



## **Submission from the Irish humanitarian community to the World Humanitarian Summit**

July 2015

### **Introduction**

This document represents the Irish humanitarian community's submission to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). It is the product of a one year consultation process that engaged a wide range of Irish humanitarian stakeholders in response to the UN Secretary General's call for the global humanitarian community to find new ways of working together to save lives and reduce hardship around the globe. The consultation process included an Irish Humanitarian Summit on the 2nd of July 2015 at which the President of Ireland pledged Ireland's commitment to finding better ways to alleviate the suffering and restore dignity to disaster-affected people globally. One of the primary objectives of this Summit was to agree on a set of recommendations from the broader Irish humanitarian community to the WHS and suggest undertakings which Irish humanitarian stakeholders should adopt to contribute to more effective humanitarian action. The resultant recommendations and undertakings are set out in the *Recommendations from the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process* which is included with this submission<sup>1</sup>. The *Recommendations* are framed around six priority themes which are expanded on below.

### **The Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process**

The Irish consultative process has five distinct phases which aim to provide '*greater coherence and inclusiveness in Ireland's contribution to humanitarian action and to develop a forum to monitor future national trends across the disparate humanitarian community*'. The process is designed and guided by a Steering Committee responsible to mobilise key humanitarian stakeholder groups in Ireland's broader humanitarian community: academia, the diaspora, non-governmental organisations, and the public and private sectors. The *Recommendations from the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process* is the product of the first three phases of this process (see the diagrammatic overview of the system of analysis in Annex 1).

**Phase I** (July to December 2014) – engagement with the five main humanitarian stakeholder groups to elicit their views on the challenges faced in contemporary humanitarian action and possible improvements to the humanitarian system. This process was guided by questions previously established by the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat. The findings were validated and carried into Phase II.

**Phase II** (January to April 2015) – began by convening a series of focus group discussions, each having representation from all humanitarian stakeholder groups, to further analyse the broad challenges and suggested improvements that emerged from Phase I. These sessions culminated in a draft synthesis report which was shared with leaders from all five stakeholder groups for feedback before it was presented at the Irish Humanitarian Summit for affirmation.

**Phase III** (July 2015) – brought the leaders of the broader Irish humanitarian community together to affirm Ireland's recommendations to the WHS. This was Ireland's first ever Humanitarian Summit

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<sup>1</sup> Also available online at: <http://cha.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/here1.pdf>.

and was opened by the Head of State, President Michael D. Higgins. Following the affirmation of the recommendations and a pledge on the part of Irish leaders to support improvements to the delivery of humanitarian action, the large attendance (approximately 230 representatives) was divided in line with the six thematic areas that comprise Ireland's submission to the WHS for further validation and refinement. This document is the outcome of the process to date.

**Phase IV** (July 2015 – May 2016) – begins with this submission. The Steering Committee will continue to engage with the WHS Secretariat to encourage the adoption of these recommendations and continuously keep its constituency informed of progress in the run up to the WHS. The broader Irish humanitarian community will focus on four key recommendations, namely: promoting the concept of humanitarian **subsidiarity** to place disaster affected people at the centre of humanitarian responses; advancing **protection** and ensuring prevention of and response to **GBV** in emergencies; building **resilience** of vulnerable countries at community and national levels to withstand and recover from disasters; and enhancing the **security** of humanitarian staff.

**Phase V** (post-May 2016) – will continue to focus on the improvements to be made to the Irish humanitarian system irrespective of what emerges from the WHS. Following the WHS itself, the broader Irish humanitarian community will begin working on the emerging proposed improvements - the Global Humanitarian Agenda Post-2016. Phase V will conclude with an Irish national seminar in July 2016 that will serve to inform the Irish humanitarian community of the findings from the WHS and of progress made to date on advancing key humanitarian issues domestically.

## Recommendations to the World Humanitarian Summit

The key recommendations are grouped in six thematic areas, with a further four cross-cutting issues: gender, innovation, funding and security. Each thematic area is presented by first listing the priority recommendations, followed by a brief narrative to emphasise key issues, and concludes with suggested undertakings to be progressed by the broader Irish humanitarian community.

### ***Thematic Area One: Put disaster-affected people at the heart of humanitarian response***

*The broader Irish humanitarian community recommends the following to the WHS:*

- Commit to upholding and promoting recognised standards<sup>2</sup> on participation, empowerment methodologies and accountability in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes, and to developing innovative approaches to their implementation.
- Ensure gender equality in participation, representation and decision making to promote inclusive engagement of all affected people in the consultation processes.
- Use or develop innovative tools and approaches to establish meaningful dialogue with communities and people affected by crises, ensuring that information flows from and back to them.
- Reinforce the use of participatory approaches in policy-making at the level of programme / project evaluation.
- Capture learning from development experience in consultation, participation and accountability and adapt good practice to humanitarian assistance.

The first recommendation to the WHS listed above was highlighted as an urgent priority, as it is a clear commitment that should be adopted by all humanitarian actors globally. The broader Irish humanitarian community feels that disaster-affected populations should be at the centre of the humanitarian effort by: prioritising good communication with beneficiaries around what assistance is needed and how it should be provided; and insisting that dialogue with disaster-affected populations is incorporated into the selection and training of humanitarian actors. It was suggested that donor funding criteria should take these recommendations into account when reaching funding decisions. The recommendation of having disaster-affected populations represented on Humanitarian Country Teams and in clusters was also put forward.

*The Irish humanitarian community has agreed to the following undertakings:* to focus action in the coming months on strengthening participation, accountability and communication in programming, training and education curricula and identification of platforms that allow communities of affected people to provide feedback and to evaluate humanitarian initiatives that affect/involve them, building on examples of good practice. The Irish humanitarian community commits to systematically include participation, engagement, empowerment, and impact indicators in all programmes, inclusive of gender, race/ethnicity and social class. They will also continue to incentivise recognition of and compliance with the Core Humanitarian Standard and the systematic incorporation of participation and accountability at all stages of programme design, implementation and evaluation to ensure optimal programme quality.

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<sup>2</sup> Including the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, the Core Humanitarian Standard, the IASC Commitments to Accountability to Affected Population and Operational Framework, and Sphere.

***Thematic Area Two: Reaffirm the commitment to IHL and humanitarian principles, particularly in conflict contexts***

The broader Irish humanitarian community recommends the following to the WHS:

- Greater political and diplomatic efforts are needed to prevent and respond to large-scale conflict.
- All actors engaged in humanitarian action should promote systematic training of combatants on IHL and increase investment at governmental level for conflict prevention and resolution initiatives.
- All actors engaged in humanitarian action should affirm their compliance with IHL in conflict contexts and their commitment to the humanitarian principles in all responses.
- The WHS should further develop the concept of humanitarian subsidiarity.

The broader Irish humanitarian community is committed to a principled approach to humanitarian action and compliance with IHL and the core humanitarian principles derived from it. To affect genuine change in humanitarian action, the broader Irish humanitarian community wishes to prioritise the need for greater political and diplomatic efforts to prevent and respond to large scale conflicts. This priority is given in the knowledge that, given existing legal frameworks, all other recommendations, while of great importance in their own right, will have limited effect in the absence of political commitment to apply existing law. Furthermore, there is a real need to communicate the essence of IHL and the core humanitarian principles to programme staff and non-humanitarian actors. With respect to the concept of humanitarian subsidiarity, there is general support within the broader Irish humanitarian community for the concept of subsidiarity to be further elaborated.

*The Irish humanitarian community has agreed to the following undertakings:* to reaffirm and strengthen policies and practice relative to the core humanitarian principles, including providing staff with regular analysis on IHL and core humanitarian principles and challenges in their application in contemporary crises. The Irish Government will continue to actively engage in regional and global fora to progress large scale conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, and Irish academic institutions will explore possibilities for inclusion of the core humanitarian principles in ongoing training and research. All Irish humanitarian actors will strive to collaborate through advocacy, policy and media engagement at national and global levels to ensure that the concept of humanitarian subsidiarity is elaborated, adopted and adhered to by the international humanitarian community.

***Thematic Area Three: Localise preparedness and responses where politically and culturally appropriate***

The broader Irish humanitarian community recommends the following to the WHS:

- Establish appropriate structures (entry points) at different societal levels, linking decentralised development cooperation programmes and reforms with humanitarian programmes.
- Establish longer-term relations with local government and non-government actors before a crisis, and continue these relationships during and after the crisis. Such relationships can provide a solid basis for discussion and engagement on humanitarian principles amongst humanitarian actors.
- Increase and strengthen local capacity building and empowerment efforts to ensure a mutual exchange of knowledge, expertise and know-how between local and international actors.
- Promote and facilitate south-south and regional collaboration, including municipalities and local civil society actors through professional exchange programmes and joint training and research initiatives.
- Document and promote bottom-up approaches to innovation (through enhanced recognition of its potential benefits and through increased investment in research).
- Especially in complex contexts, ensure that staff are aware of good risk and security management practices that may allow them to sustain their presence to continue to deliver programmes in times of extreme need.

These above recommendations to the WHS represent a commitment to build trusted relations towards disaster response, prevention and post-disaster recovery. The role of the diaspora in humanitarian processes was recognised, particularly for developing pre-crisis capacity and preparedness, and in providing analysis and possible contacts in the event of a surge response to new disasters. The need for capacity strengthening of local civil society by both funders and INGOs was also emphasised, as is the need for greater progress towards achieving the 0.7% of GDP target for the international aid agenda. As conflicts become increasingly violent, humanitarian actors need to constantly strengthen their capacities to assess risk and enhance their risk management to sustain presence and proximity in disaster-affected communities.

*The Irish humanitarian community has agreed to the following undertakings:* to identify ways to adapt and strengthen funding mechanisms so that funds can be directly accessed by local civil society. Furthermore, the Government and humanitarian actors in Ireland will advocate with other donors and with regional and national NGOs to scale up networks and funding mechanisms which have proven effective in fostering partnerships, learning and civil society capacity, for example, the Start Network and Start Fund. The broader Irish humanitarian community will explore opportunities to build the capacities of diaspora groups from disaster-prone countries living in Ireland. Staff should be trained to an appropriate level in security management and all organisations should seek to implement established good practice guidelines in relation to risk management.

***Thematic Area Four: Systematically integrate protections and gender-based violence initiatives in norms, policy and practice***

The broader Irish humanitarian community recommends the following to the WHS:

- Integrate gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response as a priority at the core of intervention planning and, in recognising that GBV is common to all emergencies, ensure that GBV programming is adequately resourced from the onset.
- Support dialogue, exchange and capacity building on protection and the prevention of GBV at the local level. In particular, support discussion on the needs and experiences of civilians so that they are reflected at policy and operational levels of humanitarian interventions.
- Prioritise addressing impunity and bringing perpetrators to justice at all levels and across all actors, engaging with affected communities, including using models for local/traditional justice systems.
- Systematically provide training on protection and GBV to civilian and military staff in UN and regional peacekeeping missions at the onset of their deployment, and ensure accountability and transparency on GBV with emphasis on zero-tolerance of abuse among humanitarian actors.

The Irish humanitarian community believes that gender has not been afforded sufficient attention in the WHS consultation processes to date. Gender has been prioritised within the Irish humanitarian consultative process as a cross-cutting issue and as a stand-alone thematic area in respect of protection from gender-based violence. It was further agreed that the WHS outcomes must refer to the Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) agenda and the Call to Action on protection of girls and women from violence in emergencies. The Irish humanitarian community, in recommending zero tolerance for those that violate agreed policies on protection and GBV, is calling for greater attention to be afforded to issues to address impunity and bringing perpetrators to justice at all levels and across all actors. The challenge is to engage with affected communities and build on existing models for local/traditional justice systems.

*The Irish humanitarian community has agreed to the following undertakings:* to explore options for building excellence in training and research in protection and GBV, building on the advocacy efforts of the Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence and in collaboration with international expertise. Furthermore, they will strive to demonstrate in all strategic and operational plans for humanitarian engagement that protection is a primary need and response, and will increase and strengthen programming on gender and protection in humanitarian crises. The Irish Government has committed to increasing targeted humanitarian funding for protection and GBV to incentivise more and better quality programmes. The Irish humanitarian community agrees that training should be facilitated in line with the revised IASC Guidelines on GBV in Humanitarian Settings.

***Thematic Area Five: Improve disaster risk reduction, resilience and early warning***

The broader Irish humanitarian community recommends the following to the WHS:

- Advocate and support national governments to prioritise planning and investment in participative and people-centred DRR and preparedness initiatives, including through advocacy with donors providing support to national governments.
- Integrate and increase the availability of development funding at municipal level, including for capacity building, planning and response, within national action plans and budgets.
- Review development funding mechanisms to ensure that funds can be channelled to national and local actors for emergency mitigation and preparedness activities and establish targets for funding local capacity building and NGOs across the donor community.
- Use available/new technology to strengthen identification, assessment and monitoring of disaster risks and to enhance early warning.
- Advocate for joint/shared risk analyses that include acute shocks and chronic stresses and are kept updated and used for programming and policy responses.

The broader Irish humanitarian community is recommending that DRR, building community resilience and early warning are not limited to natural disaster contexts, but should include fragile states and conflict prone contexts. While the above recommendations may be more easily achieved in contexts governed by states that are willing to engage with the international community, there is a responsibility on the international community to continuously reach out to all states and support their global engagement. Effective DRR, community resilience and early warning systems require funding, knowledge and understanding, and incentives to change practices and attitudes. Humanitarian actors need to engage in strategic advocacy to build political will for and understanding of DRR, community resilience, and early warning systems. Relevant contextual information on specific countries and regions should be used to maintain flexibility in funding mechanisms.

*The Irish humanitarian community has agreed to the following undertakings: greater focus on the provision of capacity development on DRR, community resilience and early-warning to local actors to enhance their long-term capacity. In addition, Irish humanitarian actors will examine and apply tools for assessing risk, hazards and vulnerabilities that can be replicated and contextualised to develop joint contextual analysis. They will engage with other sectors to establish bridges between complementary activities. Finally, the Irish Government and NGOs will strive to support longer-term commitment and flexible funding instruments, where feasible, to allow context-specific responses to adapt to local realities, changing contexts and increasing local capacity at different points in time.*

***Thematic Area Six: Support greater coordination and consultation***

The broader Irish humanitarian community recommends the following to the WHS:

- Support and strengthen existing coordination mechanisms, in particular the cluster approach, so that they are effective – including at sub-national levels - and accessible to national and local actors.
- Improve consultation processes with local communities in coordination structures. Ensure that ethnic minorities, women and women-led organisations are meaningfully engaged and given an equal opportunity to participate in such mechanisms.
- Strengthen international coordination standards and principles and develop benchmarks against which to evaluate collective action.
- Support and strengthen initiatives aimed at mapping agency presence on the ground, using innovative technology that is accessible to all stakeholders.
- Improve coordination between humanitarian, development and other sectors both for humanitarian response and DRR/community resilience initiatives. The recommendations must go beyond a conceptual suggestion to sketching an actual action – the ‘what’ must be supported by the ‘how’, especially when recommendations are not new and have been highlighted as weaknesses in many different places.
- Increase human and financial resources for NGOs – international and national - to engage as cluster co-leads.

The Irish humanitarian community agrees that lack of cooperation and collaboration are unacceptable and that the clusters, IASC, funding mechanisms and other structures should be examined to see if they are enablers of or hindrances to collaboration, and be addressed accordingly. Collective action should be pursued for greater collective impact. Innovative ways should be explored to reduce the risk of donor countries defaulting on pledges and to prevent clusters becoming siloed. The role of host governments needs to be amplified in terms of coordination and collaboration, as does the role of young people in relation to coordination. The cross-cutting theme of innovation was highlighted, for example using SMS-based programmes to address needs, and the use of cloud computing.

*The Irish humanitarian community has agreed to the following undertakings:* to establish joint mechanisms across a range of programming activities, to share more information with the public, and to explore options to expand existing coordination to facilitate stronger consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the diaspora, the Irish Defence Forces and the private sector. A suggestion which has emerged from the process for further elaboration over the coming months is the establishment of an Irish Innovation Forum for Humanitarian Action, mobilising the Irish private sector, academia, government and non-governmental actors to work together on a regular basis. There is also a commitment to collaborate with Southern researchers for joint research programmes.

## Next Steps

Whilst considerable efforts and investment have been made by the Irish humanitarian community in reaching this point, we are only at the beginning of the most important phase – shaping a new global humanitarian agenda and realising the changes required to the humanitarian system to ensure that it is able to save lives and reduce the suffering of disaster-affected people more efficiently, effectively and quickly.

Further to the ongoing Irish humanitarian consultative process, a number of important steps are being planned (see Phase IV and V as summarised above). Ireland will continue to prepare its political leaders to engage in the Global Consultation in Geneva in October, the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016 and beyond; continuously updating the broader Irish humanitarian community on progress in the lead up to the WHS – mainly through the Irish humanitarian consultative process website<sup>3</sup>, and reporting back on significant events such as the Berlin and Geneva meetings. The broader Irish humanitarian community will continue its work on the four key issues it has chosen to focus on: promoting the concept of humanitarian **subsidiarity**; advancing **protection** and ensuring prevention and response to **GBV** is a fundamental component in all emergencies; building **resilience** of vulnerable countries at community and national levels to withstand and recover from disasters; and enhancing the **security** of humanitarian staff to ensure sustained proximity to disaster-affected people.

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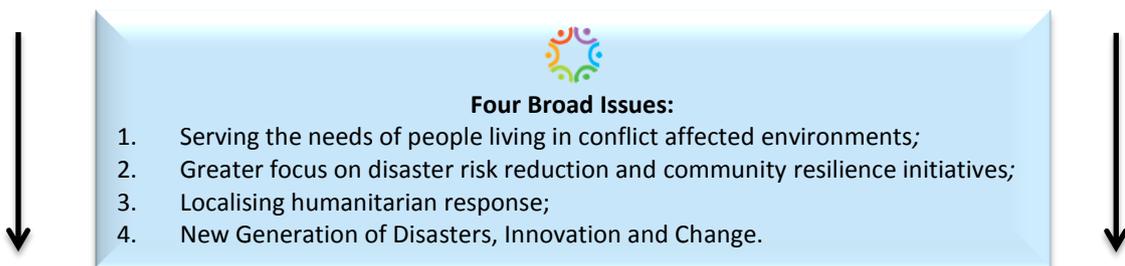
<sup>3</sup> <http://cha.ucd.ie/>



**Annex 1: System of Analysis followed during the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process to the WHS**



These four thematic areas were researched during Phase I of the consultation using qualitative methods, predominantly questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings were validated and additional information was gathered by way of focus group discussions. The findings were analysed using NVivo software and documented into five separate stakeholder papers. From these findings, four broad issues were identified which were used in Phase II of the consultation.



These four broad issues were used as the basis for discussion during Phase II. The methodology deployed during this phase was focus group discussions conducted over four full days, involving representatives from all five of the key stakeholder groups (Public Sector; Private Sector; NGO; Diaspora; and Academia). Each of the above four broad issues was sub-divided into five sub-issues. One broad issue and its attendant sub-issues was addressed on each of the four focus group discussion days.

**20 Issues**  
All twenty sub-issues were analysed individually, and approximately 100 separate findings were documented.



These 100 findings approximately have been categorised into six Emerging Issues which both the *Recommendations from the Irish Humanitarian Consultative Process* and the Irish Humanitarian Summit focused on.

