

Abstract

In advance of the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, consultations were conducted in Ireland with the view to shaping Ireland's contribution to the development of a new global humanitarian agenda. Stakeholders across five groups (public sector, private sector, NGOs, diaspora of disaster- and conflict-affected countries, and academia) were consulted on a range of pertinent topics by employing diverse research methods. The findings from the stakeholder groups were synthesised and grouped under four broad issues: localising humanitarian response and making people the prime agents of response; disaster risk reduction and resilience; serving the needs of people in conflict; and the new generation of disasters, innovation and change. These broad issues that resulted from Phase I served as the starting point for Phase II of the consultative process.

Introduction

The Irish humanitarian community is using the opportunity of the World Humanitarian Summit¹ to re-affirm its national commitment to principled humanitarian action and to articulate a new humanitarian agenda to better respond to current and future humanitarian need. The consultative process, which involves four phases,² brings together the breadth and diversity of opinion within the different humanitarian groups of actors in Ireland that are engaged in humanitarian action. These groups include:

- Public Sector (primarily, the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Environment);
- Private Sector (private companies with an interest in humanitarian action);
- Humanitarian NGOs and other agencies involved in the sector;
- Diaspora of disaster-affected countries living in Ireland; and
- Academia.

In addition to the national consultation, a series of global, regional and online consultations are ongoing. All of the consultations address *four* thematic areas.³ The first theme concerns *humanitarian effectiveness*. 'Improving effectiveness' has long been a concern to the humanitarian community and while progress has been made in professionalising the sector and enhancing accountability, partnership and humanitarian financing, further advances can be made in this regard.⁴ The second theme concerns the *reduction of vulnerability and the management of risk*. The importance of this theme becomes clear when the challenges posed by global trends such as

¹ The WHS is an initiative announced by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2014 to build a more inclusive and diverse humanitarian system by bringing all key stakeholders together to share best practices and find innovative ways to make humanitarian action more effective. A three year consultation process will lead up to the summit itself, which is scheduled to take place in Istanbul in May 2016. The process is being managed globally by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

² **Phase I** (September - December 2014): Review its current status and formulate positions on key humanitarian issues post 2016. Each group was supported to present its position on issues related to the four thematic areas and select representatives for each area in Phase II.

Phase II (January - April 2015): A thematic group (with representatives from each of the five stakeholder groups) will be established for each of the WHS's themes. The output was a position paper on each thematic area.

Phase III (June 2015): Ireland will host its own humanitarian summit to share information from the previous two phases and discuss the submission of Ireland's contribution to the WHS in July 2015. In the lead up to this summit there will be a process for agreeing and disseminating the final documents. This summit will target members of all of the stakeholder groups and key actors relevant to the WHS from outside of Ireland.

Phase IV – leading to the WHS (Phase IV)

³ These four themes were first articulated by UN OCHA as part of the WHS – see

www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/file/437077/download/475965

⁴ Ibid, 1-2.

unplanned urbanisation, demographic trends and environmental changes to lives and livelihoods are considered.⁵ The third theme relates to *transformation of the humanitarian sector through innovation*. Innovation is considered to include not only new technologies, products and services, but also new processes and partnerships.⁶ The fourth theme concerns *servicing the needs of people in conflict*. The scale, intensity and duration of armed conflicts including the massive displacement of people, continue to create immense humanitarian need. Work under this theme identified more effective strategies and methods of providing assistance and protection to people affected by conflict even in areas where there is combat.

The Irish Consultative Process is supported by the Irish Government. The process was managed by University College Dublin's Centre for Humanitarian Action and guided by a Steering Committee that comprises representation from all the aforementioned stakeholder groupings. The Irish consultative process will shape the development of an Irish Humanitarian Agenda which will be affirmed at the first Irish Humanitarian Summit scheduled to take place in early July 2015.

The objective of Phase I of the Irish Consultative Process was to engage as many organisational representatives as possible, across the five stakeholder groups, and document their position on each of the four thematic areas set out by the WHS. Phase I also focused on identifying representatives across all five groups to continue consultations into Phase II of the process. This paper presents the methods employed and key findings by each of the five stakeholder groups involved in these consultations.

Methodology

The methodology adopted during Phase I of the consultative process was mainly qualitative in nature and employed survey methods and focus groups discussions. Representatives from four of the five stakeholder groups⁷ responded to a survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) which was designed using the guidance questions developed by the WHS Secretariat as part of their four thematic papers.⁸ The questionnaires administered to each of the four groups were broadly similar (amended for language and context),⁹ thus allowing for comparative analysis of the findings across groupings. Each of the questionnaires administered to the four stakeholder groups were piloted with key informants and subsequently edited prior to dissemination within that stakeholder group. In the case of the Public sector, one response, amalgamating the opinions of a number of different Government departments was received. Nine humanitarian NGOs responded; ten diaspora networks or individuals; and seven academic or research institutes also responded. It is not known how many individuals within each department, organisation, institution or network engaged in the study.

The responses to the questionnaires were then analysed and the initial findings were validated by means of a focus group discussion (with the exception of the private sector respondents). Further analysis was then undertaken using the NVivo software package to ascertain the main issues raised within each of the individual stakeholder groups.

⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁶ Ibid, 3.

⁷ Public Sector; NGO Group, Diaspora and Academia

⁸ A list of approximately 30 questions adapted from those provided by WHS as a guide to the four thematic areas: Humanitarian Effectiveness; Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risk; Transformation through Innovation; and Servicing the Needs of People in Conflict.

⁹ The questionnaire administered to the diaspora stakeholder group contained additional questions specific to this stakeholder group.

For the private sector, two main methods were employed – semi-structured interviews and an online business survey. Thirty six companies were contacted and invited to interview. Of these, 16 companies granted an interview and an executive (for the most part chief executive officers) of each of these companies was interviewed using a standard format.¹⁰ A database was developed and 940 companies invited to partake in an online business survey based on a model designed by OCHA and surveyed in other countries/regions. The response rate was comparatively low however the results informed Phase II of the Irish Consultative Process and a baseline was developed for further research in the future.

Key Findings

Based on the analysis conducted in the paper a number of issues have been identified from the responses that can be further addressed in Phase II of the Irish Consultative Process ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit. Some of the proposals are addressed to the Irish humanitarian sector while others are addressed to the global humanitarian system as a whole.

The result of this first phase in the consultation process was a rich data set which was analysed in line with: Issues (what needs to be done); Actors (who needs to do what); and methods (how it should be done). The key issues that emerged from each of the stakeholder groups were grouped under four broad headings established on the basis of frequency and emphasis given in the responses. The resultant broad issues were: serving the needs of people in conflict; disaster risk reduction and resilience; localising response and making local people the prime agents of response; and new generation of disaster, innovation and change.

Serving the needs of people in conflict

A significant number of ideas emerged concerning how the needs of people living in conflict affected environments can best be served and how the deteriorating humanitarian environment in conflict situations can be addressed. Lists of the more salient ideas provided by the different stakeholder groups are presented below:

The public sector respondents provided the following ideas:

- Further awareness-raising ought to be conducted concerning the Humanitarian Principles and their implementation – programming and reporting should address the principles. Incentives should be provided for raising awareness concerning the principles among other actors;
- Funding should to be provided to local civil society actors in a more systematic manner;
- Gender-based violence prevention and response ought to be further promoted;
- Pre-positioning of supplies (shelter items, food, non-food items etc.) can enhance preparedness;
- Mapping of agency presence can support preparedness for conflict-related crises;
- Preparedness can also benefit from prior agreement on land issues;
- The establishment of safe zones can better address conflict-induced displacement;
- Support for national and regional early warning systems for conflict ought to be promoted;

¹⁰ The interviews addressed six areas; the nature of involvement of the company with humanitarian action; corporate decision-making regarding humanitarian engagement; the motivation for the engagement and the perceived or expected benefits; the nature of their partnership or coordination in their humanitarian engagement; barriers to humanitarian engagement and inclusion in humanitarian affairs; innovation in humanitarian action.

The NGO respondents also provided ideas concerning this theme:

- Further awareness-raising ought to be conducted concerning the Principles and their implementation – programming and reporting should address the Principles. Incentives should be provided for raising awareness concerning the Principles among other actors;
- Funding ought to be provided to local actors in a more systematic manner;
- Adherence to International Humanitarian Law ought to be further promoted.

The respondents from the diaspora stakeholder group provided the following ideas:

- There is a need to use all means of communication to conduct an ongoing dialogue with affected populations in order to, inter alia, reassure affected people about the motivations of humanitarian actors;
- Diaspora are key in sensitising humanitarian actors (including donors and western NGOs) to the crisis environment;
- Funding ought to be provided to local actors in a more systematic manner.

The key issues that emerged from ‘serving the needs of people in conflict’ to be further developed in Phase II of the consultation process were: the challenge to maintain access to and dialogue with people affected by conflict; how to promote awareness of and adherence to International humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles; establishing more appropriate and relevant funding mechanisms to people affected by conflict; and greater attention to be given to preparedness and conflict prevention.

Disaster risk reduction and resilience

Concerning the tackling of recurrent and protracted crises in a coherent way and the provision for disaster risk reduction and resilience initiatives, lists of the more salient ideas provided by the different stakeholder groups are presented below.

The public sector participants provided the following ideas:

- It should be ensured that funding is provided in a flexible manner based on the context;
- Political empowerment and representation around responding to early warnings, the use of technology, and the capacity development of institutions and local NGOs, CBOs and regional organisations ought to be promoted;
- Effective participation of populations, especially urban populations, in preparedness planning should be promoted

Relevant to Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, the Private Sector commented:

- Build the capacity of international and regional relief organisations and charities on disaster risk reduction to be of foremost importance;
- Building the capacity of local civil society and local government on disaster risk reduction was also important.

A number of ideas were provided by the NGO representatives:

- Long-term disaster management and resilience building at the local level ought to be improved through community-led programmes;
- Further emphasis ought to be placed on disaster risk reduction in relief programmes;
- Risk management should be boosted by linking the WHS process with the different policy domains of relevance (Hyogo Framework for Action, Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change Adaptation);
- It should be ensured that funding is provided in a flexible manner based on the context;

- Political empowerment and representation ought to be enhanced around responding to early warnings and the use of technology;
- The capacity development of institutions and local NGOs, CBOs and regional organisations ought to be further promoted.

The diaspora respondents provided the following ideas:

- Research, training, education and knowledge transfer is required to better understand and anticipate the changing nature of risk and vulnerability;
- Effective participation of populations, in particular urban populations, ought to be promoted in risk assessment, hazard mapping, safe shelter awareness and preparedness planning.

Respondents within the academia stakeholder grouping provided the following ideas:

- Political empowerment and representation around responding to early warnings, the use of technology, and the capacity development of institutions and local NGOs, CBOs and regional organisations ought to be promoted
- Research, training, education and knowledge transfer is required to better understand and anticipate the changing nature of risk and vulnerability
- Further systems strengthening in disaster-prone countries ought to be undertaken
- Coordination mechanisms ought to appropriately reflect the capacity of the local government
- There is a need for further promotion of south-south collaboration and experience sharing of municipalities and civil society.

The key issues that emerged from 'disaster risk reduction and resilience' to be further developed in Phase II of the consultation process were: building on existing knowledge, skills and capacities to build resilience at all societal levels; promote community-led disaster management and risk reduction programming; challenge to build capacities of regional, national and local authorities to anticipate risk and to engage with local NGOs and CBOs to mitigate the worst effects of disasters; establishing new flexible funding mechanisms to support local disaster risk reduction and resilience initiatives.

Localising humanitarian response and making people the prime agents of response

The importance of localising humanitarian response and making people the prime agents featured prominently in the discussions. Lists of the more salient ideas provided by the different stakeholder groups are presented below:

Several proposals were provided by the public sector participants:

- Humanitarian response and risk reduction over the longer term can be localised through agile and adaptable financing mechanisms;
- Resourcing of local actors, in particular in relation to protracted emergency settings, ought to be increased;
- Coordination mechanisms ought to appropriately reflect the capacity of the local government;
- There is a need for further promotion of south-south collaboration and experience sharing of municipalities and civil society;
- Further support for research and innovation is required, including investment in innovative early warning systems, infrastructure development, adaptation and retro-fitting;
- Effective participation of populations, in particular urban populations, ought to be promoted in risk assessment, hazard mapping, safe shelter awareness and preparedness planning.

The Private Sector provided the following ideas on the theme of localising humanitarian response:

- The Private Sector overwhelmingly considered innovation in better communication with (and participation of) affected communities as having the most potential for improving disaster response.

The NGO respondents provided the following ideas:

- Greater support should be provided for the rule of law and justice sector reform in order to enhance accountability;
- Accountability indicators ought to be further standardised;
- There is a need for greater participation of local people, including women, in key positions;
- The funding opportunities of local actors, in particular in relation to protracted emergency settings, ought to be increased;
- Effective participation of populations, in particular urban populations, ought to be promoted in risk assessment, hazard mapping, safe shelter awareness and preparedness planning.

The diaspora respondents placed great emphasis on this theme and provided the following ideas:

- Humanitarian response and risk reduction over the longer term should be localised through agile and adaptable financing mechanisms;
- Greater support should be provided for the rule of law and justice sector reform in order to enhance accountability;
- There is a need for greater participation of local people in key positions;
- Further systems strengthening in disaster-prone countries ought to be undertaken.

Academia provided the following ideas on the theme of localising humanitarian response:

- Further systems strengthening in disaster-prone countries ought to be undertaken
- Coordination mechanisms ought to appropriately reflect the capacity of the local government
- There is a need for further promotion of south-south collaboration and experience sharing of municipalities and civil society.

The key issues that emerged from 'localising response and making affected people the prime agents of response' to be further developed in Phase II of the consultation process were grouped together, however it became increasingly clear that while making affected people the prime agents of response is unconditional, the extent to which response can or should be localised is context specific. The issues chosen were: the need for enhance levels of engagement of affected people in line with existing codes and standards; examining ways to ensure that the humanitarian system never loses sight of the centrality of affected peoples in the humanitarian effort; establishing mechanisms to empower affected populations to shape the humanitarian effort to meeting their needs; and promoting dialogue and exchange of experience, ideas and resources between existing and emerging actors in humanitarian response.

New generation of disasters, innovation and change

The key issues concerning the emergence of a new generation of disasters as well as innovation and change in the humanitarian system were many and varied. Lists of the more salient ideas provided by the different stakeholder groups are presented below:

The following ideas were proffered by the public sector respondents:

- There is an opportunity to streamline global financial mechanisms through pooled funding and consortia;
- There is a need for more predictable leadership within the global humanitarian system;
- National budgets should address longer-term resilience;

- It is important to improve digital data collection and standardisation of data gathering to enhance needs assessments and other assessments (collaboration with ICT sector is required);
- Fora for scaling up innovation in humanitarian action ought to be established that allow for cooperation among competitive actors (e.g. NGOs, private sector companies);
- There is a need to link humanitarian/DRR financing with longer-term development financing;
- The evidence base for the cost effectiveness of particular aspects of humanitarian action (DRR over response; the relevance of humanitarian action to development gains) ought to be developed;
- Urban risk ought to be addressed through further support to local municipalities and civil society;
- Methodologies for anticipatory responses ought to be further developed;
- Coordination and division of labour of humanitarian actors according to comparative advantage and national/thematic interest ought to be promoted.

The Private Sector interviewees provided the following ideas on new generation of disasters, innovation and change:

- To build an innovative culture towards successful innovative products and processes, there must be a solid platform, facilities or institutionalised structures, rather than simply encouraging brilliant ideas. As such, these platforms etc. are to bring people together for cross-sectoral problem solving, with emphasis on collaboration, networking and even co-competition (combination of cooperation and competition).
- There is interest on the part of the private sector to support, in Ireland or as a global concept, a platform or an institutionalised structure for humanitarian innovation. This could possibly be in a private-public partnership, or in establishing multi-sectoral (private, academic, agencies, government) institute(s) dedicated to developing innovative products and processes for humanitarian use, and where the risk of engaging in "R&D" could be supported and more broadly shared.

The NGO respondents provided the following ideas on the same theme:

- There is a need for common proposal and reporting requirements across donors;
- Financial mechanisms ought to be streamlined through pooled funding and consortia;
- More predictable leadership ought to be developed within the humanitarian system;
- The accountability of humanitarian actors ought to be enhanced;
- There is a need for further consistency and continuity of funding;
- Budgets should be consolidated for longer-term resilience funding;
- It is important to improve digital data collection and standardisation of data gathering to enhance needs assessments and other assessments (collaboration with ICT sector is required);
- Communication with target populations ought to be further promoted;
- Fora for scaling up innovation in humanitarian action ought to be established that allow for cooperation among competitive actors (e.g. NGOs, private sector companies);
- Cash transfer ought to be scaled up;
- There is a need to further institutionalise relationships and develop common understandings between the private sector and humanitarian actors, for example through the engagement of private sector umbrella groups;
- There is a need to link humanitarian/DRR financing with longer-term development financing;
- Greater funding ought to be provided for innovation and research in order to develop new technologies;
- Coordination and division of labour of humanitarian actors according to comparative advantage and national/thematic interest ought to be further promoted;

- The strengths of the private sector, including in data management, ought to be better harnessed.

The diaspora respondents provided the following ideas:

- There is a need for common proposal and reporting requirements across donors;
- It is important to improve digital data collection and standardisation of data gathering to enhance needs assessments and other assessments (collaboration with ICT sector is required);
- Communication with target populations ought to be further promoted;
- There is a need to further institutionalise relationships and develop common understandings between the private sector and humanitarian actors, including through the engagement of private sector umbrella groups;
- The strengths of the private sector, including in data management, ought to be better harnessed;

The academic respondents provided the following ideas concerning the same theme:

- Further support for research and innovation is required, including investment in innovative early warning systems, infrastructure development, adaptation and retro-fitting;
- It is important to improve digital data collection and standardisation of data gathering to enhance needs assessments and other assessments (collaboration with ICT sector is required);
- Funding innovation and research for new technologies to enhance risk management is required;
- The strengths of the private sector, including in data management, ought to be better harnessed;
- There is a need to implement better surveillance systems, early warning systems and thresholds for action in urban areas.

This broad issue served as a ‘catch-all’ with exciting new ways to approach humanitarian policy, programming and practice. In taking this thinking forward into Phase II, the following issues were established: modelling new ways to engage the diverse humanitarian stakeholder mix to meet current and new humanitarian challenges; more coherent policies to be established to address existing and emerging disasters causing demographic trends linked to urbanisation and migration; adapting existing and new technologies to meet current and future humanitarian challenges; and the search for appropriate and relevant ways to prioritise these innovations within the constraints of the existing system, which is already under stress and over stretched.

Conclusion

This paper brings together the findings of the consultations with the five stakeholder groups as part of Phase I of the Irish consultative process ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit. Four of the five stakeholder groups (the public sector, diaspora, academia and the NGOs) addressed four themes: localising humanitarian response and making people the prime agents of response; disaster risk reduction and resilience; serving the needs of people in conflict; and the new generation of disasters, innovation and change. The findings from the private sector provide some key insights into the current state of engagement of the private sector in humanitarian action and how such engagement can be enhanced. While there is some common ground within and across the stakeholder groups, it is important to also acknowledge that consensus has not been fully reached concerning each of these themes, nor was it sought. The findings provide a basis for further detailed consultations in Phase II of the Irish Consultative Process when members from each of the

stakeholder groups convene to further develop the ideas gleaned from Phase I. The outcome of Phase II will be the development of an Irish Humanitarian Agenda which will be affirmed at the Irish Humanitarian Summit scheduled to take place in early July 2015. Thereafter, the Irish Humanitarian Community will consolidate its findings and actions gathered throughout this process and prepare its submission to the World Humanitarian Summit consultative process.