence. There are also concerns that are related to the sector. This may include negative side-effects of improvements, such as for example the discussions that are raised about the central role of the UN, that has been strengthened 10 years precisely to remedy the fragmentation of aid.

Aid must be premised on the specific context and the type of crisis (open conflict, fragility, refugees and displaced, natural disasters or biological/ chemical/ nuclear disasters). Especially at the junctures of different types of crises and modes of aid, most critique on aid comes out. This is often related to organisational politics, bureaucracy and a lack of flexibility.

There has been much innovation in the past years through the development of new technologies and new partnerships, for example between humanitarian organisations and the private sector. Much may still be gained in these two domains and innovation will therefore feature prominently during the Dutch humanitarian summit, as well as the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

Based on the workshops and interviews with the 12 organisations, the following issues are most relevant to table during the Netherlands Humanitarian Summit.

- Access to people in need in highly violent conflict situations and the extent in which the international and local humanitarian agencies are equipped to work in these circumstances.
- The coordination of aid, including the role of the United Nations that has multiple roles in coordinating, implementing and financing aid, while the humanitarian bodies of the UN also have a direct link with its political and military components.

- How can the linkages between relief, rehabilitation and development in different types of crises be improved? How can organisations better switch operations when the context changes in such a way that they make optimal use of local capacities and resources? How can humanitarian donors improve the continuity between relief, rehabilitation and development?
- How can international humanitarian organisations improve their strategies and practices of respecting the sovereignty of national governments and seeking collaboration within the parameters of their mandate?
- How can Dutch organisations strengthen their public support in the Netherlands and how can they continue their honest discussion about quality of aid with each other and the public at large?

Many staff in Dutch organisations expressed in the workshops and interviews the need for more sector-wide discussion and learning facilities. This raises the question whether it is timely and feasible to set up a knowledge centre for humanitarian aid in order to enhance the learning capacity of the sector.

The World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 aims to prepare the humanitarian sector for the future. It is anticipated that humanitarian needs will increase, as a result of conflict, natural hazards, climate change and continuing population growth. In many countries, these growing needs will largely be dealt with by increased response capacity of national government and civil society. But not everywhere. There will always be countries and crises where direct assistance of the international humanitarian community is vital. It will thus remain highly relevant to invest in an international humanitarian sector that centres on the promotion of human dignity and is professional, effective, accountable and learning.

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World Humanitarian Summit

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Abbreviations

CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
DSH	Direction of Stability and Humanitarian Aid
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Project
IASC	InterAgency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internal Displace People
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
LRRD	Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development
NGI	Non-Governmental Individual
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PHA	Platform Humanitarian Action
PiA	People in Aid
SCHR	Standing Committee of Humanitarian Response
SHO	Samenwerkende Hulp Organisaties
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

