

Report on preparatory consultations

Consultation with ECCAS Disaster Management Agencies

In a session at the annual consultation meeting of disaster management agencies from the ECCAS region¹ on 28 April – 1 May in Yaoundé, Cameroon, OCHA facilitated a discussion on the themes of the World Humanitarian Summit, particularly focused on managing the risks of humanitarian crisis in the region.

Participants identified the top five risks in the Central Africa region as: flooding; epidemics / illnesses; drought; landslides and volcanoes. They highlighted the importance of building capacity in governments and humanitarian organizations to monitor and warn local people about natural hazards, including flooding, landslides and volcanoes. Concrete actions to address limited existing capacity could include strengthening the professional skills and training of people working in the sector, identifying high-risk areas that haven't been mapped before, as well as building up surveillance networks and the operational and technological capabilities of observatories and running education campaigns.

With respect to epidemics and illnesses, the discussion focused in particular on challenges related to delivering and gaining acceptance of health services in urban areas - in particular immunizations - citing insufficient human resources capacity and lack of organization of the settlements in certain areas as some of the main challenges to enabling people, communities and cities to become more resilient to shocks.

Participants recognized the need to strengthen the capacity of organizations in the region to help prevent and manage the risk of humanitarian crisis. They recommended that it would be beneficial to establish a mechanism of coordination at the regional level in Central Africa to contribute to managing risk, which could include regional centers similar to AGRYMED and CILSS in West Africa, as well as a dedicated committee.



Participants at the ECCAS Disaster Management Agencies' Annual Consultation in Yaoundé, Cameroon (28 April – 1 May 2014) discuss WHS themes. Photo: OCHA

¹ Member states of ECCAS include: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.



Consultation with ECOWAS Disaster Management Agencies

During the annual consultation meeting of disaster management agencies from the ECOWAS region² on 4-6 June in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, OCHA facilitated a session on the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), including the various steps in preparation of the regional consultation in Abidjan, as well as the four thematic themes.

In a session on 'reducing vulnerability and managing risk', participants identified the major risks for West Africa: floods, socio-political conflicts, epidemics, droughts and locust invasions. For these top 5 risks, participants discussed: the impact of risks in the region; mechanisms in place to manage the risks; strengths and weaknesses of existing mechanisms, as well as; recommendations to improve prevention, mitigation and response. They highlighted that Governments and ECOWAS need to be better prepared to face emerging risks such as terrorism and socio-political conflicts (for example, the recent conflict in Mali) for which monitoring or response mechanisms are weak or not yet in place.

Moreover, participants pointed out that while the Ebola epidemic has facilitated cross-border cooperation and rapid response, Governments should not forget that other, less visible diseases or epidemics (such as malaria) cause many more deaths. OCHA invited participants to complete a survey in light of the up-coming WHS Regional Consultation and discussed some selected key questions such as demographic pressure, increased poverty, urbanism and conflicts.

Among the most important factors to ensure effective humanitarian action in West and Central Africa, participants highlighted accountability towards communities, coordination among humanitarian actors, timeliness of assistance, funding based on humanitarian needs and consultation with affected communities.

The need for innovation was also discussed. Participants highlighted several examples of innovative solutions already in place: the Strategic Response Plan for the Sahel (2014-2016) as an example of multiyear initiatives; the programme 'Cities and climate change'; ECOWAS humanitarian policy and ECOWARN; cash transfers; use of social media and mobile phones in communicating with communities; distribution of locally-produced enriched flour; and cooperation with private sector organizations (such as in response to the 2012 floods in Nigeria).

In response to a question on the obstacles to upholding the humanitarian principles in the region, participants highlighted: lack of knowledge of humanitarian principles; lack of communication of violations of humanitarian principles; conflicts of interest among involved actors; impunity and lack of accountability.

Participants then stressed issues which should be addressed at the WHS, such as: prevention, improved coordination, monitoring and evaluation of all interventions, resilience, community participation, innovative fund raising systems, faster allocation of humanitarian funds, improved multi-sectoral interaction; improved synergy of multiple actors; debate among decision makers and humanitarian actors on negative impacts of increased humanitarian needs and crises (in light of demographic trends in the region).

² Member states of ECOWAS include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Cape Verde.

Civil society consultation organized by the West African Research Centre (WARC)

Discussions over the two-day meeting (13-14 May, 2014) organized by the West African Research Center in Dakar, Senegal, focused on the four WHS themes and on generating recommendations from the civil society perspective, plus a set of good practices and lessons learned for each. The workshop, which gathered experts from 16 countries from across West Africa, Cameroon and Chad, aimed at exploring the participating organizations and countries' respective experiences to identify the fundamental issues to be addressed in the region and at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.



Participants at the regional consultation of civil society organizations, organized by WARC Photo: OCHA

Themes that recurred throughout the discussion included the importance of longer term solutions, as well as the need to strengthen governments' institutional capacity to prepare for crises and use early warning systems to communicate with people in accessible and practical ways.

Participants highlighted the importance of working with local organizations to leverage their capacity and understanding of the language and culture and context, in order to better coordinate, monitor and share information about services delivered by the multitude of different actors – as well as to better understand needs and make the impacts of assistance more sustainable.

They also encouraged organizations to support and strengthen mechanisms for knowledge transfer and to share lessons learned across emergencies. Participants discussed various aspects of innovation, pointing out that it is not just about technology but about social changes and leveraging knowledge of the local culture and landscape in order to avoid 'importing' ideas which may not fit the real local needs. They referenced the example of using radio communication in displaced people's native languages to increase understanding of the services available across borders (Niger and Nigeria one example, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire another).

Cash transfers were recognised as a way to support the local economy and empower people to make their own choices about what they and their families needed in these cases, as a way to support economic and social development and alleviate the baseline of poverty and vulnerability in many areas affected by crisis.

Many interventions focused on the need to meet longer-term and more socially-focused needs (including psychosocial support for people in conflict) in addition to the 'life saving', initial emergency needs like food, health services and shelter that would be traditionally thought of as humanitarian.

Participants agreed to establish a professional network of civil society practitioners in the region focused primarily on humanitarian issues.

National NGO consultation organized by the African Office for Development and Cooperation (OFADEC)

On 7-8 May 2014, the African Agency for Development and Cooperation (OFADEC) hosted a regional consultation for West and Central Africa for national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in N'Djamena, Chad. The objective of the workshop - which brought together experts from 12 different countries from the region - was to identify, based on the respective experiences of participating organizations, the fundamental issues to be addressed at the Regional Consultation for West and Central Africa in Abidjan and fed into the agenda for the 2016 Summit.



Participants at the regional consultation of national NGOs organized by OFADEC Photo: OCHA

The meeting generated a set of recommendations focused on ways to strengthen national NGO capacity, including through the establishment of a collaborative framework for capacity building in the region and increasing support for staff training programs. Participants proposed ways to increase communication and collaboration between NGOs, including by setting up a common website or exchanges to share reports and publications, publishing a newsletter with inputs from different NGOs, and organizing consultations. They encouraged donors and partners to take into account the costs of this type of capacity development in decisions related to funding for NGOs. They also suggested that developing more regular exchanges between government and NGOs would help to share information and improve the complementarity of their efforts.

Participants also emphasized the importance of ensuring that affected people and communities are at the core of humanitarian action, by adapting responses to local contexts and to the realities of affected people by regularly consulting with them. They suggested that one way to enhance and strengthen rapid response capabilities is to focus on local capacities, including of affected people and national NGOs, as well as on better harmonizing the response efforts of the numerous donors and organizations involved. Finally, they emphasized the importance of making plans early in each response to phase out humanitarian efforts responsibly, to repair any damages to the intervention area and to provide the required support to local communities based on the principle of 'do no harm'.

Discussions on humanitarian effectiveness and reducing vulnerability and managing risk focused on the centrality of meeting the needs expressed by affected people and developing their capacity to support themselves and anticipate crises in order to limit dependence on outside assistance - which can sometimes be irregular, slow to arrive, unsustainable or not suited to the local culture or environment. Participants also emphasized the importance of basing responses on the humanitarian principles and on respect for the rights and dignity of affected people. They pointed out that efforts to innovate in the humanitarian sector and use new technologies should take in account the realities of day-to-day life and people's access to basic services - limited electricity and mobile phone service coverage, as well as illiteracy. They emphasized that innovation and serving the needs of people in conflict required solutions to challenges of insecurity and imbalanced coverage of services for people in remote or hard-to-reach areas. At the core of the recommendations was a desire to gain greater recognition of the role of national NGOs as valued partners, with the unique local knowledge and cultural connection to local communities that is necessary to be able to better understand and respond to their needs.

Workshop on Accountability to Affected Populations organized by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

ICVA organized a workshop on accountability to affected populations on 26 May in Dakar, with 27 participants (four refugees, ten national/regional NGO staff, three UN staff and ten INGO staff). Participants shared their experience and learnt from each other the benefits of using quality and accountability tools in their work. The afternoon discussions evolved around the humanitarian system's willingness to have beneficiary populations judge the work which is being done. OCHA representatives presented the WHS efforts that had been undertaken to collect affected populations' views. The participants of the debate, starting with the refugees, emphasized that "disaster and conflict-affected communities ... must be central to the discussions and must be given a voice in the official WHS consultation. Their inclusion must go beyond tokenism as they

are the best-placed to ascertain to what degree aid has or has not been effective". ICVA also organized an informal NGO debate on the WHS on 20 May with a dozen NGO colleagues, half of whom were ICVA members. The informal meeting highlighted that NGO staff had a limited understanding of what WHS was about and were eager to understand and engage more.

West and Central Africa Regional Policy Forum organized by the OCHA Regional Office for West and Central Africa

The two-day workshop brought together over 50 individuals, representing 12 different countries in the region. Participants came from national and regional humanitarian organizations, national academic institutions, civil society groups, the private sector, and international organizations. In the final session of the Forum, participants provided the following recommendations on how to strengthen humanitarian response in the region:

- More support for innovations in information and communication;
- Invest in establishing comprehensive databases of baseline and operational information;
- Invest in and scale-up two-way communications with affected people and invest in the technology systems and partnerships as necessary;
- Reinforce communication among humanitarian actors;
- Invest more in translation into local languages;
- Support African actors to establish humanitarian assistance platforms;
- Encourage more rotation of staff and staff exchanges between different types of organizations;
- Put more focus on the prevention/anticipation of conflicts than on intervention;
- Develop a sustainable mechanism for knowledge-sharing and identifying best practices within the region; and
- Increase engagement and formal partnerships with national NGOs.

The Forum also resulted in a commitment from participants to continue to work to bring together academics, NGOs, private sector companies and others in the region to advance a common agenda on improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response, starting with the establishment of a regional network of national NGOs.

Consultation on Protection and Access organized by Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP)

On 30 April in Dakar, Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection integrated a discussion on protection and access issues related to serving the needs of people in conflict into a workshop on International Humanitarian Law. Discussion groups explored four key issues that had been identified as of specific relevance for the region. They discussed how to improve remote management programmes and collaborate responsibly with local partners in order to gather feedback and ensure knowledge transfer, as well as how to mitigate the influence of political and military interests on humanitarian action. Participants suggested that reinforcing CMCOORD mechanisms and harmonizing codes of conducts and their dissemination would be ways to approach this issue.

Participants also explored ways to improve access to people in need, proposing a refocus of the language often used in the humanitarian sector, toward addressing more broadly the protection-related needs of affected people - not only humanitarian workers - as well as to direct more energy to working on the concept of acceptance.

Finally, they made more general recommendations about how to better respond to people in need, including to improve analysis of risk and baseline information; ensure complementarities among agencies to avoid competition and duplication of efforts; reinforce local capacities, including through knowledge transfer and establishing clear mechanisms to work through mixed teams; and to involve affected people from the start of the planning of a project and in all stages of responding to humanitarian crises. They proposed that looking for areas where 'quick wins' can be gained for a generalized impact on a broader section of the population - as opposed to concentrating on a few selected groups - would help humanitarians respond more effectively to people in need.



Part of a broader process in West and Central Africa

Several lead-up consultations have been organized to serve as the building blocks for the Abidjan gathering. Lead-up consultations were designed to ensure that the different WHS stakeholder communities are all equally engaged and that views reflect inputs from across West and Central Africa, given the diverse realities, priorities and needs among the 24 countries that make up the region.

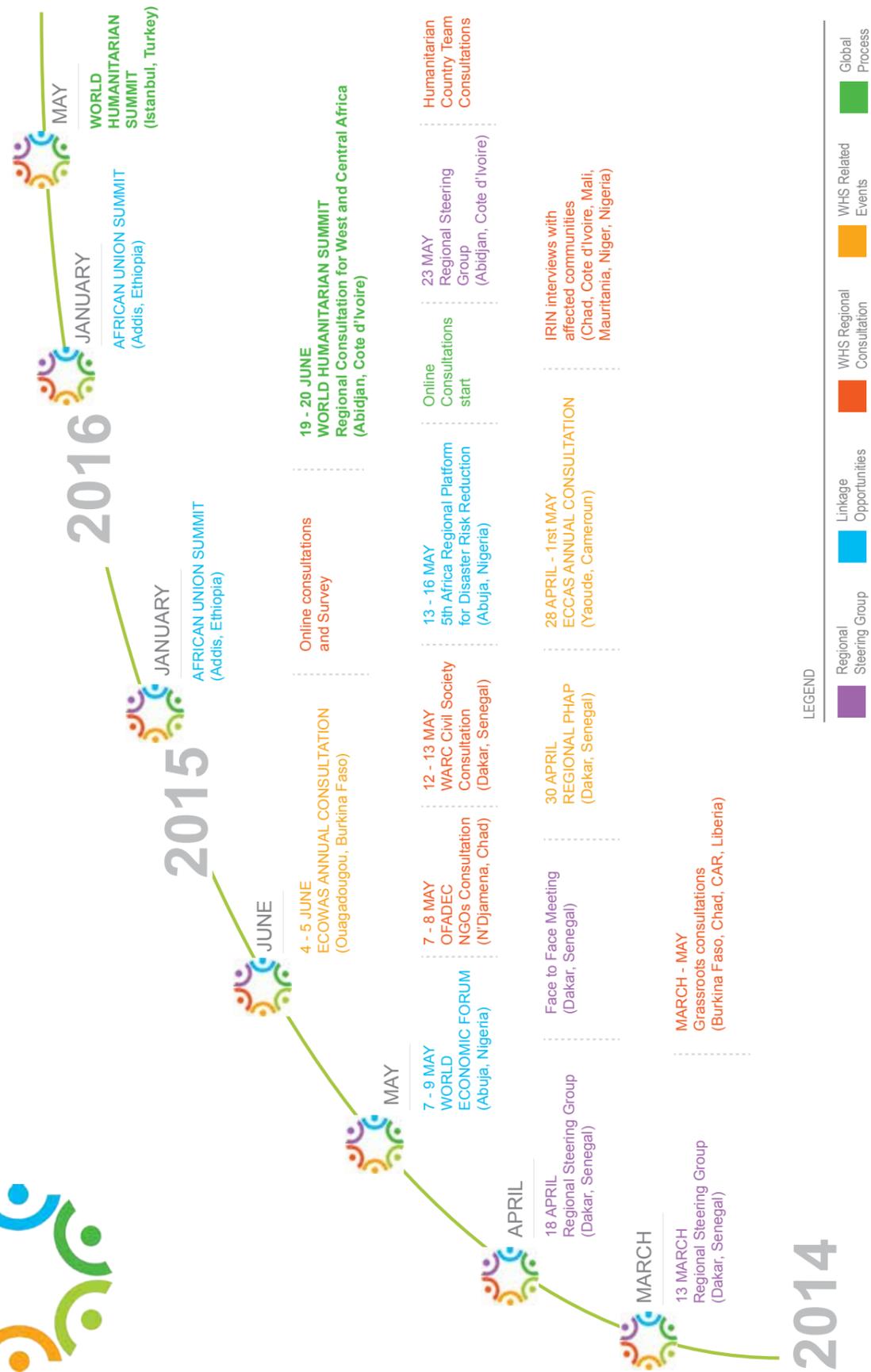
The consultation strategy included four building blocks:

- Consultations organized specifically to discuss the WHS themes with different stakeholder groups, including people affected by humanitarian crisis;
- Integrating WHS discussions within various regional and sub-regional meetings and events that were already scheduled;
- An innovation contest to identify creative solutions to humanitarian challenges; and
- Online consultations and surveys to reach out to the broader humanitarian community in West and Central Africa.

Coordinating the regional discussion as a series of inter-related events that build upon each other will serve to create an on-going discussion on the subject, rather than isolated or compartmentalized conversations. Discussions on the four WHS themes have been included within the framework of annual meetings and agendas reflecting regional and sub-regional realities and contexts in order to ensure a more comprehensive and practical reflection of the four broad themes identified by the WHS Secretariat. Utilizing these spaces has been a cost-effective way to expand the discussions and build broader participation.



TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS LEADING UP TO (AND BEYOND) THE WHS REGIONAL CONSULTATION



Consultations with affected communities

Communities affected by humanitarian crises form one of the key stakeholder groups in the process leading to the Regional Consultation, during the Consultation in Abidjan and finally at the Summit in Istanbul. Their voices and inputs are a central element in identifying themes and recommendations of the WHS. To ensure community voices are integral to the West and Central Africa consultation, communities were heard through grassroots consultations and their inputs captured in (2) standardized interviews.

Grassroots consultations

OCHA, in cooperation with local partners, organizes grassroots consultations with focus groups in a number of affected communities.

Country	Community	Date
CAR	Internally displaced people/affected communities (Bangui)	27-29 March
Liberia	Refugees (Monrovia, Zwedru)	22-24 April
Chad	CAR refugees/Chadian returnees (Gore, Doyaba)	28/29 April
Burkina Faso	Rural Sahel communities (Dori)	13-15 May

Interviews

IRIN's correspondents conducted standardized one-on-one interviews with individuals coping with humanitarian challenges – both complex emergencies and natural disasters, both chronic and fast onset. Ten interviews produced per country with photos of each interviewee were produced.

Country	Theme	Community
Mauritania	Rural and urban food insecure; urban flood affected	Nouakchott, Mbera
Mali	Conflict-affected, displaced; food-insecure	Bamako, Gao and Kayes
Nigeria	Long-term flood displaced; IDPs; malnutrition	Kano, Kobe
Niger	Long-term displaced; refugees	Niamey, Tahoua
Cote d'Ivoire	IDPs, malnourished	Guiglo
Cameroon	Food insecure; conflict-affected	North and East regions



Grassroots consultation in Burkina Faso

Wurotorobe is a small village in northern Burkina Faso. The villagers are facing many of the challenges that are typical for the Sahel related to climate change and unpredictable rains. Farmers receive training on how to fertilize and protect their fields to improve harvests. Humanitarian partners have helped with a food-for-work program and subsidized school canteens.

But in difficult years the entire community risks to fall into crisis. Families struggle to have at least one meal per day, often only calming the worst hunger. The poor diet makes children extremely vulnerable to epidemics and disease.

During the consultation, local partners noted the concerns and ideas of the villagers. “In Abidjan, tell them how difficult our life has become. When the rains start, hope returns. But when they stop too early, we can’t cope without assistance. We need the means to make a living from the land and our animals. Otherwise, our village will disappear.”



“It doesn’t rain as it used to do. The next harvest will come in too late. All our stocks are already gone. Right now, we have nothing left to eat.” — Abdoulaye

“I have many mouths to feed at home. With the water from a bouli [a water reservoir] we can farm vegetables, even sell some. This will get us through the tough dry season.” — Fadhima



“Subsidized fodder helps us for some time when the pastures have dried out. But still, towards the end of the difficult months, I have to sell animals to feed my family. It’s getting more and more difficult.” — Barry

“We have ideas, and we are working hard. There is less rain, my father had a better life than myself. But if we progress, step by step, the situation can improve again. I am teaching my son how to live from our land.” — Mousa



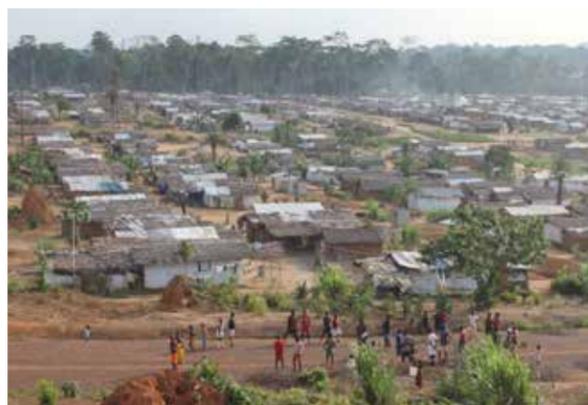


Grassroots consultation in Liberia

The consultations took place in April 2014 with urban refugees in Monrovia and in the PTP refugee camp, in the Grand Gedeh region. The PTP camp hosts more than 15,000 Ivorian refugees. While many remain hesitant to return, a “Go and See” program allows them to visit their home country and assess the situation in their communities.

In the camp, families are living in difficult conditions, under plastic sheeting or in simple mud houses. Humanitarian partners are providing assistance, and a livelihoods program helps refugees to cultivate and sell some of the products.

During the consultations, while expressing their gratitude for the assistance they receive, refugees also pointed out several gaps, notably with regard to food, health, shelter and education.



“Each month, we only receive 12 kg of rice per person. Which is not enough! We’d also need vegetables and other condiments, especially for the children.”
— Madeleine

“I live in very difficult conditions. I do not receive any specific support and I have no activity. I live in idleness.” — Martin



“We need solutions that help us become more independent. In the camp, we lack opportunities to work and earn some money.” — Fernand

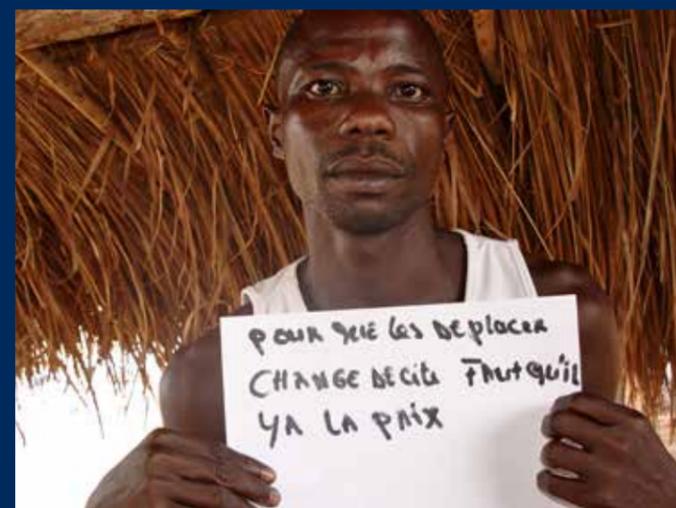


Grassroots photo project in the Central African Republic

The photo project “Talk to Me”, organized in March 2014 in the Central African capital Bangui, aimed to strengthen dialogue between affected populations and humanitarian service providers.

Aid workers were photographed with questions they would like to ask affected populations. Three local photographers then set out during two days to visit the IDP sites of Mpoko and Saint Jacques de Kpetene, and communities in Gobongo and Ouango. Equipped with their cameras, copies of the questions, markers and blank pieces of paper, they interviewed and photographed over 100 affected persons.

The interviewees responded with images of themselves, their contexts, and their opinions. Many families also seized the opportunity for a family portrait which the photographers, before the crisis, used to offer in their small studios. The photo project also sparked a wider debate among affected populations which was facilitated and documented by humanitarian organizations working on the sites.



“Displaced people will only move to another neighborhood if there is peace.”



“No, there is no help in our neighborhood.”



“It’s not going well.”



“We need to play.”



“We are not consulted in the planning of humanitarian assistance.”



“There is no more medicine to take. We are sick.”



Grassroots consultation in Chad

Since December 2013, over 100,000 refugees and Chadian returnees have arrived in Chad, fleeing violence in Central African Republic. Tens of thousands took shelter in Doyaba, Gore and Siddho transit camps in southern Chad. Having witnessed the deaths of family members in sometimes brutal fashion, many adults and children in the camps talk of the need to keep busy, to find things to do, so they do not dwell on their experiences.

Some 200 children in Doyaba were separated from their families during the violence and mass exodus. While 100 have been reunited thus far, those who have not yet been, are losing hope. Living conditions in the camps are very poor, due to a combination of a severe lack of funding for assistance, limited capacity among existing aid agencies on the ground and the temporary nature of transit camps.

Thousands of families lack basics like plastic sheeting for shelter, blankets, cooking equipment or soap. Dozens of water points have been set up and latrines constructed, but sanitation is poor, and aid workers worry cholera will be a risk as the rainy season continues. To improve conditions and delivery of assistance, Chadian authorities and humanitarian partners have opened more permanent camps and started relocating the displaced families.



“I returned from school into a massacre scene – they killed my mother in front of me. Militia chopped off my leg – French military took me to a hospital. When I watch my friends playing football, I cry.” — Ali Bouri Hidjazi, 19, fled to Doyaba transit camp in southern Chad from violence in Bangui, Central African Republic



“Everything at home was destroyed. I came with four of my children – my fifth was killed in the fighting. We set up a school but we have 40 books for 3,000 children. It’s hard. I’m sick, I sleep on the floor and I’m tired.” — Adja Abibe Mahamat

“They came and killed my father and my brother, at two o’clock in the afternoon. I fled with my mother and five children. On our way to Chad, we were attacked again. Two of my children were killed.” — Halima



“I rented a sewing machine from someone in the village. Working as a tailor, I am even able to make some money. This makes our life here a bit less difficult.” — Abdoulaye



“We moved to the Central African Republic when I was a child. But I will never go back. They killed five of my family members, hacked them to death with machetes.” — Hawa

IRIN interviews

Using its network of local correspondents, IRIN reached out to communities in seven different countries which had been directly affected by a conflict or crisis. The countries targeted were Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. The reporters asked individual community members a series of questions on the assistance given over a 12-month period: had they or had they not received assistance during this time? What would they change about the assistance provided? What were their biggest concerns and priorities? Had they been consulted at any stage of the assistance-giving process?

One of the main messages that came back was that people felt they had not been properly consulted regarding their own views on aid priorities. Another point constantly reiterated was the need for aid to leave people as self-sufficient, not more dependent, than they had been prior to the crisis. The quotes presented here give a snapshot of people's concerns.

Photo credits: Kingsley Monde Nfor, Sidiki Demebele, Mamadou Kane, Boureima Balima, Aminu Abubakar



“Days after the attack agencies came to our aid with food and clothing. Since then we have been left to our fate. If I had my way, I would change the trend of delivering aid through intermediaries.... We are often short-changed when aid is given this way.”
— Abbagana, internally displaced by violence in north-eastern Nigeria’s Borno State



“We try to keep busy. To sit around and do nothing isn’t good for people who are not used to it. I think they should set up dialogue committees so that we can exchange views with humanitarian agencies.”
— Ibrahim, northwest Niger

“Our cultural needs are not taken into account when it comes to food aid. We’ve asked for more meat and milk and less grain for a long time. Most of us re-sell our grain to buy meat.”
— Ahmed, refugee in M’Bera camp, Mauritania



“There are lots of meetings in the camp whenever a new international organization arrives...they consult us, but our opinions are usually not taken on board.”— Amaa Wallet Aboubacrine, president of the women’s committee in M’Bera camp, Mauritania

“Security is my most pressing concern. I’m a widow with four children, what preparation do I have against another attack? My husband was the family’s bulwark against any danger. His absence has left the family with no protection.”— Aisa, displaced from Jakkana village in Borno State, north-eastern Nigeria





“My most pressing concern is to shore up my house before this year’s rains come and to find somewhere to live that is not in a flood zone.”—Zahra Issaka, flood-affected, Niamey, Niger

“I’ve received 25 bags of fodder from aid agencies. It helped me lose fewer animals than I’d thought I would. But I’d need three times this amount of fodder to feed all 20 animals throughout the lean season. We can do very little against this brutal climate.”—Hussein Ould Imijen, pastoralist in Debaye, a drought-prone and chronically food-insecure part of Mauritania



“We received food aid. It was what we needed, but it wasn’t enough. It’s harder for me to face a crisis now than it was five years ago – my family has been weakened by food insecurity over the past five years.”—Mahamadou Abdoulaye Maiga, in Kita, a drought-prone region of southeastern Mali



“The income-generating aid that I’ve received has really helped me look after my family. This kind of aid where we responsabilise and make refugees work, is the best form.”—Albaha Kayoraboro, mechanic from Gao in northern Mali in Mauritania’s M’Bera camp



“Nevertheless we are grateful for the aid we have received as it’s kept us alive. Some has been appropriate – like the food aid – but the shelter we have been given is ill-adapted to our environment. We would like to sit down and discuss with any authority on the things that concern us because it is only through that means that we can find durable solutions to our problems.”—Pauline Youkoute, CAR refugee in Guiwa camp, East Region, Cameroon



“What hurts me most is that we men are incapable of providing for our families as we used to in our villages in Nigeria. Everything we have is provided to us, and that is not how life is supposed to be. We are used to working.”—John Shetema, Nigerian refugee, Minawao camp, Far North Region, Cameroon

“Fear of conflict breaking out again keeps me awake at night. We continue to live among ex-combatants and outsiders who have taken over our farms. Organisations must ask affected people directly what they need. We explain our needs but most of the time, they are not met.”—Louèye-Bahié Djia, internally displaced in Guiglo, western Côte d’Ivoire

“I’d like some financial assistance instead of food. Then I could set up a small roadside business so I can look after my children myself.”—Bernadette Tosséha, mother of a malnourished baby in Guiglo, western Cote d’Ivoire

“My preoccupations are having enough food so we can eat better; having something to do; and preparing for our return. We’d like to get a better idea of how aid is managed, and we’d like distributions to be more regular.”—Mahaman Interizigan, Malian refugee in Tillabéri, northwest Niger



Innovation Contest

Innovation is one of the four themes of the World Humanitarian Summit, and a cross-cutting issue as all themes reflect on best ways to reform and improve humanitarian action through innovative approaches. To identify and support innovations developed in or for West and Central Africa, an Innovation Contest was launched.

The contest reached out to the humanitarian community in West and Central Africa to identify humanitarian projects and initiatives with an innovative approach. The contest ran for one month and was open to any humanitarian project using a new product, process or approach. A selection panel reviewed the short list of projects and selected three winners.

The winners were invited to participate in the consultation in Abidjan and present their project, and a selection of the best innovation projects showcased in a poster exhibition. The overview and assessment of the projects by innovation experts helps to better understand what enables and hinders innovation in the region and what recommendations should be put forward in Abidjan.

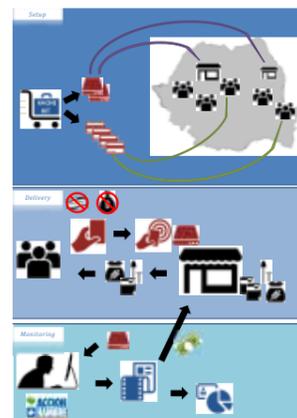
The three winners

REGIONAL

Kit for Autonomous Cash Transfer in Humanitarian Emergencies – KACHE

Organizations involved: *Action Against Hunger (ACF), funded by the UN World Food Program (WFP), through its Cooperating Partner Innovation Fund (CPIF).*

The use of e-transfers in humanitarian response is often limited by a lack of e-payment infrastructure in many affected areas. The Project aims to address this by developing a Kit for Autonomous Cash Transfer in Humanitarian Emergencies - KACHE. The kit includes a small number of “terminals”, which run on long-lasting batteries and do not need to be connected to a telecommunication network. They can be deployed at selected locations offering goods and/or services (shops, market stalls, health centers, etc...), matched with a large number of smart cards that can be easily configured at the beginning of the response with beneficiaries’ personal data, amount of cash to be transferred, etc. The system is mobile and can be deployed in any given operation where cash transfer can be a viable response option and can be used “offline” in remote contexts, based on a “closed-circuit branchless structure”.



CHAD

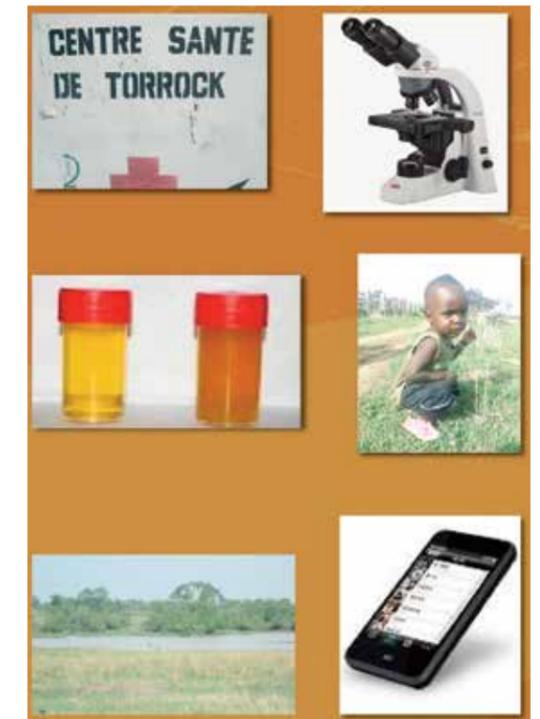
Creation of a Unit in Charge of Bilharzia

Organizations involved: *Reach for Change, the Canton and the Health Centre of Torrock, Etablissements GouinPala Institutions, Pharmaceutical Plant, Tigo-Chad, and KoudoriGuizine Enterprise.*

In the Torrock area, children suffer from urinary problems caused by Bilharzia. Over 60 per cent of children 1-14 years old carry Bilharzia eggs. The population is poorly informed about the disease, and children are left largely untreated.

The project aims at creating a mobile screening unit in the Torrock area. Parents wishing to test their children only have to send a message to a special hotline to make an appointment. Samples of the disease are taken at the child's home and test results are communicated via SMS. Families of children tested positive for the ailment pay for their prescription drugs via cell phone through Tigo Cash. Drugs are delivered directly to childrens' home.

In one year, 750 children were tested at their homes, and 60 per cent were treated. The project could be expanded to other districts and regions throughout Chad.



BENIN

Preparing Communities Affected by Recurrent Flooding with Clean Drinking Water Solutions

Organizations involved: *Care International Benin/Togo, DayOne Response, Inc., Procter and Gamble Children's Safe Drinking Water Program*



Northern Benin faces recurrent annual flooding, which resulted in a high vulnerability of the population due to the consumption of muddy and contaminated drinking water from the Niger River during recent emergencies. The project will empower individuals with tools to convert highly turbid water into clean drinking water and promote water and hygiene education. The DayOne Waterbag, coupled with P&G Purifier of Water packets, provides all the essential functions of municipal water supply in a personal backpack: water collection, transport, treatment and hygienic storage. The bags will be distributed to affected communities in Benin and the project evaluated to determine its effectiveness as a tool to support post-crisis water needs.

ARE YOU AN INNOVATOR?

Online Survey

To capture the views of humanitarian actors across the region OCHA put out an online survey on the WHS themes: humanitarian effectiveness, serving the needs of people in conflict, reducing vulnerability and managing risk, and innovation. The survey distilled the themes into six questions, and asked respondents the priority issues they think the World Humanitarian Summit must address. Running for five weeks, the survey was posted online and sent out to Government, national NGO, international NGO, International Committee of the Red Cross and other partner distribution lists.

The largest group of the 81 respondents came from INGO staff (33%), followed by UN agencies (26%), national NGOs (10%), ICRC (4%) and national governments (4%), then volunteers and donors. Over half (52%) of those who took part worked in country offices; 38% in regional offices and 9% in headquarters. Respondents came from 18 countries across the region, the largest proportion coming from Senegal (21%), followed by Cameroon (15%) and Mali (11%).

WHS West and Central Africa consultation priority issues

The **three priority issues** respondents wanted the WHS West and Central Africa Regional Consultation to address in order to improve humanitarian action in the region were:

1. Funding

There were calls for more funding, the availability of early warning funding for local actors, better management of funding, and more streamlined funding of reporting requirements.

2. Coordination

The need to improve coordination among different actors, with better information sharing including with governments and regional bodies, and better leadership,

3. Humanitarian Principles

Respondents called for greater respect for humanitarian principles, bringing up the need for improved security and access in conflict zones, application of the principles, and more reliable protection for civilians in crisis.

Other issues respondents wanted to see highlighted at the WHS included helping build the capacity of national governments to respond; a greater respect from political actors for humanitarian needs and increased will to address them; clarifying the role for humanitarians in building resilience including better links between early warning and response; and more focus on innovation.

Aid effectiveness

The **top five issues affecting humanitarian action in West and Central Africa** were cited overwhelmingly to be lack of adequate funding (88% put it in their top five), followed by conflict (73%); population displacement (58%); resilience programming (42%) and multiplicity of actors providing assistance (38%) followed closely by lack of respect of international humanitarian law (37%).

These priorities were followed by: climate change, lack of humanitarian space, private sector engagement, and development of new technologies, urbanisation and emergency of new donors.

The **top five factors to ensure effective humanitarian action** in the region were cited as being: accountability to affected communities (60%); coordination among all actors involved (56%); sufficient needs-based funding (46%); capacity of local governments to provide assistance (44%); and safety and security to enable response (43%).

Innovation

When asked to give three examples of innovative tools or solutions to humanitarian problems in West and Central Africa, one third of people did not respond.

Those who did named the following as examples of successful innovation, which can be categorized thus:

Technology and tools	Preparedness	Products	New approaches	Better collaboration and accountability
SMS cash transfers	Operational contingency plans	Shelter innovations	More focus on needs and vulnerability analysis	Cross-border interventions and coordination
Social networks	Emergency stock pre-positioning	Agricultural innovations (not specified)	Stronger performance monitoring	Sahel-wide regional appeal
Use of GIS to map problems and monitor assistance including web-mapping	Community early warning and response systems (SCAP-RU in Niger)		Cash transfers, vouchers, cash-for-work schemes	Better communication with community leaders and better involvement with affected communities in response
Better real-time reporting via cell phones	Ghana's National Disaster Management Organization, NADMO		Outsourcing NFIs to civil society	More results-based programming
Satellite technology	Seasonal malaria prevention		The Good Enough Guide	Reinforcing state service capacities
	Cholera vaccine		Purchase for progress	Better (more specific and nuanced) performance monitoring
	Working with mothers to detect malnutrition signs		Flexible funding from some donors	
			Sahel strategy as regional attempt to coordinate responses	
			Push for resilience funding	
			Closer coordination with state budgets	

Some **80 percent** of respondents said their organisation had **no specially earmarked funds for innovation**.

Funds that were used in this area were directed at training initiatives, to support response innovations, to reach out to affected communities, and to aid the speed of response and to help partners innovate.

The **biggest blocks to humanitarian innovation** in the region were seen to be: shortfalls in funding for research and development (68%); inadequate collaboration with other sectors, including private sector and telecoms (51%); poor knowledge or information sharing about innovation (45%); few opportunities to discuss problems and solutions across organisations (41%) and organisational risk aversion (35%). Other factors that respondents mentioned included: insufficient communication with scientists, social scientists and academics; corruption and a lack of transparency; a failure to engage in innovation in the region, and an overall lack of imagination in the sector.

Methods respondents had a series of different techniques available to communicate with communities. These included: consulting with community-based personnel and community leaders; holding ongoing meetings; telephone exchanges; ideas boxes and email stations; joint evaluations; rapid surveys; focus group discussions; PRA (participatory rural appraisal) techniques; listening clubs; rural radio; volunteer feedback networks; surveys and rapid assessments, and systematic consultation on programme decision-making.

Some **58% of respondents work with the private sector** to meet needs, mostly in the provision of goods and services: food, transport, NFIs, radios, medicines, security and satellite communications. Others mentioned telecoms contracts for cash transfers, training, awareness raising, research and fundraising.

Risk management and reducing vulnerability

The three biggest obstacles to integrating risk management and reducing vulnerability were judged to be: a lack of financial resources (63%); insufficient technical capacity to integrate risk management and vulnerability reduction into policy and action (59%); a lack of information about risks and vulnerabilities (38%) and dealing with multiple risks making intervention too complicated (31%).

Less than half of respondents answered the question on what was the biggest success linked to anticipating crises. Those that did submit replies identified the following as important: early warning systems; epidemiological monitoring and surveillance on disease outbreaks; better tapping into local knowledge; the locust early warning system; food insecurity and malnutrition early warning monitoring; media coverage; involvement of civil society and civil society-based risk reduction mechanism.

Serving the needs of people in conflict

The most important change required to better serve people's needs in conflict was identified as getting host governments to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian actors (55%). Second to this was the need to improve dialogue between humanitarian and armed actors (52%), followed by armed actors respecting humanitarian action, IHL and HR law (47%), and the need to strengthen the presence of humanitarian actors in conflict zones (37%)

When asked to identify the three main obstacles to upholding the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, respondents' answers were spread fairly evenly.

Amongst the problems cited were: leadership failures, including a lack of strong humanitarian leadership; a failure to advocate effectively for humanitarian principles and a lack of political will to uphold the principles; an inadequate understanding of humanitarian actors' roles and the principles that guide them, often coupled with a weak understanding of IHL and human rights law; too many different approaches being tried and actors with different agendas; a failure amongst humanitarian actors to collaborate effectively; weak governments and states and poor governance; the politicization of aid by governments; terrorism; a lack of adequate financial support; and a poor analysis of risks.

Online consultations

The Online Consultations for West and Central Africa were launched on 5 May 2014 and closed on 13 June 2014. The online discussions provided an open, public forum to discuss questions around the four themes of the World Humanitarian Summit in addition to providing a space for additional ideas. Participation in the forum was open to anyone who registered, from any origin or location. The majority of participants were from West and Central Africa. The online consultations were publicized through a number of channels through humanitarian and development media and networks (i.e. ReliefWeb, IRIN, UN and NGOs), through Member States, social media, and through the Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP) network.

A total of 10 questions were discussed, with lively debate around the four themes, and two questions that dealt with cross-cutting issues and broader recommendations. The discussion questions were developed by the WHS secretariat staff in consultation with the Discussion Chair, the Moderators, and the Regional Steering Group.

The questions were viewed by about 1500 people. Within the region, the top viewers were from Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria. Participants from 11 countries in the region posted comments in both French and English. Contributions were received from international NGOs, regional institutions, community based organizations, research organizations, and independent consultants.

The discussions were chaired by Mr. Paul Empole, the First Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations. The discussions were moderated by Mr. Ibrahima Diane, a journalist who is the Head of BBC Afrique, from Senegal who has previously worked for UNHCR, and Mr. Gima Forje, a seasoned humanitarian worker from Cameroon.

The discussions evolved around five initial questions:

1. What is most critical to ensure that humanitarian action is meeting humanitarian needs in West & Central Africa?
2. How can we make the international community focus more on reducing vulnerability & managing risk in West & Central Africa?
3. What aspects of humanitarian action would most benefit from innovative approaches in West & Central Africa?
4. What should humanitarian actors do differently to better meet the needs of people in conflict situations in West & Central Africa?
5. What are the most vital overarching or cross-cutting issues that should be included in these discussions?

The contributions were rich in diversity – highlighting different considerations on the five questions. For instance, opinion is divided as to whether humanitarian action should be extended into long-term development. However, there is emerging consensus around a number of issues, such as the need for improvement in coordination, preparedness measures, increasing the cooperation with local governments and NGOs, and adapting humanitarian interventions to the context of each environment.

“In order to ensure a smooth transition and sustainable action, relief organizations should collaborate with host governments and/or other local structures in developing and implementing appropriate exit strategy” — Mohammed, Sierra Leone



“It is critical for agriculture to benefit from innovative approaches that would enable the regions to feed their people and avoid recurrent food crises.” — Ethel, Ghana

Recommendations include:

1. Increase investment for local and regional humanitarian capacity (governments, communities, civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and national NGOs) and map these capacities across the region.
2. Re-open discussions on the current financing options for humanitarian response.
3. There needs to be more collaboration between West and Central Africa in terms of managing and mitigating risks associated with climate change and environmental degradation.
4. Root causes of conflict and disasters need to be addressed. Innovations in agriculture will help the region avoid recurrent food crises.
5. Common standards of effectiveness need to be developed.
6. International NGOs should be cognizant of disparities between the services they provide and what local institutions and governments are able to provide.
7. Local communities need to be involved in the design of all responses.
8. The politicization of humanitarian action needs to be stopped.
9. National governments need to be supported to develop robust contingency plans, which involve local and national actors.
10. Humanitarian actors should include capacity building of local communities as part of all interventions.

The findings from the web platform have contributed to identifying the priority issues on each theme that will be tabled at the regional consultation, and will continue to be an important input to each of the regional consultations. A complete report on the online consultations will be made available for the West and Central Africa Regional Consultation in Abidjan.

“It is also important for external humanitarian actors to have a deep understanding of the cultures and practices of the affected communities before engaging.” — Jimm, Ghana



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