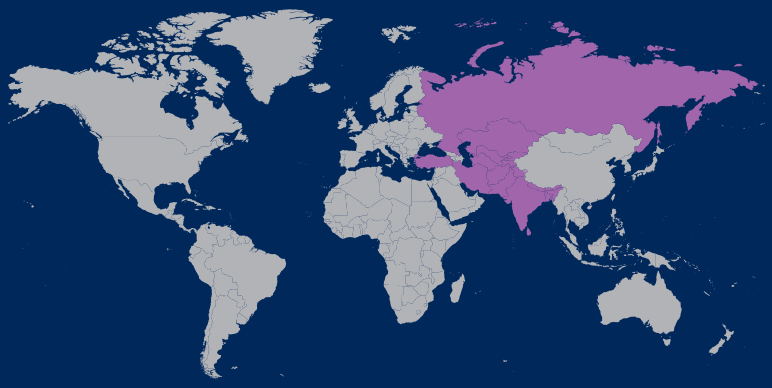
WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

REGIONAL CONSULTATION
South and Central Asia
28-30 July 2015

PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER • ANALYSIS •



Countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

16 countries

7,600+ people participated

700+ organizations

5,600+ community voices

In the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) Regional Consultation for South and Central Asia, extensive preparatory stakeholder consultations were organized across the region. Between April and June 2015, stakeholders from the 16 covered countries[1] had the opportunity to make their views on humanitarian priorities heard through workshops, surveys and online discussions. In total, more than 7,600 people participated in the preparatory consultations and contributed in shaping the agenda for the regional consultation. The preparatory process and the present Stakeholder Analysis, which consolidates and conveys its results, aims to ensure the discussions at the regional consultation in Dushanbe are directly informed by the specific needs of the South and Central Asia region.

Methodology

In order to capture the diverse nature of experiences, skills and competencies of those consulted, a range of methodologies were used, including focus group discussions, individual open-ended interviews, structured questionnaires and online surveys.

To conclude the process, a three-week online consultation was hosted on the WHS website, allowing humanitarian stakeholders and the general public to share their views and experiences and expand on the issues raised during the preparatory consultations.

The official languages used for the preparatory consultation were English and Russian: the general survey was available in Russian as well as English and focus group discussions were conducted in both languages. Translation of Russian inputs to English was provided by official translators. Some focus group discussions took place in third languages and/or local dialects. Where other languages were used, the facilitating agency was responsible for translating the respondents' feedback into either English or Russian.

Shortly after the preparatory consultations began, Nepal was struck by a series of major earthquakes. While the response to this natural disaster impacted the number of consultations conducted in Nepal and surrounding countries, the experiences of humanitarian actors, voices of affected people and lessons learned while responding to these disasters have helped greatly to inform the analysis.

While the Stakeholder Analysis itself is available only in English, Russian language versions of other background materials for the regional consultation will be developed and made available to participants in Dushanbe.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results of the general and specialized surveys was supported by Statistics Without Borders.

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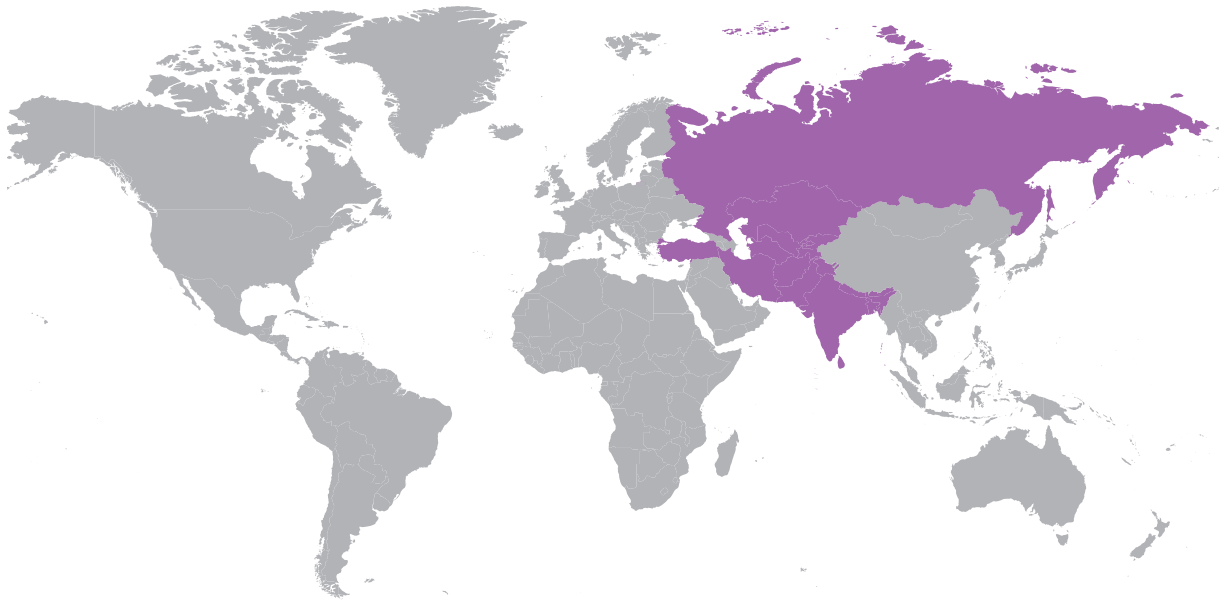
- Community members
- Civil society orgs
- Government agencies
- International NGOs
- Media
- Military & armed forces
- Private sector
- RC & RC Movement
- UN agencies
- Youth organisations
- General public

1. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS



Regional Coverage

The South and Central Asia region covers an enormous geographical area, ranging from the arctic regions of Northern Russia to the tropical islands of the Maldives. The diversity of this region is clearly reflected in this stakeholder analysis. The number of responses received from South Asia - the most densely populated geographical region in the world with well over one fifth of the world's population – was significantly greater than those from Central Asia, one of the world's least populated regions. While feedback was received from at least some of the targeted stakeholder groups in all 16 countries, it must be noted that not all stakeholder groups participated in all countries or at the same level in different countries.

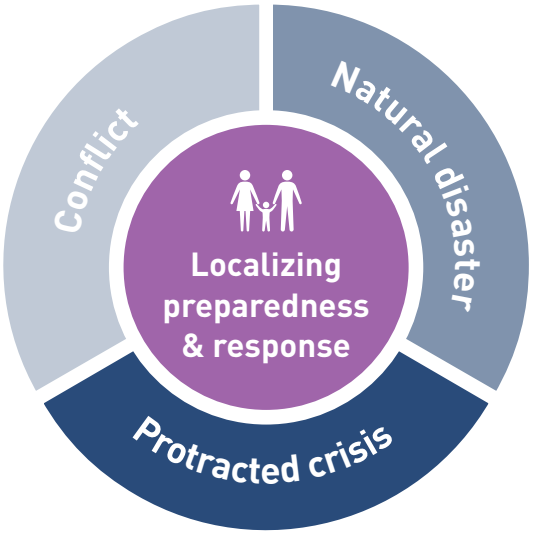
Preparatory stakeholder consultation themes

The preparatory consultations for South and Central Asia were initially framed around the 'emerging issues' from other regional and thematic WHS consultations, as summarized in the infographic on page 20 of the briefing kit.

1. **Giving affected people, particularly women and youth, greater voice and choice.**
2. **Localizing preparedness and response.**
3. **International humanitarian law and humanitarian action in conflicts.**
4. **New models for protracted crises.**
5. **Adapting the humanitarian system and financing for the future.**

Contextualizing humanitarian action

Clearly emerging throughout the preparatory consultations were the very different needs of communities experiencing different situations, making it necessary to consider humanitarian action through different lenses based on different contexts. The stakeholder analysis has thus been framed around a tripartite model of humanitarian action in **(i) conflict, (ii) protracted crisis,** and **(iii) natural disaster settings**. Comparative data analysis shows that safety and security is always paramount, but other priority areas differ significantly for communities experiencing each of these contexts and tend to vary over time in protracted settings.



CONFLICT PRIORITIES

Safety/security, protection from violence

PROTRACTED CRISIS PRIORITIES

Safety/security, spiritual needs, information about the situation

NATURAL DISASTER PRIORITIES

Safety/security, food, money, water

PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Regional humanitarian priorities

Preliminary analysis of the stakeholder inputs led to the identification of the central theme of the South and Central Asia regional consultation;

- **Localizing Preparedness and Response**

The results of the preparatory consultations can also be seen broadly to have aligned with a number of the global 'emerging issues', highlighting sub-themes of specific regional relevance that emerged organically from and have been reflected within the three lenses on humanitarian action:

- **Ensuring that the voices and choices of affected people, particularly women, youth and the most vulnerable, are respected and encouraged;**
- **Strengthening legal frameworks, including religious or customary law, to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable;**
- **Implementing integrated models of coordinating and financing humanitarian action and development work;**
- **Enabling and encouraging the activities of the diverse partners involved in humanitarian action.**

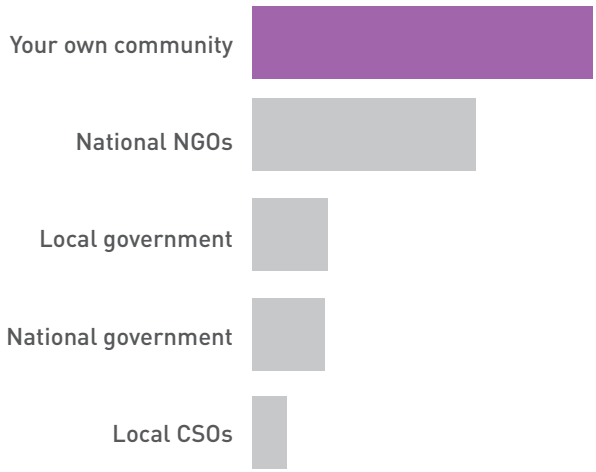
Localizing preparedness and response

Throughout the preparatory consultations, the critical role of local actors and the need to focus on identifying and implementing local solutions in crisis situations was clearly raised. When communities were asked who responded most effectively to their needs, the majority focused on local actors, particularly local governments, local and national CSOs and affected communities themselves. It was noted online that the definition of affected community should be expanded to include local private sector and local media.

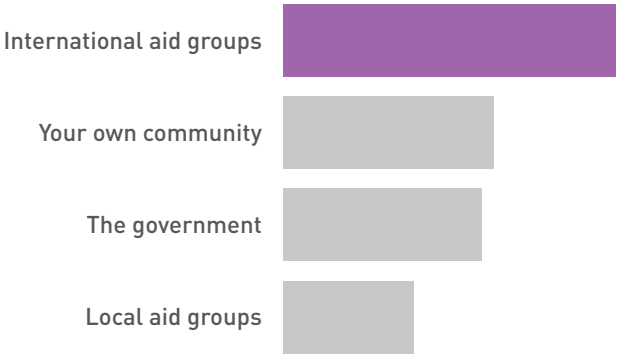
Regardless of the type of crisis faced, respondents agreed that the basic responsibility for providing assistance and protection to people rested with the government. Differences emerged, however, in their views on how best to promote this. Some felt that communities and civil society had a responsibility to better organize themselves and advocate for change, while others felt that external pressure on governments to strengthen national systems was needed.

Community respondents identified international humanitarians as bearing the primary responsibility for emergency preparedness. They also emphasized their own important role, the role of government and of local aid groups.

Q **Which groups were the most effective at meeting the needs of your community during the crisis?**

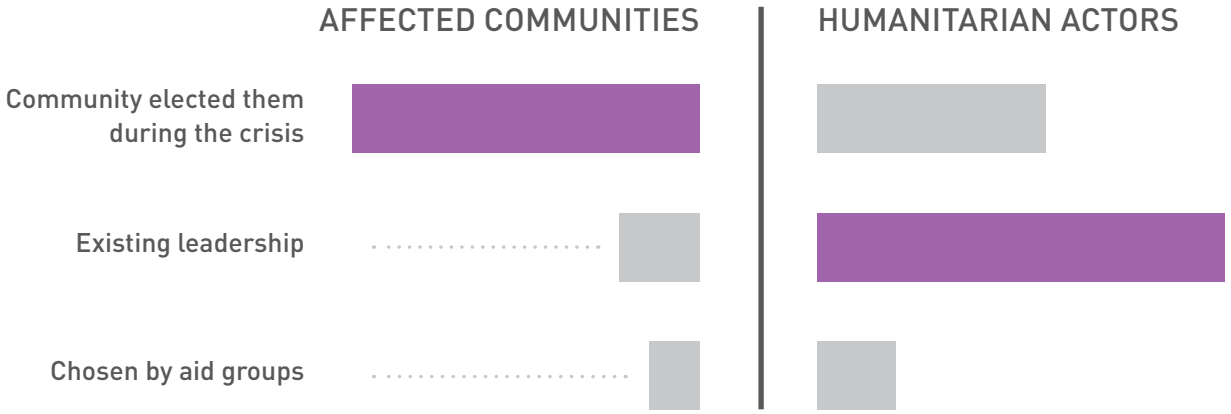


Q **Who do you think has the main responsibility for helping your community to prepare for and prevent future crises?**



PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Q **How were community representatives selected during the crisis?**



All stakeholders saw local leadership as pivotal during times of crisis, and community leaders were repeatedly identified as best placed to provide relevant disaggregated data (gender, youth, elderly, disabled persons) as well as understanding of the local context needed to interpret these. An interesting divergence emerged, however, between local communities and national and international actors in terms of who was seen to provide local leadership during times of crisis. Nearly 70 percent of community respondents said representatives were elected by communities during a crisis, compared to just 16 percent who said that the existing leadership carried forward. On the other hand, government, international actors and local CSO respondents all gave more weight to existing leadership than newly elected community leaders during a crisis.

Ensuring humanitarians respect local customs and culture was important to affected communities. While respondents clearly articulated that humanitarian action should promote equity and diversity, they did not agree that it was the place of international humanitarian actors to try and change local power balances and customs. Community members generally said they felt humanitarian actors treated them with respect and dignity, but also articulated that aid should not undermine local systems and coping mechanisms. Communities throughout the region indicated that aid did usually reach those who needed it the most, but wanted to be more centrally involved in the selection of beneficiaries.

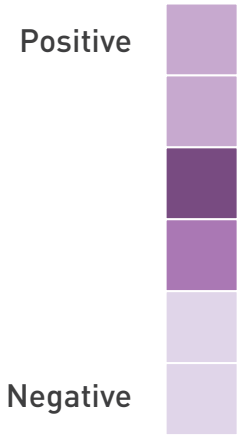
Civil society stakeholders almost unanimously expressed a commitment to improving 'downward' accountability to affected communities and families, suggesting that humanitarian actors should integrate local culture, indigenous knowledge and community leadership into the planning and delivery of preparedness activities. To improve understanding of local context, rapid assessments carried out by humanitarian actors should include mandatory focus group discussions with affected people, using participatory approaches to ensure that women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities and other vulnerable groups received equal opportunity to express their views.

The need to develop stronger and more innovative feedback mechanisms that were appropriate to local cultures also emerged as a priority for civil society. Some community members reported that it remained difficult to provide feedback to aid groups and felt their feedback was often not taken into account. This was particularly important with regard to gender dynamics. A proposed solution was for CSOs to ensure that frontline female staff were available during periods of crisis to engage with female community members. The crucial role of places of worship and faith-based organizations in reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized, especially people with disabilities, was also highlighted.

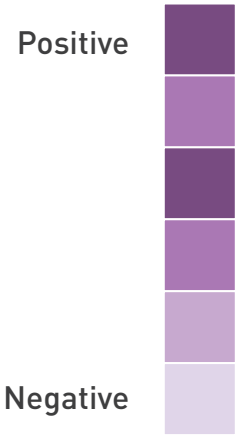
PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Hearing the voices of affected communities

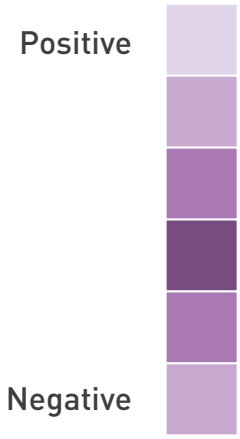
Q **Do you feel your community were treated with respect and dignity by aid groups?**



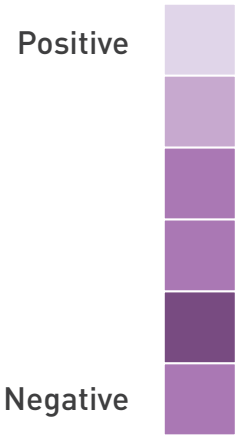
Q **Do you think that aid groups gave assistance to the people who needed it most?**



Q **How easy was it for you to contact aid groups and give them your feedback, opinions or complaints?**



Q **How much do you think aid groups took your opinions into account?**



Local CSO respondents were concerned about the difficulty of funding response and indicated that they had limited access to diverse funding sources. They called for flexible and simplified processes to be adopted by donors and international humanitarian organizations, as well as their own governments, in order to make humanitarian financing more widely and rapidly accessible. Across the region, CSOs said that convoluted and slow approval processes placed a heavy administrative burden on implementing partners. They proposed that pooled funds administered independently of donors and governments should be established to support local actors in areas such as planning, preparedness and advocacy. UN Agencies highlighted the tension between donor responsibilities to taxpayers and their own accountability to those they sought to assist and stressed that this required re-balancing.

"Our communities should not expect NGOs and government to do everything. They can try and do many things (themselves) without much cost"

Is it possible to agree on a set of key actions that will lead to better localization of preparedness and response? What might a checklist for this look like?

CONFLICT

A boy looks up at soldiers in Afghanistan.

Credit: Edda Schlager

CONFLICT

Localizing preparedness and response in conflict settings

Where discussed by respondents living or working in settings they classified as conflict-affected, the localization of humanitarian action was seen to be at its most challenging. The need for strong local partners in conflict settings was clearly referenced; however, there was also a robust call for the continued engagement of international actors. Many of those consulted felt there was a need to balance local knowledge and capacity with the different strengths and added protection provided by international actors. Communities recommended engaging local experts to help outside actors understand local contexts and community dynamics in these complex situations.

It was clear from the responses that working with governments in conflict settings throughout the region can be complicated. In some settings, engagement with government was seen to improve protection and access; in others, particularly where the role of government actors in the conflict was unclear or governments were party to the conflict, any visible cooperation could be seen as compromising the neutrality of humanitarian actors. Regardless, advocacy and effective communication with local leadership was highlighted as critical in the protection of communities and humanitarian actors.

Heeding the voices and choices of affected people in conflict settings

The South and Central Asia preparatory consultations reiterated findings common to other regions as to the critical role of local CSOs in enabling communities to play a greater role in improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action in conflict. However local CSOs often lacked capacity to deal with the complexities of conflict. Some discussions suggested that national and regional CSO networks should implement capacity building programs specific to conflict settings, integrating traditional knowledge and peace-building practices.

Proposals for community empowerment in conflict settings included the development of local representative committees made up of community and religious leaders, CSO representatives and administration officers. Joint Government-CSO councils were highlighted as good examples of integrated approaches to humanitarian action in Central Asia. In conflict settings these committees could help manage transparent and effective distribution of relief and also support protection and access.

The preparatory consultations highlighted that lack of trust between communities and state actors in conflict settings meant people were sometimes afraid to express their true needs during assessments. They recommended that community-based surveys be conducted by non-governmental actors and take measures to protect the identity of participants. Other efforts to address trust deficits could focus on developing conflict-sensitive two-way communication strategies that provided vulnerable populations with access to necessary information, helped them make their voices heard and know they had been listened to.

Analysis of the results of the preparatory stakeholder consultations showed significant difference between South Asia and Central Asia. Active discussions and recommendations emerged from South Asia in terms of humanitarian action in conflict settings and peacebuilding during and post conflict. In Central Asia, the focus was on the potential impact of natural disasters, resource management and climate change as contributing factors in future conflict, with a greater focus on prevention and preparedness.

Youth respondents in particular highlighted the importance of providing counselling for community members to help address the psychological damage associated with conflict. There were broad calls to pay attention to people's psychological wellbeing as a core humanitarian need, in particular by helping people to strengthen their personal resilience to crises.

It was suggested that a standard for humanitarian action in conflict should be developed and incorporated into standard operating procedures for humanitarian actors in the region. This should complement existing mechanisms such as the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership[2] and act as a foundation for shared learning and collaboration.

How can tools for two-way communication with conflict-affected communities be strengthened? Is there potential for private sector or media to innovate in this area?

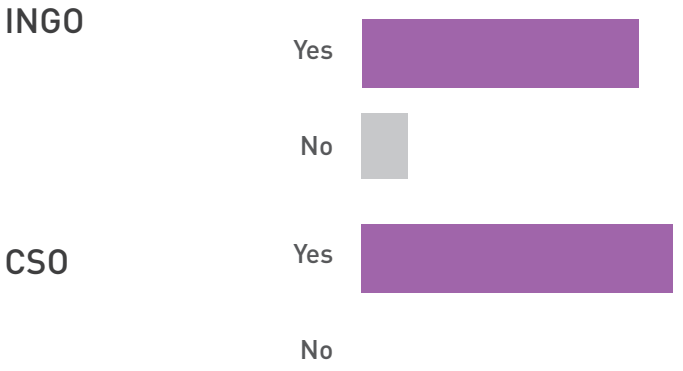
How can psychosocial needs be recognized as a core humanitarian priority?

How can the voices and needs of communities be considered in the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for humanitarian action in conflict settings? What areas of work should these SOPs encompass?

2. www.hapinternational.org

PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Q **Have you experienced challenges in maintaining access and providing humanitarian assistance to communities in conflict situations?**



Adapting the humanitarian system to focus on protection and peace-building, particularly in settings where there is denial of access

The obligation of governments to ensure the protection of civilians was highlighted throughout the preparatory consultations. Wherever possible, humanitarians should work with governments and build on local laws and customs to positively influence protection work.

In some cases however, humanitarian organizations had to engage and negotiate with parties to a conflict in order to better meet the needs of people caught up in the conflict, particularly women, youth and other vulnerable groups. Humanitarian actors working in such settings noted the need for, as well as the complexity of, incorporating peace-building principles into humanitarian action. International humanitarian actors felt there was a need for better tools to effectively translate conflict analysis into conflict-sensitive programming. How best to operationalize this in the regional context was not specified. During the Online Consultation it was proposed that humanitarian assessment tools be revisited to incorporate information on conflict dynamics and enhance peace-building opportunities.

Another area of focus was to strengthen the role of CSOs providing assistance in conflict settings. For example, embedding conflict mitigation advisors into organizations in order to mainstream their roles had worked well in parts of the region. CSOs could also assist the most vulnerable members of society by promoting awareness of their basic human rights.

In some countries, interfaith religious committees played a key role in conflict prevention by helping raise awareness of emerging tensions so leaders could take early measures to address these. Many respondents noted that religious leaders could support strengthened protection of humanitarians and civilians by highlighting the complementary nature of their religion's teaching to the principles and tenets of international humanitarian law (IHL). A proposed initiative was to provide training on humanitarian principles and practices to graduates of religious academies. Further study and dialogue on the role religious and civic leaders could play at the intersection of humanitarian action and peace-building would also be useful. Faith-based groups themselves recognized the need to be sensitive to any perception of their actions as proselytizing, particularly when people were at their most vulnerable during times of crisis.

"Humanitarian action in conflict often brings expectations by affected populations that providing solutions to the problems caused by the conflict can also provide solutions to the conflict itself."

International actors discussed the importance of traditional knowledge, religion and culture as sources of identity and cohesion in times of crisis. In many countries, there were strong collective mechanisms at village level that could provide a basis for extending and strengthening protection. Where such local governance mechanisms were replaced by other models, social cohesion and resilience was seen to suffer.

Member states highlighted a number of ongoing state-led initiatives on dissemination of IHL taking place in the region that could be scaled up, in particular for the military. Further training for military actors on protection and humanitarian principles was needed and could be operationalized through existing regional platforms and bilateral military training initiatives.

The potential role of regional organizations in helping to secure access and mediate between parties to a conflict was raised in several instances. In particular, regional organizations could be in a position to develop trilateral agreements on access and protection with all parties to conflict. On the other hand, Government and civil society stakeholders underscored the potentially destabilizing role that regional organizations could play if their membership was not unified and cooperative.

The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict.[3]

3. www.un.org/en/peacebuilding

CONFLICT

To mitigate this, some respondents suggested that regional organizations' decision-making models should be based on majority rather than unanimous agreement; with no one state wielding veto power.

The call for regional actors to play a larger role in humanitarian action in conflict settings was taken further by some suggestions that this should be a central focus of regional organizations' work.

How can humanitarian action link to the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission at an operational level?

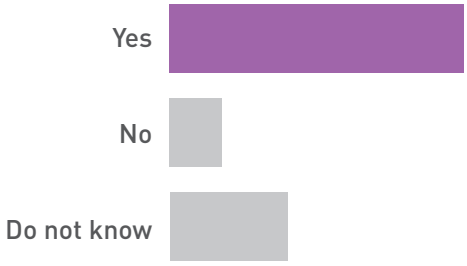
What role should regional organizations play in conflict settings that they are not doing now?

How can stakeholders work together to expand general understanding of IHL through its linkages to religious and customary law? Is this approach applicable to all contexts?

Strengthening collective action in conflict settings

A wide range of actors deliver humanitarian assistance in conflict settings in various parts of the region. The preparatory consultations highlighted that even where these diverse actors had shared objectives they also had different operational areas, working modalities, value systems and models of engagement with local communities. It was repeatedly highlighted that governments, humanitarian actors and other parties needed to work together more intensively to prepare for and respond to conflict in a coherent way. This required them having the capacity to better anticipate conflict, deploy effective mitigation and peace-building measures before it escalated, and develop integrated plans to prevent recurrence.

Q **Should regional organizations or networks play a larger role in humanitarian action in conflict settings?**



"Developing community based protection systems that local people can manage would require a lot of community capacity building, including leadership development"

The regional preparatory consultations also confirmed findings similar to other regions, that humanitarian action by itself was not optimally configured to help people and governments reduce vulnerability to conflict and its humanitarian impacts.

Based on their experience, it was evident to humanitarian actors throughout South and Central Asia that they would continue to be challenged by the changing nature of conflict. Factors that were likely to intersect with conflict in future included urbanization, religion, resource-based competition, climate change impacts and the increasing involvement of armed non-state actors. Humanitarian actors in the region recognized they must evolve and adjust to emerging risks. What this recognition failed to carry forward however were shared recommendations regarding new ways of delivering humanitarian assistance in conflict settings. Rather than focusing on why cooperation between traditional actors had not succeeded thus far, stakeholders proposed a focus on the future to create the new policies and guidance that were required.

A number of CSO representatives proposed that humanitarian issues should be removed from the agenda of the UN Security Council and that an independent Humanitarian Council be established. In this new Council, regional representation should be ensured and decision-making made democratic by declining to give veto power to any actor.

What predictable mechanisms can be put into place to elevate concerns regarding humanitarian access and provisions that safeguard protection to Government, regional organizations and, if need be, the UN Security Council?

What are the foundations of a viable alternate model for global governance of humanitarian affairs?

What lessons can be learned from the intergovernmental process for developing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and how might this type of framework approach be applied to conflict settings?

PROTRACTED CRISIS

A girl waits outside a camp in Pakistan.

Credit: Ramoneda / UNICEF

PROTRACTED CRISIS

The WHS preparatory consultations in South and Central Asia and consultations in other regions repeatedly emphasized the need for all actors to promote a more coherent and complementary approach to protracted crisis. Respondents from international humanitarian organizations in particular stressed that humanitarian action was designed to be short-term in nature and should be focused on meeting specific emergency needs. They felt that in many protracted crisis contexts, the humanitarian system was being called on to work far beyond the boundaries of what it was designed to manage.

Highlighting a perceived lack of collaborative regional approaches that engaged diverse stakeholders in addressing protracted crisis, respondents drew attention to existing frameworks such as the United Nations Framework on Ending Displacement in the Aftermath of Conflict, which calls for the development of country level Strategies on Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons; the UNHCR Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern; and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons. It was questioned why these frameworks were not more effectively implemented in the region.

Adapting humanitarian action to situations of protracted displacement and migration

Most stakeholders looked to host governments to implement comprehensive plans that supported both displaced and host communities. A number of regional examples of governments developing innovative ways of supporting long-term displaced populations were highlighted; for instance, CSO and affected community respondents highlighted cash transfers and debit cards as being highly effective in the right contexts.

Other suggestions for innovation included developing formal education programmes for displaced or migrant children that incorporated the national curriculum of countries of origin. Governments could also support CSOs or community members to open community centres to help displaced or migrant communities connect in urban settings. Additionally they could ease permission processes for organizations wanting to conduct needs assessments or offer psychosocial support programs to displaced people or migrants.

The importance of generating employment opportunities for displaced people was also flagged. CSO representatives called for governments to encourage local business initiatives that would both restore livelihoods and reduce tensions between displaced and host communities. For their part, CSOs suggested they could partner with private sector actors to develop work readiness programs, including offering language courses.

At the global level, urbanization has been commonly raised as a complicating factor in humanitarian response; however survey responses indicated that although displacement was a largely urban phenomenon in the region and most actors now worked extensively in urban settings, this had not overly changed the work of humanitarian actors. In fact some felt that working in urban areas could make program delivery easier.

For those that found urban settings more challenging, identification and monitoring of displaced populations was highlighted as a key concern. Several questioned the utility of targeting practices that tried to distinguish between displaced people and urban poor in the host community. Others indicated they felt that weaker social ties and accountability among individuals in urban settings resulted in the need to ensure greater control of access to services.

There is no common causal definition of protracted crisis, since the driving factors may be natural disaster, conflict, climate change, economic or a combination of these. Protracted situations are generally considered those in which people have been impacted for five years or longer and for whom there is no clear opportunity for finding a solution.

The South and Central Asia region has experienced numerous protracted crises. Some have stretched for decades, greatly impacting the livelihoods and coping mechanisms of displaced people and host communities, and the capacity of governments to cater for their needs.[4]

How should national and international actors work with governments to strengthen integrated social assistance packages for communities experiencing protracted displacement?

What opportunities exist for investing in public-private partnerships to create market-based responses to protracted displacement?

Where neither return nor resettlement to third countries are viable durable solutions, how can local integration of displaced and migrant people be better supported (and by whom)?

4. More than other sections of the analysis, this section was particularly informed by inputs from UN Agencies, INGOs and the IFRC alongside government, CSO and community inputs.

PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

"Working with urban communities is easier, they are often better educated, have more resources, are easier to access and less vulnerable. We can get more done in less time."

Q **How does working in urban areas affect your organization when compared to rural areas?**

Building local capacity in protracted crises

In parts of the South and Central Asia region, humanitarian actors have been providing assistance to displaced populations for decades. In such contexts, stakeholders spoke often of the need to build local capacity so governments, civil society and those caught up in the protracted crisis could take the lead in developing durable solutions for themselves. Affected communities themselves highlighted that dependency on relief damaged social cohesion and individual motivation. They asked for improved access to research on the long-term effects of relief efforts and their impacts within different communities.

INGOs and CSOs placed a particular focus on strengthening governance procedures. It was suggested that a shared model of capacity building be developed by international actors and local institutions so as to build trust and distribute responsibilities among different stakeholders. In particular, local CSOs argued that in order to empower local actors, international humanitarian organizations and governments should view them as project partners, rather than as subcontractors.

CSO and community respondents noted that laws relating to displaced people were frequently updated, and indicated the need for capacity building on how to interpret and leverage legal frameworks. International NGOs and UN Agencies were seen by local actors to be best placed to encourage governments to clarify the legal status of displaced people.

Particular emphasis was given to the need for adequate enforcement of laws related to human trafficking and for awareness raising campaigns in this area. CSO representatives suggested that in situations of displacement, protection officers should be immediately designated by the local authority and begin education and awareness raising programs. CSOs proposed encouraging media to focus on promoting more positive perspectives on the local integration of displaced and migrant people.

Participants in the Online Consultation emphasized the need to identify and build on local capacities to support peace-building in protracted situations. They highlighted the need for further research and understanding of local coping strategies and cultural norms so as to develop clear guidelines for humanitarian actors on how to best engage with local peace-building capacities.

International humanitarian actors in Central Asia also emphasized the need to consider the impact of labour migration on communities of origin, particularly in rural areas. As part of this, a strong focus should be given to creating access for women, who were often left behind to head the remaining household but did not traditionally have access to formal leadership roles. These women were identified as key responders in times of crisis and capacity building needed to go beyond training to support their empowerment within their local communities.

What support do governments need to establish robust legal frameworks for displaced and migrant communities? What lessons can be learned from IFRC's IDRL Guidelines?[5]

What are the impediments to more systematic integration of humanitarian action into national planning frameworks?

Can progress already made in building local capacity in disaster settings provide a framework for protracted crisis?

5. www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-law

PROTRACTED CRISIS

Facilitating durable solutions to protracted crises

Although stakeholders underscored the need for government, humanitarian and development actors to work together more effectively, they also recognized the challenges that this presented. Government and international actors agreed that finding durable solutions for protracted situations required political commitment at the national level and beyond to address root causes.

The crucial role of governments in providing protection and ensuring human rights for displaced and migrant people, as well as host communities, was repeatedly highlighted. CSO representatives argued that the tendency by governments in the region to create special categories for displaced communities complicated the work of civil society and public institutions in developing comprehensive vulnerability-based social and development programmes.

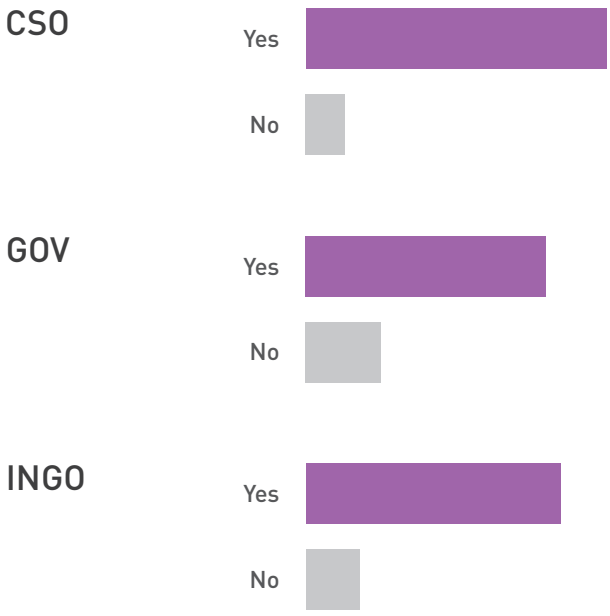
International actors raised the question of whether the primary responsibility for securing the rights of internally displaced people and migrants should in fact reside with governments. Across the region a number of individual governments had no legal frameworks or institutional capacity for upholding these. This also emerged as a critical issue for CSOs and communities, who highlighted that proper recognition contributed to better protection and greater opportunity.

International actors indicated that the line between development and humanitarian programs became particularly blurred in protracted situations. Humanitarian actors said this resulted in them continually being asked to operate beyond the bounds of their mandates. Donors also identified this as a key reason for their reluctance to continue to provide financing in protracted situations. To resolve this, governments should create an enabling policy environment that aligned humanitarian, development and national approaches. UN Agencies and other international actors should promote regional or national coordination mechanisms specific to protracted crisis.

UN agencies widely recognized that financing systems were not conducive to effective and timely cooperation between actors. Various stakeholders highlighted the need for donors to mobilize humanitarian and development funds in parallel from the very beginning of a crisis. Different pools of funding held by a single donor government should be synchronized and multi-year integrated financing models further explored to maximize effectiveness over longer periods of time.

A key point emerging from the preparatory consultations was that governments in the region continued to advocate for return as the preferred durable solution for displaced people and host communities alike. The Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement highlighted that in some settings where protracted crises had continued for generations, people may have lost their connection to their homeland and the prioritization of return over other innovative approaches should be questioned. There were no specific suggestions put forward from the region of practical solutions in situations of prolonged conflict, suggesting that alternative solutions have yet to be identified.

Q **Do you feel your organization is willing to take risks and try new methods of responding to crises?**



Are there too many frameworks on durable solutions for displacement? Can these be rationalized?

Can standard criteria, targets and mechanisms be established specifically for protracted crises and what would they need to encompass?

Does commitment to impartiality and neutrality preclude humanitarian actors from attempting to address underlying political obstacles to implementing durable solutions?

NATURAL DISASTER

Homes destroyed by earthquake in Nepal.

Credit: Panday / UNICEF

NATURAL DISASTER

UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
2015 Sendai Japan

Introduction to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-30)

The Sendai Framework is a 15-year, voluntary and non-binding agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk, but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and others. It aims to achieve the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.[6]

Practical steps towards collectively operationalizing the Sendai Framework

Stakeholders in the region recognized the value of the Hyogo and Sendai Frameworks in providing a clear and internationally agreed roadmap to guide governments, humanitarian and development agencies and other partners in how to focus on disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery. However they expressed uncertainty as to how to operationalize the Sendai Framework's recommendations, especially using current financial and institutional tools and structures.

Humanitarian and development actors in the region suggested they each had respective strengths and focus areas. Other actors did not distinguish between their work and advocated a holistic approach that eliminated the differentiation between humanitarian and development, particularly in prevention, mitigation and preparedness. Strong proposals called for humanitarian actors to focus efforts on strengthening the capacity of governments and local actors in preparedness and response and highlighted the need for all actors to move to align their goals and operations. In order to facilitate this, survey respondents recommended that all actors engaged in common disaster risk analysis and shared long term planning, programming and funding. Academics suggested using the Sendai Framework as means to learn more about disaster risk management. They proposed conducting research to help address humanitarian issues, including research on food security in developing countries.

The preparatory consultations confirmed that a number of countries in the region had enacted disaster management laws or policies, but also underscored that these were often not well implemented or understood at operational levels. Several stakeholders indicated that the absence of legal mandates for local actors to undertake humanitarian action and lack of risk information had been real challenges to implementation. The Online Consultation noted that, if implemented effectively, legal frameworks could help to institutionalize community involvement in risk reduction, particularly through established building codes, early warning systems, community awareness raising and education. Support from international actors was called for in helping to strengthen domestic legal and policy preparedness for disasters.

Exposure to natural hazards and experience of disasters varies significantly across the region. In densely-populated South Asia, high levels of poverty, natural resource depletion and rapid urbanization were seen to compound the effects of seasonal weather patterns and climate change. Climate change was also a key concern for future humanitarian action in Central Asia, with potentially extensive implications regarding water and food supply management in the region.

Previous WHS regional consultations showed that the faster support reached the poor and vulnerable following a disaster, the better they coped with its impact. However there was seen to be a clear lack of budget pre-planning in the region, with the suggestion countries that experienced recurrent disasters ensure their annual budgets included allocations for humanitarian assistance.

Building on this, focused work on strengthening the role of social protection systems in responding to emergencies was advocated. One proposed way of strengthening collective action was to build emergency response components into social protection mechanisms. As the most vulnerable were already targeted for assistance through these, topping up existing programs could rapidly provide support to communities coping with disaster. However, stakeholders noted that many countries lacked reliable social protection tools or faced technical difficulties in operating them effectively.

What changes do humanitarian actors need to make to respond to the challenges and guidance the Sendai Framework lays down, particularly regarding disaster risk reduction?

What are practical ways that humanitarian and development organizations can work together to produce common disaster risk analysis and contingency planning?

6. www.wcdrr.org

PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Disaster response in conflict and post-conflict situations

In the South and Central Asia region, a number of natural disasters occurred either during or following prolonged conflict. In such situations, stakeholders noted the impacts of natural disasters were inevitably more pronounced. CSOs emphasized that disaster preparedness and response needed to be adapted to specific aspects of conflict and post-conflict settings. They stressed that before engaging in response activities, humanitarian actors must take into account local context and adapt their actions accordingly. It was proposed that disaster preparedness should be modified to include conflict sensitive approaches and that humanitarian actors should move beyond 'do no harm' approaches, towards incorporating peace-building as part of disaster response.

Local CSOs underscored that social tension in post conflict situations could result in lower economic and social mobility, which reduced the resilience of communities to shocks. Providing simplified access to financing and rapidly rebuilding a strong private sector after conflict were proposed ways to redress this.

Breakdowns in communication and coordination in post-conflict settings were also raised as a concern by government respondents, who emphasized the importance of all levels of government quickly re-establishing ties to the community in order to understand and meet their needs.

CSO respondents pointed to an increased need to understand how the combined effects of disasters and conflicts were experienced in relation to gender-based violence and loss of opportunity for women and young people. They also highlighted that in both South and Central Asia, climate change and environmental degradation had reshaped local social and economic landscapes and had the potential to drive conflict by increasing competition for resources.

What do disaster managers and peace-builders need to do differently to avoid fuelling social tensions during disaster preparedness and response? What role could conflict analysis play in this?

How can equitable economic recovery be promoted in conflict and post-conflict disaster settings? What could be the role of the private sector in this regard?

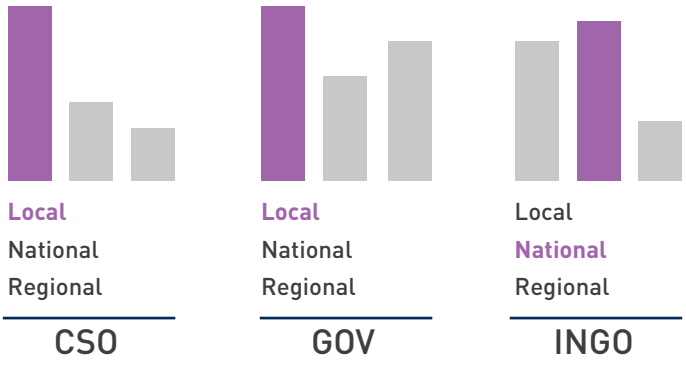
Converting preparedness investments into better response and recovery

Recent experience in dealing with disasters had led many stakeholders across the region to re-evaluate what preparedness truly meant. CSOs respondents said that aligning different preparedness requirements for different types of disaster was critical. For instance, they noted that in some part of the region communities were well prepared for floods but not ready for earthquakes when they occurred. This suggested that multi-hazard preparedness should be the regional standard.

Stakeholders raised the need for detailed cost-benefit analyses to help justify to governments why investment in preparedness now would save money later. These analyses could be developed using private sector approaches to estimate potential risks and how these could be better mitigated. UN agencies felt that joint advocacy for better disaster preparedness and engagement of government ministries were critical steps in this regard.

There was consensus that preparedness funds would be best placed within national systems, with both CSO and government respondents indicating that these would be most effective if held at the local level. International actors felt that national or local level funds would be most effective. Interestingly, government respondents felt that regional funds would be more effective than national funds.

Q **At which level do you think a preparedness fund would be most effective in reducing the impact of future crises?**



In terms of leadership and coordination, CSO respondents highlighted the importance of national leadership, and of international actors cooperating to support this. Effective leadership depended on familiarity with the capacities of partners and understanding of local requirements. One government representative noted that "disaster management is like an orchestra" and it was important to be clear on who the conductor was.

NATURAL DISASTER

Strengthening preparedness required that local CSOs and governments worked together with communities to conduct vulnerability and capacity mapping. This should include identifying trained volunteers and local leaders who could provide support during emergency responses. National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies throughout the region should support this mapping through their national volunteer networks.

Private sector respondents highlighted the impact of rapid urbanization in South Asia and suggested that the focus of preparedness had shifted. Disaster management agencies said they had substantial experience in managing disasters in rural contexts however felt their capacity to manage urban response was weaker. One suggested solution was for governments to develop standard operating procedures and protocols to support planning and response to urban disasters. Also, it was important for the humanitarian system to invest in appropriate technologies and for governments to regulate building codes to prevent urban disasters such as fires or building collapse.

How can all actors work together to develop and implement one unified and comprehensive vulnerability and capacity mapping approach?

What does local emergency preparedness actually look like and how does this differ from rural to urban settings?

Strengthening South-South cooperation and regionally-led response

Considerable attention was dedicated in other regional consultations to understanding the role of regional organizations in humanitarian action. In some contexts, regional organizations were seen to increasingly provide an intermediate level of support between national and international capacities. In South and Central Asia, regional organizations were seen to lack operational capacity for direct response and primarily conducted research or facilitated information and experience exchange. Local CSOs suggested that regional organizations expand their role in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness by facilitating capacity development initiatives, conducting joint planning, supporting nationally-led coordination, and promoting reference to global norms and standards within the region.

Private sector stakeholders suggested that regional organizations could support the development of standardized clearance mechanisms for incoming humanitarian goods and help streamline access for relief during response. The importance of legal preparedness for cargo transport and customs clearance, particularly regarding taxes and fees, was heavily discussed by governments, international actors and CSOs. This included clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of local authorities and administrations in handling post-disaster international assistance. Pre-existing visa waiver agreements and customs procedures were seen to be beneficial to rapid response mobilization and regional organizations and governments were encouraged to cooperate on strengthening these across the region. As indicated above, stakeholders in the region remained unconvinced as to the effectiveness of establishing regional preparedness funds, and said there was a lack of clarity as to the availability and access procedures for regionally held response funds.

Several countries in the region already played an influential role in disaster response and this regional capacity was seen to be increasing. Governments in the region tended to prefer bilateral support arrangements over multilateral models, which meant their contributions were often not well captured in financial tracking systems that focused on multilateral resources flows. In order to develop a better picture of South-South and intra-regional resource flows, an internationally recognized and accepted system of tracking resources leveraged for disaster response via different modalities (i.e. bilateral, multilateral and individual donations, and direct provision of goods and services by governments and private sector, as well as humanitarian organizations) was required.

What are the challenges to using existing international tools to support South-South cooperation and regional response?

How can 'disaster diplomacy' and new South-South development and climate financing instruments be leveraged to improve disaster preparedness and response?

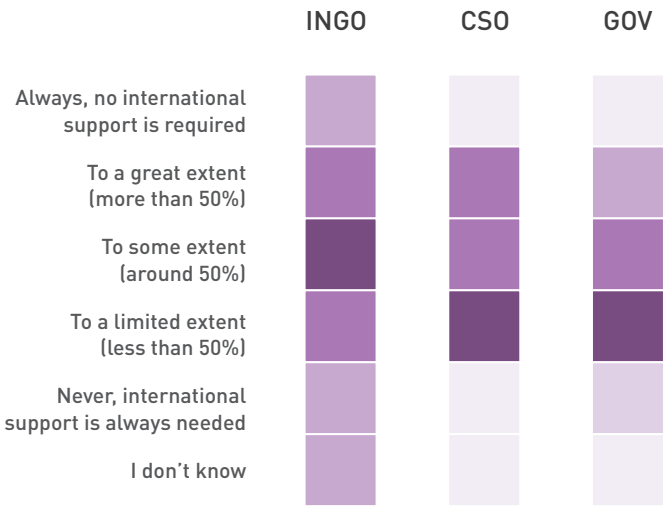
Engaging all stakeholders in disaster preparedness and response

CSO, government and international actors held the view that national resources were adequate to meet the needs of disaster affected communities about 50 percent of the time. These responses implied that external support was still regularly needed for disaster response in the region.

Various stakeholders highlighted the need for greater collaboration within branches and levels of government and issuance of agreed processes and procedures for engaging international actors to support response. Some international NGO respondents revealed that they often received contradictory responses from different ministries or departments, making their operations more challenging. It was suggested that

PREPARATORY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Q When humanitarian emergencies occur in the country, are the needs of the affected communities adequately covered by national resources (including the Government and/or national and local CSOs)?



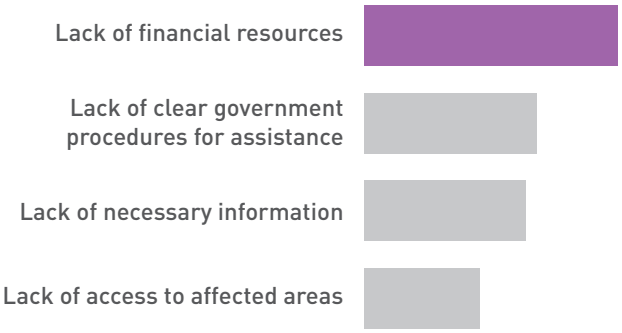
governments clarify at ministry level their processes for working with international actors.

The need for clear government procedures was also of particular importance to private sector respondents, who noted that their activities were often constrained by corporate social responsibility laws or other legal or financial restrictions. Clarification of government procedures for accepting assistance would enable all actors to better contribute to humanitarian action.

Clarification in this regard would be particularly critical given that government respondents themselves indicated support for decentralization of disaster management. They proposed to strengthen the leadership role of disaster management committees at the local level and indicated this would require defining governmental jurisdiction, responsibilities and functions at all levels, as well as allocating resources through annual budgets or other means to help committees plan and implement humanitarian responses.

The preparatory consultations highlighted the strong role of the private sector in South Asia, where private companies were taking a lead role in humanitarian action. In particular, ability to mobilize quickly and draw upon diverse skill sets were highlighted as comparative advantages. Overall, however, stakeholders reported that private sector actors lacked thorough understanding of how to best meet actual needs during crises and suggested that experienced actors develop standards of activity and guidelines for response that others

Q What are the main barriers to humanitarian action?



could learn from. Stakeholder dialogues and online platforms could be strengthened to facilitate sharing of this knowledge, but further discussion was required on who would be responsible for establishing and maintaining these.

At the local level, government and humanitarian agencies should promote investment in preparedness by the local private sector and recognize their technical expertise, not just their financial role. The potential role multinationals could play in developing the capacity of local businesses and organizations, particularly in strengthening financial systems, was also highlighted.

The potential for media to play a constructive role during disaster response was highlighted, with stakeholders identifying the need for media officers from different agencies to coordinate early and involve the government to ensure accuracy in reporting and avoid giving mixed messages. Stakeholders also noted that media should be engaged more meaningfully and over a sustained period, not only during disaster response.

The role of youth in preparedness and response was repeatedly highlighted, with a call for youth organizations to be recognized as legitimate partners in humanitarian action. Youth leaders highlighted their ability to mobilize large numbers of connected young people who understood local community needs and how to engage with technology to communicate rapidly with other stakeholders.

Partnerships between humanitarian organizations and universities or think tanks could see researchers embedded in response programmes to support real time analysis that contributed academic rigour to assessment and programming decisions.

NATURAL DISASTER

In discussing the role of diaspora in humanitarian action, government and community stakeholders highlighted their potential contributions of know-how and financing. However, government respondents also felt there were risks to be considered, including the variance in political views associated with being disconnected from country of origin. It was suggested that governments should provide clear incentives and support transparent mechanisms to channel financial contributions from diaspora. There was also a need to engage diaspora beyond humanitarian response into longer-term investments in national preparedness and resilience efforts.

Stakeholders also identified a need to support the strengthening of inter-regional dialogue between governments and CSOs in Central Asia, particularly in regards to regional priority areas of human trafficking and illegal migration.

How would decentralization of disaster management leadership change how national and international humanitarian organizations engage with government in the region?

How can greater trust be established between government, humanitarians and actors like media and diaspora, who have independent and often critical voices? How do online platforms, particularly social media, affect these relationships?

Mainstreaming disaster preparedness and response in gender programming

The need to prioritize the empowerment of vulnerable populations, especially women and girls in preparedness, response and recovery efforts was strongly reflected during the preparatory consultations. CSO stakeholders suggested that on-going gender programmes, including livelihood initiatives for women, could be used to enhance disaster preparedness.

The preparatory consultations revealed a sense that humanitarian action could create momentum to address the root causes of gender inequality, but could also perpetuate vulnerability if culturally inappropriate or insufficiently gender-sensitive. Actors aiming to address gender bias in society needed to recognize that during disaster response community dynamics changed and women could take on larger roles in community decision making than pre-disaster.

During disaster response, gender received different levels of consideration by different groups. For example, the specific needs of women in disaster response were repeatedly raised by stakeholders from national CSOs and UN agencies. However gender was rarely mentioned by government representatives or private sector stakeholders responding to the same questions.

Consultations with affected communities revealed that women often felt discriminated against during aid delivery. Among other causes, this was due to a lack of female staff to which women felt they could communicate their needs. Female respondents indicated that in some situations medical facilities and food packages failed to consider the special needs of pregnant women, elderly and young children. Participants stressed that 'priority needs' must be considered in context and take into account associated risks.

In some circumstances, attempts to promote gender equality through humanitarian assistance actually increased the burden on women. For example, requiring women to collect relief items from distribution centres or participate in cash for work programs was not practical where women were already solely responsible for child care and providing for their household.

The vulnerability of women during times of humanitarian crisis was raised by affected communities in relation to the design and management of shelters. These often failed to provide adequate safety and privacy for women, particularly adolescent women and breastfeeding mothers. It was suggested that community management of shelters throughout the year could play a role in addressing the vulnerability of women by ensuring shelters were clean and regularly stocked with necessary supplies. It was further proposed that the private sector could be invited to bring innovation into shelter design and management.

What should local and national governments and civil society organizations do to better align gender and disaster preparedness programming? Is there a role for the private sector, academia and media in strengthening this?

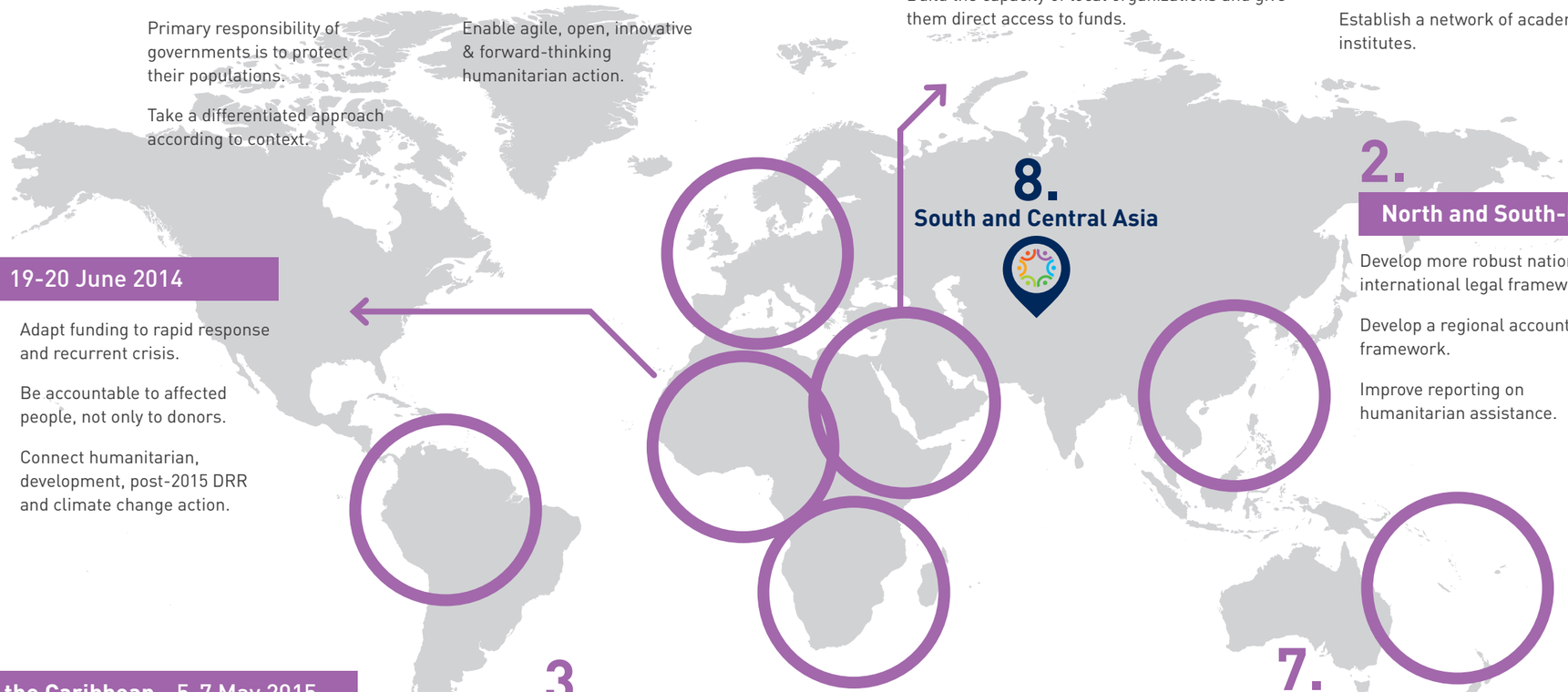
How do we strike the balance between advocating respect for local culture and promoting gender equality in disaster response? Should humanitarian programmes be intentionally designed to achieve social change or is this not appropriate?

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

GLOBAL EMERGING THEMES

Ensuring affected people, particularly women, have a stronger voice & greater role in humanitarian action.
Confronting IHL violations & finding new ways to protect and assist people in conflict.
Developing new approaches for managing recurrent & protracted crises.
Taking global action to address the funding gap.
Adapting the humanitarian system to new contexts, actors and challenges.
Localising preparedness & response.
Creating an enabling environment & investing in innovation.

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS



1. West and Central Africa 19-20 June 2014

Engage local and national actors in designing appropriate response.

Recognize the pivotal role of government.

Uphold humanitarian principles to guarantee humanitarian space.

Adapt funding to rapid response and recurrent crisis.

Be accountable to affected people, not only to donors.

Connect humanitarian, development, post-2015 DRR and climate change action.

2. North and South-East Asia 23-24 July 2014

Develop more robust national and international legal frameworks.

Develop a regional accountability framework.

Improve reporting on humanitarian assistance.

Support regional organizations to become conduits of innovation.

Develop regional guidance on civil-military coordination in conflict.

Develop regional conventions on protection of IDPs and migrants.

3. Eastern and Southern Africa 27-29 October 2014

Strengthen the capacity of local institutions to improve exit strategies.

Recognize the comparative advantages of the development & humanitarian communities.

Find new funding sources and streamline funding flows.

Increase the role of youth & women in humanitarian action.

Ensure accountability through transparent & measurable mechanisms.

Adopt technology within a range of contexts.

4. Europe and Others 3-4 February 2015

Support local, sub-national and national response.

Primary responsibility of governments is to protect their populations.

Take a differentiated approach according to context.

Improve inter-operability among humanitarian actors.

Enable agile, open, innovative & forward-thinking humanitarian action.

5. Middle East and North Africa 3-5 March 2015

Provide IHL training to ensure protection of civilians.

Increase the role of the international community in protracted crises and displacement.

Build the capacity of local organizations and give them direct access to funds.

Leverage the culture and traditions of Islamic giving.

Scale up efficient and coordinated cash-based programming.

Establish a network of academic and training institutes.

6. Latin America and the Caribbean 5-7 May 2015

Strengthen coordination, monitoring and reporting at the municipal level.

Implement independent accountability mechanisms that involve affected people.

Create national and regional financing tools with fast and flexible activation mechanisms.

Develop strategies for innovation that use traditional and ancestral knowledge.

Use private sector tools to facilitate feedback from affected people.

Establish centers of excellence to strengthen public, private and academic participation.

7. Pacific Region 30 June-02 July 2015

Establish national platforms for private sector engagement in preparedness and response.

Develop better national maps of social, economic and structural vulnerability.

Coordinate better between climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

Support voluntary and dignified migration or relocation for those affected by climate change.

Draw on traditional ways of mediating conflict to support displaced and host communities.

Organize regular community level simulation exercises involving all partners.

8. South and Central Asia

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

REGIONAL CONSULTATION
South and Central Asia
28-30 July 2015