WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

'Humanitarianism in Sri Lanka;
Reaching new heights and goals'

National Consultation in Preparation for

the World Humanitarian Summit 2016

**10th June 2015
at the Auditorium, Bandaranaike Centre for
International Studies (BCIS)
Colombo 07
Sri Lanka**

REPORT

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The United Nations is to convene a World Summit to set a renewed agenda to make humanitarian action beyond 2016 more effective, inclusive and global. This summit will take place in Istanbul, Turkey in 2016. Leading up to this summit consultations have been initiated across various regions to capture thoughts of stakeholders involved in humanitarian activities. The biggest achievement of Sri Lankan consultation is the gathering of 77 humanitarian agencies working in different parts of the country under one roof to discuss how Sri Lanka can contribute towards the ongoing preparation for this summit. The participants endorsed that humanitarian crises and therefore human suffering as a result of natural and anthropogenic causes are increasing. Financial and other resource capacities required for providing humanitarian assistance are stretched to a breaking point. Although a number of humanitarian agencies are increasing, all with the noble intensions to serve people in need, representatives of many agencies admitted that they lack experience and expertise to handle complex humanitarian issues. The participants were also unanimous in conveying their feelings that there needs to be a change in the approach to humanitarian services.

Participation in group discussions/debate was generally open and frank. Although there was evidence of reservations and distrust among some participants when questions pertaining to pre and post-war situations came up during the discussion, they did not affect the general outcome of this consultation.

Every group was of the view that the Sri Lankan narratives pertaining to humanitarian services are derived from actual field experiences relating to poverty, armed conflict, tsunami, floods, landslides, etc. Therefore, Sri Lankan humanitarian experiences and recommendations for change in humanitarian work will be useful globally, and as such, Sri Lanka should be included in any future global deliberations on this topic.

Agreements were reached on the following, which formed the recommendations to the national and global policy makers to make future humanitarian actions effective and relevant.

1. **Humanitarian Effectiveness**

   Coordination:- It was agreed that there is a need for improving coordination for better understanding of all humanitarian programmes, resource allocations and eliminate effort-overlaps and irrelevant or redundant projects. Coordination does not necessarily mean a single agency supervising all others agencies. Coordination will also have to be among the various humanitarian agencies as well as for strengthening each other's capacity and sharing of resources and expertise. Unfortunately, even among the 77 agencies who met at the BCIS on the 10th June no two organizations knew each other's work programme in spite of, in some cases, working out of the same town. The reasons for working in isolation alluded to the following:-

   - Funding sources are different and donor preference or directive on the type of work that should be undertaken, and selection of target groups with the allocated funds do not allow interaction with other agencies

   - Donors generally prefer to not reveal or share information pertaining to funding generated by them

   - Donor rivalries arising from competition to collect new funds and be the first to break new grounds

   - Humanitarian agencies on ground also compete with each other resulting in reluctance to open up should donors divert funds elsewhere

There was a consensus for more openness and interaction vertically and horizontally, meaning coordination involving   (i) a central body (at the country level) coordinating all humanitarian agencies working in the country and (ii) free interaction among various humanitarian agencies working across the country. It was proposed and agreed (by show of hands without any dissension) that meetings of similar nature as held on the 10th June with   Humanitarian agencies at BCIS should take place more frequently, preferably at quarterly intervals and CHA should be the convener (at least in the interim) of such meetings and provide facilities for such meetings. *The hope is that such regular meetings will help better coordination, sharing of work based on the expertise of the implementing agencies, and to bring out professional excellence and specialty of each agency. In the long run, it may lead to a common mechanism for resource allocation and accountability and evaluation of humanitarian agency contributions to the overall development across the country.*

2. **Basic principles guiding humanitarian services: Humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence**: Participants had reservations about adhering to these principles. Many of them felt that the target beneficiaries and the type of assistance on offer are largely determined by the donor. Even government funding comes with conditionality of how the funds should be spent and who should be beneficiaries; very often they are party supporters. Although these humanitarian principles are noble and idealistic there will be difficulties to comply with them. *"Shouldn't these principles govern the donor communities as well?" the participants questioned. This calls for policy and attitudinal changes on the part of the donors. The donors should also be flexible and willing to employ different criteria to evaluate use and impact of their funding*

3. **Recommendations that cut across themes 2,3 and 4:-** Participants recommended the following to address these themes:-

   - **Community empowerment: -** Communities should be empowered through encouraging frequent consultations among people constituting a community within administrative boundaries –e.g. a village*. To facilitate this consultation it was recommended that religious leaders should be involved*. Examples were given of leaders representing various religious groups in a locality coming together

and constituting a focal point to encourage discussion on local issues, including preparedness for disaster. This type of frequent consultation needs to be helped (by humanitarian agencies in the area) with a disaster management plan to enhance the level of community preparedness and humanitarian agencies to solicit support from the local communities, to locate victims, assess needs and in providing relief assistance.

- Use of GPS should become a common practice to locate victims and possible use of even drones should become a routine practice to reach out to the people who are cutoff from the main stream. Such measures could reduce vulnerability of people in disaster-prone areas and potential risks can be managed before it leads to serious disasters.

- As mobile phones are a common communication tool even in the remote areas,   people should be kept informed of potential dangers and the closest assembly points of safety in case of emergencies.

- Suggestions were also made of building food stocks at a safe and strategic place in every locality.

- **Building Trust: -** Building trust should be given priority particularly in war affected areas. A trust deficit between different communities and between victims and humanitarian agencies prevent or make humanitarian services ineffective. Trust should be built at different levels. Post-war reconciliation in particular, cannot happen if victims are kept in constant fear. Needs of people are not uniform and therefore the rule of using standardized humanitarian service kits is inappropriate. Any assistance given should be culture-sensitive.

- **Conflict prevention:** To get humanitarians into action there seems to be a (perceived) need for a crisis to occur leading to disorientation/dislocation of people. Could there be a mechanism to anticipate a potential crisis and take precautionary measures beforehand? According to the group that discussed this topic, it is possible. This relates to early warning in two fronts: (i) Early warning of natural hazards – floods, drought, storm etc. (ii) Societal disruption. For measures pertaining to early warning of natural disasters see comments under 'community empowerment'.   Early warning of potential societal disruption could be set up by encouraging religious leaders to be vigilant and take measures to anticipate and diffuse potential flash points. According to some participants this is possible if leaders of different faiths in a locality can be encouraged to have constant dialogue with the main focus on guiding people to respect common human values and rights enshrined in various faiths. Such a group constituted voluntarily by religious leaders in each village could play a significant role in preventing conflicts.

- **Forum for youth:** - Youth constitute a substantial part of society but they   consider themselves as being neglected by the same society and by policy makers. Potentially, future peace and stability of the country rest on the youth. Therefore, there is a need to understand the youth and take measures to prevent future conflict. According to some participants youth seem disoriented and confused as they face demands and peer pressure emerging from globalization and a market oriented society. Some youth prefer to leave the country in hope of brighter prospects and/or are easily persuaded into anti-social activities. How youth can be harnessed and guided into mainstream nation building (by gainfully engaging them) should be considered as an important humanitarian challenge. High school students should be coached in disaster preparedness including first aid as additional workforce for humanitarian workers in emergencies.

Serving humanity requires sacrifice and compassion on the part of humanitarians. Commercializing humanitarian services cannot bring solace to those afflicted by tragedies. Humanitarian service is now considered a competitive business and rendered mechanically cannot establish the ambience of solace. It is only transformation of hearts and not methods that can finally determine effectiveness of those services.

High Level Opening Remarks

Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah - Executive Director, Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies

Mr Thiagarajah welcomed all distinguished guests and participants to the WHS Regional Consultation for Sri Lanka emphasizing the importance of coming together from various parts of the country in order to formulate a national perspective of what we have seen, what we know, what we have learned, and what we wish to see in the future in terms of humanitarianism in Sri Lanka. Recounting the itinerary for the day, he reiterated the importance of every individual contribution, encouraging all to share openly in any language they felt most comfortable with. In conclusion he wished everyone a productive day's proceedings.

Address by the Chief Guest

**Hon. Dr. Harsha de Silva MP
Deputy Minister, Policy Planning and Economic Affairs**

Honourable Deputy Minister of Policy Planning and Economic Affairs and chief guest for the event Harsha De Silva spoke on the shift of the responsibility of facilitation and supervision of NGO's under the new Government from the management of the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of Policy Planning. It was further said that this shift would allow NGO's to serve the public and operate with flexibility and transparency. He further detailed that this change occurred through placing the NGO Secretariat under the Ministry of Policy Planning and establishing an environment of freedom for the NGO's to provide their services to the public and continue their work in a flexible capacity while ensuring both transparency and accountability of such work. He concluded the address by describing the Ministry's satisfaction in seeing NGO's , Government, and the private sector working in collaboration with one another to better serve the needs of the destitute as part of a mutually beneficial partnership among the three sectors as a win-win-win situation.

Introduction to the Humanitarian Forum

Dr. Ghassan Elkahlout, Advisor
The Humanitarian Forum

Dr Elkahlout thanked the organisers and proceeded to shed some light on the Humanitarian Forum in support of the consultation process ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit scheduled to be held in Istanbul in May 2016, initiated by the United Nations in order to improve humanitarian action on a global scale. He emphasised the aim to build more inclusive, diverse and effective humanitarian systems by bringing all key stakeholders together to think innovatively and make improvement in humanitarian action. In this respect, the World Humanitarian Summit fulfils the mandate of the Humanitarian Forum, he stated, which seeks to build bridges and trust between governmental organization and multilateral organization from the north and south having aided the organization of over thirty, thirty-five workshops worldwide.

The Forum aims to provide opportunities and understanding of the four thematic areas in discussion at the consultation, which are, namely, humanitarian effectiveness, reducing vulnerability and managing risk, transformation through innovation and serving the needs of people in conflict, drawing on rich moral values and the strong heritage of the humanitarian solidarity, philanthropy, and challenging existing stigma. He stressed the importance to engage a new generation of emerging humanitarian leaders.

Dr Elkahlout in conclusion called all participants to grasp this opportunity to advocate for the voice of the grassroots organisations in Sri Lanka, placing it on the international humanitarian platform.

Address by the Guest of Honour

Mr. W. M. Bandusena
Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management

Echoing the sentiments of the speakers before him, Mr Bandusena reiterated the value addition of the event to the country, which he stated was an opportunity to share experience and knowledge and feed into the global agenda for work beyond 2016. The initiative also comes at a critical time where we are being challenged by global phenomena like climate change and inevitable socio-economic changes, he stated, emphasising on the actions as being instrumental to making humanitarian actions more effective and inclusive to confront imminent future challenges.

Referencing the two massive humanitarian emergencies in the country within the century, namely the tsunami of 2004 and the ethnic conflict of thirty years, he commented on the lessons learned and the substantial knowledge gained in their wake which could be contributory to the overall global framework. This experience, he said, was vital to the progress made by the Ministry of Disaster Management and the agencies under its purview, within the last ten years.

From the vantage point of both a government agent and humanitarian actor in the disaster management sector, Mr Bandusena presented the importance of serving the vulnerable populace as being a prime responsibility. He elaborated on the efforts taken by the Disaster Management Centre in liaison with the ministry, under the Sri Lanka Comprehensive Disaster Management programme, such as the National Emergency Operations Plan to improve the effective coordination of humanitarian aid amongst other initiatives to improve the capacity of institutions and personnel in disaster response. However, he noted that there were gaps that the ministry was conscious of.

The objective of investment should be to build resilience. Building partnerships is vital to that agenda. The collective contribution of all gathered would reassure such partnerships, he said in conclusion, thanking the organisers and wishing the event success.

Humanitarian Services in Sri Lanka

Dr. M. A. Mohamed Saleem
Chief Trustee - Mahatma Gandhi Centre, Sri Lanka

In opening Dr Saleem underscored the psychological impact of the word "humanitarian" on the human consciousness as alluding to crisis, disaster and victimisation giving rise to an implication that there should be crisis and victims to prompt humanitarians into action. He drew on the spiritual and religious aspects of the human condition, stating the importance of differences, not for people to despise but to recognize and complement each other by strengthening bonds of affinity.

He established that with increasing threat to human life, health and subsistence arising from the lack of protection against poverty, inequality and access to basic services exasperated by reoccurring natural disasters and armed conflicts, simple emergencies become complicated and humanitarian intervention made necessary. However, he stated that the ethics of humanitarian work have recently been made unclear because the label of 'humanitarian' is increasingly being utilised to legitimize international military interventions in pursuit of false security concerns.

He spoke of crises arising from a single or combination of factors such as natural disasters, armed conflict, forced displacement and economic migration, insecurity, ethnic and religious tensions and discriminations. In this light, he drew on Sri Lanka's experiences with the separatist war and the tsunami of 2004 amongst other continual concerns. He commended the spirit of Sri Lankans as being instinctively to helping those in need, recognising the efforts of local NGOs and international organisations active within the country. He stated his belief in Sri Lanka's contribution to global discussions as being of paramount importance when taking into consideration the country's experience.

Dr Saleem also drew on gaps in past humanitarian actions in Sri Lanka stating that everyone working in the humanitarian sector must seek to bridge them, guided by principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence in order to avoid bureaucratic hiccups. He mentioned the need to be prepared as being paramount to dissipating crises at origin. There also remains a need to coordinate with one another to maximize resources. He too established the importance of the four thematic areas in discussion in influencing policy.

In closing, Dr Saleem drew on his opening remarks of upholding values of unity, the instinct to help others in need and the responsibility of the strong and the rich in the community to assist the weak and the needy to facilitate better humanitarianism in the country.

Background to the Stakeholder Consultation - Sri Lanka

World over human conflicts and natural disasters are increasing in frequency, displacing people out of their homes into refugee camps internally within boarders of the respective countries and/or across the neighbouring countries. The cost and logistics for providing humanitarian assistance to victims of tragedies are staggering which had led the United Nations to convene a World Summit to set a renewed agenda to make humanitarian action beyond 2016 more effective, inclusive and global. This summit will take place in Istanbul, Turkey in 2016. Leading up to this summit consultations have been initiated across various regions to capture thoughts of the stakeholders involved in humanitarian activities aimed at generating collective recommendations for improving humanitarian response systems that will cost effectively meet the needs of the people afflicted by tragedies.

On June 10th 2015 Sri Lanka responded to the call for national consultation in preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit by assembling as many as 77 NGOs and INGOs who are registered and working across the country on humanitarian issues at the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BICS), Bauddhaloka Mw.Colombo-7. This consultation was facilitated by the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) in collaboration with The Humanitarian Forum, Muslim Aid, Islamic Relief, and Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management Sri Lanka (A-PAD SL).

Background documents pertaining to the Summit prepared by the 2016 WHS secretariat were made available well in advance to the participants. According to the WHS guidelines the consultations were to focus on the following four core themes that emerged out of previous discussions:- (1) Humanitarian Effectiveness (2) Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risk (3) Transformation through innovation and (4) Serving the needs of people in conflict.

Sri Lanka is a small island country which is home to people with multiple cultures and religions. Although historically a peaceful country, over the past few decades, Sri Lanka has had a fair share of human conflicts and natural disasters witnessed in other parts of the world. Human conflicts triggered by demographic differences and disproportionate claims for rights and privileges, preference of one language as the official language over the other indigenous languages, religious intolerance and hatred, discrimination of one group over others etc led to protracted violent struggles and human death and displacement. Sri Lanka was also hit by the devastating tsunami in 2004 and several thousands of lives were lost, displaced and their properties destroyed. Sri Lanka survived through all such crises, and along the way it has accumulated vast amount of experience in managing humanitarian tragedies.

Sri Lankan National Consultation tried to secure answers to the WHS-suggested themes by raising its own set of questions to reflect on tragedies the country has been through.

These questions were:-

1. Did we in Sri Lanka follow ethical guidelines (humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence) in our humanitarian actions?

2. Could the disaster victims have recovered faster than they did?

3. Were the humanitarian assistance given in response to a crisis appropriate, timely, reach the real victims and justify cost incurred?

4. How the relief and rehabilitation programmes were/get linked to Sri Lanka's overall development

programmes/plans?

5. Were any of the programmes we mounted (in response to a crisis) incompatible with or irrelevant to the needs of the victims?

6. Did anyone place difficulties, excessive controls or obstructions that may have prevented humanitarian operations to reach the place of need or emergency?

7. Were there incidences of discrimination (preferential treatment) that led to the exclusion of certain groups or individuals from humanitarian assistance?

8. Did the humanitarian support provided (in response to a crisis) strengthen or weaken resilience or improve/adversely affect the local capacity of those vulnerable people to face future crises?

9. Could there have been a different coordination strategy and more coherent (humanitarian) programmes?

10. Given our experience, are there possible mechanisms to anticipate and take precautionary measures before they break out into full blown crises?

The main body of the text gives the detailed outcome of group discussions under the four WHS themes.

Thematic Discussions & Key Recommendations

Humanitarian Effectiveness

On context specificity of humanitarian action where humanitarian effectiveness is concerned, humanitarian initiatives from the government should be tangible. In addition, the necessity of identifying the needs of target sectors was discussed and it was agreed that both parties should identify the factors of their ability and necessity in participating in humanitarian programmes. Maintaining effective communication and transparency along with accountability in community activities, getting the feedback after the completion of work, and follow up action are also important factors. The importance of balanced gender representation in all areas of work is also discussed, including planning, identification of beneficiaries and in the implementation of humanitarian action. Further, the importance of identifying a proper mechanism to avoid duplication of work was discussed. This can be facilitated through regular meetings with NGOs. It was also agreed that an emergency response preparedness plan was important. Where manmade disasters are concerned, humanitarian work on conflict mitigation and prevention are important to humanitarian effectiveness. The government should additionally encourage people to go for organic production and consume organic production.

On discussions of humanitarian funding, although proper funding proposal is submitted to obtain the financial assistance from a donor agency; they are very rigid in releasing finance. This makes the quality of their contributions to the humanitarian system both important and requiring improvement, particularly by improving quality and timeliness of funding mechanisms. It was discussed that unnecessary expenditures on humanitarian action can be eliminated through regular coordination meetings among humanitarian actors. Establishing an auditing body that can support local CBOs in financial reporting and auditing as their CSR part would also

prove beneficial. Furthermore, private sectors should encourage assistance, not only in financial terms, but also in the areas of providing technical, technological and expertise knowledge.

Key recommendations

- Humanitarian action should be effective in communication and transparency

- Humanitarian intervention should be sustainable

- Government humanitarian actors should have a tangible initiate in humanitarian action

- Humanitarian actors and the target sector should identify the priorities and capacities of both parties to participate in humanitarian programmes

- Donors should improve the quality of their contributions to the humanitarian system

- Humanitarian actors should maintain accountability in community activities and get the feedback from relevant communities after the completion of humanitarian work

- Humanitarian actors should formulate an emergency response preparedness plan before crises occur

- Humanitarian actors should have role assignment plan for the private sector, government sector, and NGOs to meet any situation for better cooperation between stakeholders

- Humanitarian actors should incorporate the concept of resilience into the main humanitarian action plan

- Humanitarian actors should identify suitable mechanisms to avoid duplication of work through regular meetings with NGOs.

- Humanitarian action should include balanced gender representation in all areas of work, planning, identification of beneficiaries, and in the implementation discussed

- Humanitarian action should work on conflict mitigation and conflict prevention where manmade disasters are concerned

- Government humanitarian actors should encourage people to go for organic production and consume organic production

- Humanitarian action should include follow up action

- Humanitarian actors should improve the quality and timely funding mechanisms of humanitarian action

- Private sector humanitarian actors should encourage in assisting not only with the financial assistance but also in the areas of providing technical, technological, and expertise knowledge

- Humanitarian actors should establish an auditing body that can support local CBOs in financial reporting and auditing as their CSR part

- Humanitarian actors should conduct regular coordination meetings to eliminate distrust and unnecessary expenditures being spent on a humanitarian project

Reducing Vulnerability, Managing Risk

Several challenges and threats within the country and region have made Sri Lanka susceptible to widespread crises and exacerbate the demand for humanitarian action. Humanitarian actors must subsequently work to identify and understand the existing and future risks in their crisis reduction and management efforts. The discussion highlighted such threats, including environmental, social, and economic threats. Environmental threats referred largely to rapid environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and climate change. Environmentally sustainable approaches to sustaining Sri Lankan economies additionally lowered the national capacity to overcome income inequality. Economic infrastructures are further threatened due to war, slower growth rates in emerging economies regionally, concerns about water and food security, and weak or nonexistent social safety nets. Economic and social disparities and mobility restrictions arising from post-war conditions have also facilitated the growth of new social tensions.

The regional and national context of the aforementioned threats requires reflection of community priorities and needs in their management to reduce vulnerability in Sri Lanka. In such an integrated approach, social vulnerability must also be taken into consideration of existing risk.

Where reoccurring and predictable crisis effects are concerned, humanitarian action must minimize crisis related shocks through preventative action. For example, industrial areas must be separated from residential areas in order to minimize industry related disasters. Rising risks in urban areas also need to be considered by such addressing crises. For example, open areas can be designated to accommodate low income populations during early warning periods. Humanitarian action must also prepare for unexpected crisis effects, such as unplanned urbanization in which there is environmental degradation in line with ongoing development efforts. Alternative plans become essential, such as introducing alternative livelihood in the case of drought effects on agriculturally dependent populations that limit resilience strategies and capacities to recover from crisis effects quickly.

Preparedness and resilience in conflict are challenged by gaps between the community and policy makers, disaster management information not reaching the grass roots communities, and weakness in interagency cooperation and coordination. To address these issues, coordination and cooperation strategies require improvement among responsible humanitarian actors, such as CBOs and INGOs, and adequate resources must be allocated by stakeholders of humanitarian actors for crisis relief. In relation to resilience strengthening, humanitarian actors need to consider restrictions that prevent crisis affected people from recovering and establish plans for such possible occurrences. Both the local and institutional capacities for crisis mitigation must be developed and strengthened.

Where preparedness and risk financing is concerned, primary obstacles faced by humanitarian action include crisis management activity costs falling under other activity costs, funding allocations from governmental, NGO, and similar organizations going unaccounted for in the total allocated funds for related activities, and the donor preference of short term projects for crisis related activities as compared to those that require long term commitment. Both community and private sector contributions must be considered in crisis management and reduction financing. Additionally, economic impacts of crises can be addressed by including insurance policies in development plans and improving select welfare and care services.

Key recommendations

- Humanitarian action should reflect community priorities and needs

- Humanitarian action in reducing vulnerability should also address social vulnerability

- Humanitarian actors should formulate alternative action plans when predicting and addressing future threats in the event that primary action plans are ineffective due to crisis effects

- Humanitarian actors should formulate policies to strengthen the resilience of crisis-affected people

- Humanitarian actors should strengthen the institutional capacity of humanitarian action

- Humanitarian action should involve interagency cooperation and coordination

- Humanitarian actors should improve and strengthen cooperation among all responsible parties

- Stakeholders of humanitarian actors should allocate adequate resources for crisis

- risk reduction

- Humanitarian actors should strengthen local capacities for disaster mitigation

- Humanitarian actors should separate industrial areas from residential areas to minimize industry related crises

- Humanitarian actors should designate open areas to accommodate low income communities during early warning periods of crises

- Humanitarian actors should improve select welfare and care services to address the economic impacts of crises

- Financing of humanitarian action should consider both community and private sector contributions

- Humanitarian actors should incorporate insurance policies into development plans

Transformation through innovation

On innovative partnerships, collaboration with interfaith and interreligious groups, private sectors such as mobile service providers, young people, and the general public were identified as important elements in humanitarian action in disaster, relief, recovery, and preparedness. Community attitudes and mind-sets should shift through innovation from dependency to self-reliance. Humanitarian action should be able to strengthen local organisations for disaster risk reduction, preparedness, establishment, and maintenance of relief stocks at village level in a planned manner while communities can act as a collective to minimize damage and risks from crises, such as floods. During floods, people are not able to access town and face access constraints. People can mark the boundaries of access roads appropriately so that when the village's roads get flooded, people will still be able to figure our boundaries of access roads and avoid further risks to their lives. Communities can additionally keep an emergency stock for easy access in crises. The general public acts first in disaster relief provision, so they are capable of organising in advance until government assistance can be offered to them. Government assistance in humanitarian action can be made easier through flexible policies and rules in terms of administration services and delivery systems, as well as policy framework for innovation for crisis mitigation and management to strengthen resilience.

On empowering local innovators, humanitarian actors should recognize relief workers and innovative actions on disaster management. It is further discussed that awareness programmes on disasters are important. It is discussed that young people and the youth task force can be involved and mobilised as first respondents in crises. Another discussion on awareness outlined the use of disaster mitigation education in school systems. By delivering a message to school children, they go home and share that message with their respective families. To further resilience in communities, crisis affected people should receive psychological assistance to recover. Also at the community level, the importance of early warning systems is also discussed. Early warning systems can connect

with private mobile service providers through partnerships to make location specific early warnings. Similarly, the maximum use of latest technology in disaster prevention, mitigation, and management, such as electronic backup system of people's information (ID), and drone technology, would be beneficial to humanitarian initiatives. Technology can also be used to receive information when access is an use through, for example, the use of drones. As social media is increasingly used in emergency situations the world over and also in humanitarian assistance provision, Social Media use and access to the internet to can also be improved to connect humanitarian actors and crisis affected people and allow access to information in a crisis situation. As housing construction was seen as a big issue during post tsunami housing construction assistance provided by humanitarian actors, new construction technologies can also be adapted.

Logistically, there has to be proper planning and thinking of the sustainability of innovative humanitarian assistance and solutions. Developing systems and procedures for emerging and potential new disasters, such as biological, earthquakes, nuclear, and chemical disasters, is important and humanitarian actors have to think innovatively about new disasters that may befall regionally, nationally, and globally. Strict enforcement of legislation to protect environment pollution and comprehensive action towards conflict prevention are further discussed. Organizations left communities in Sri Lanka unprepared for man-made disasters and did not prevent them, particularly those at the end of the war. A broad discussion follows on how to prevent conflict with an early warning. For example conflicts related to religious disputes do not spread or escalate because interfaith religious committees that can be drawn upon to take measures to prevent the spread of tension.

Key recommendations

- Humanitarian actors should enhance interfaith and inter-religious collaboration in disaster, relief, recovery and preparedness/mitigation

- Humanitarian actors should develop greater partnerships with the private sector such as IT or mobile service providers, for early warnings

- Humanitarian actors should make early warnings location specific so that the messages can directly reach the affected

- Humanitarian action should involve young people and the youth task force and mobilise them as first respondents

- General public should act firstly in disaster relief provision and keep an emergency stock which is controlled by the community for access in crisis situations

- Communities should organize in advance so they are ready until government assistance reaches them.

- Humanitarian action should include the maximum use of latest technologies in disaster prevention, mitigation and management, such as electronic backup system of people's information (ID) and drone technology

- Humanitarian actors should promote disaster mitigation education in the school system

- Humanitarian actors should strengthen local organisations for disaster risk reduction and preparedness and establishment and maintenance of relief stocks at village level in a planned manner

- Humanitarian actors should develop a supporting policy framework for innovation for disaster mitigation and management

- Humanitarian actors should recognize relief workers and innovative actions on disaster management

- Humanitarian actors should change the community attitudes and mind-sets from dependency to self-reliance

- Humanitarian action should include awareness programmes on disasters

- Humanitarian actors should improve the use of and access to social media to connect themselves and to access information in a crisis situation

- Humanitarian actors should connect early warning systems with private mobile service providers to send early warning messages for disaster management units in a disaster situation

- Humanitarian actors should use technology, such as drones, to receive information when access is an issue

- Humanitarian actors should adapt new construction technologies in housing construction

- Government should have a flexible policies and rules in terms of administration services and delivery systems for humanitarian actors

- Humanitarian action should include proper planning and consideration of sustainability

- Humanitarian action should include coordination mechanisms with religious leaders

- Communities should mark the boundaries of access roads appropriately so that when the village's roads get flooded, people will still be able to figure our boundaries of access roads and avoid further risks to their lives

- Humanitarian actors should use school children to communicate messages to a community

- Humanitarian actors should effectively use and maximise use of early warning systems installed at community level

- Humanitarian actors should develop innovative systems and procedures for emerging and potential new disasters, such as biological, earthquakes, nuclear, and chemical disasters

- Humanitarian actors should promote comprehensive action towards conflict prevention.

- Humanitarian action should strictly enforce legislation to protect environment pollution.

- Humanitarian actors should think innovatively about how to prevent man-made disasters, such as war, with early warning

- Humanitarian actors should assist crisis affected people in all spheres of wellbeing, including physically and psychologically, to prepare the affected to build up their resilience to face disasters

Serving the needs of people in conflict

On addressing specific risks people face in conflict situations, the priority for needs of people is protection, security, and assurance of security. People need to feel they are safe. Those responsible for looking after them, such as actors like the United Nations, have to assure crisis affected people of their safety. This extends to the psychosocial element. The United Nations has to stay with the affected people as it is in their mandate. Faith based organisations can play a role in this process. Protection also involves access so the humanitarian action must consider how protection and access can be negotiated. In such negotiations, there is a role for third party mediators. A third party mediator remains undesignated but the concept of a consortium was flagged. The enabling environment where people feel safe and secure needs to be guaranteed.

Humanitarian action to serve the needs of people in conflict is challenged by a lack of trust between communities and the state actors resulting in people being afraid to express their true needs so these actual needs are not identified. For example, crisis affected people may be hesitant to discuss or address concerns about their missing relatives out of fear. Trust must be restored, identifying a specific role for

people within the peace building sphere to work with actors involved in the conflict during a response and afterwards in order to build trust between communities. There is also often a mistrust of the international humanitarian system for a number of reasons, including the fact that systems did not recognise host families or there was a reluctance to work with local partners. There is an additional disconnect in the language being spoken during crisis relief. Some affected people may not understand the donor community language and principles may be articulated differently. There needs to be a better way for discussions among all parties.

There is a need to revisit the four principles of humanitarian action. Principles and standards require local context and cultures in discussion and ranking.

There is a lack of coordination among partners and also lack of planning in humanitarian action. A mechanism is needed at a national where all sectors that have a humanitarian role, such as civil society and government, get together and coordinate among themselves to plan responses to crises. Donors can demand such a mechanism for allocation of funds. Additionally, sometimes funds are donor driven and not needs driven as donors do not know ground level needs and must be flexible in responding to local needs.

Key recommendations

- Humanitarian actors should assure safety and protection to crisis affected people

- Humanitarian action should involve third party moderators to negotiate protection and access to protection

- Humanitarian actors should rebuild trust between responsible actors and affected communities

- Humanitarian actors should consider local context and cultures in principle ranking and discussions of humanitarian action

- Humanitarian actors should communicate in a simpler language with affected communities

- Donors should be flexible in funding and responsive to local needs and issues

- Donors should mandate coordination among humanitarian actors in planning through mechanisms for allocation of funds

- Humanitarian actors should involve all responsible sectors in planning crisis response

Good practices and lessons learned

Helping others in need is an inborn human quality, and therefore, every human being, in the traditional settings is also a 'humanitarian'. In this sense, 'humanitarians' are not a special breed although unfortunately in the NGO/INGO lexicon and in today's usage 'humanitarians' and the service they render are associated with a special group dashing around the length and breadth of a country with whatever materials such groups carry after a disaster strikes.

Every tragedy causes disruption to normal life, meaning it disrupts peace in one's life. Severity of this disruption depends on the gravity of what caused the problem, be it natural or manmade. Humanitarian response in the traditional settings aims at restoring normalcy (**peace** - within oneself, families, community and between communities, between villages etc.). People around the disaster-locality know exactly what the needs of the victims are depending on the nature of the crisis. Response to a tragedy is not compartmentalized and it evokes spontaneous outpouring of compassion, and sympathy is expressed by embracing the victim(s) and willingness to share whatever one has to lighten the impact of the tragedy. Such empathy and whatever small material and moral support the victims receive from the people around them ensure rapid recovery. It is compassion and time-honored customary bonding that spontaneously mobilize 'humanitarians' from among those who are unaffected by the tragedy, and every humanitarian gesture is considered by those who are rendering it, as a highly merited spiritual fulfillment. *Cultivating the goodwill of people in the immediate neighbourhood of the disaster location and getting them involved is a key to the success of humanitarian actions, particularly in the case of proving emergency relief*. Unfortunately, these aspects are now compartmentalized as separate activities in the modern understanding of humanitarian services.

Humanitarian services today have taken a commercial slant and organized as multi-purpose enterprises using highly sophisticated methods to raise and disburse funds after disasters.   Greater the disaster the better it becomes for fund raising. We have also seen instances where 'humanitarian' organizations mushroom in the immediate aftermath of major disasters (like the recent Tsunami) as they open up avenues for accessing funds. Humanitarian service is no more a spiritually fulfilling undertaking,

instead it has become a very mechanical and competitive business and outputs from those services are decided on, by how much money is spent and the number of recipients. Over time these impersonal services have blunted the conscience of recipients. Recipients have increasingly become selfish, trying to maximize whatever individual assistance they can get from anyone (not minding depriving other victims) even if the assistance is of the same kind. Some even deny receiving relief items as a way of attracting more from whoever is willing to give. Humanitarian agencies working at the grassroots level leave with the satisfaction that donor funds have been well spent and therefore the mission is complete. *To what extent any intervention by an agency changed the life of the affected and how has it been beneficial or created adverse effects are not followed up (because such findings are not in the project definition and time frame) and what happens thereafter to those victims is immaterial.* How can we bring back personal touch to humanitarian actions? Could there be a coordinating mechanism for unifying humanitarian actions and follow up for maintaining institutional contributions and memories as part of continuing accountability?

Humanitarian services have also become so complicated and difficult to comprehend when humanitarian crises are deliberately created. Case in point is the invasion and aerial bombing (during the last decade or so) of peaceful countries giving the excuse of targeting terrorist and this results in enormous civilian casualties and displacements of civilians into refugee camps. Ironically, same countries that create these humanitarian crises are also the main funding sources for humanitarian services. Consequently, they are the ones determining who gets humanitarian services and who should be denied or allowed to die. Decisions on humanitarian services have become a political tool. Thus, the issues relating to protracting crisis, nature of conflict and disasters and peace building need to be discussed keeping these realities in mind.

During the discussion there were many suggestions on how to improve and make humanitarian services meaningful, such as the importance of humanitarians developing a personal touch with the victims, and towards this end there have been calls for humanitarian organizations to involve more local people in the team. In order to achieve this, involvement of religious leaders in the locality is a necessity, particularly in disaster affected areas where there is more than one religious/ethnic community. People usually assemble at religious shrines when overtaken by a disaster, and religious leaders still command the people's respect. In places where leaders of different religions have collaborated in needs assessment, relief delivery, post-disaster rehabilitation there had been more equity in terms services and peace was restored quickly. This is a resource that has not been fully utilized in humanitarian services. Such inter-faith groups leading every village can also contribute to anticipating crises and aid in dissipation before they become humanitarian flash points. Establishing inter-religious dialogue and how they can be used for humanitarian services needs further discussion.

Conclusion and Vote of Thanks

Mr. Faizer Khan
Country Director, Muslim Aid, Sri Lanka

Mr. Faizer Khan of Muslim Aid proposed a vote of thanks for the consultation, thanking all of those involved with making the National Consultation a success. On behalf of the organizing committee, he thanked Honourable Minister Dr.Harsha De Silva, Deputy Minister of Policy Planning and Economic Affairs; Mr.Bandusena, Secretary to the Ministry of Disaster Management; Dr.Ghassan Elkahlout from The Humanitarian Forum; moderators, Dr. Vinya Ariyarathna (Sarvodaya), Dr. Jehan Perara (NPC), Amjad Saleem, Mr. Jeewan Thiagarajah (CHA), and Ms. Annet Royce of SEWA Lanka; Dr. Saleem; rapturous Minoli de Soyza, Deepthi Herath, Kanthi Meegolla, and Sulochana Peiris; The Humanitarian Forum , Islamic Relief (IR), Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) , and Disaster Management centre (DMC); the management and staff of Bandaranaiyake Centre for International Studies; Mount Lavinia Hotel; Hashim and his team from CHA and Indika and Abdul from Muslim Aid; Kevin de Silva for his technical support; and lastly, the press and media for their coverage of this event.

Annexes

INVITATION

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies
in collaboration with **The Humanitarian Forum**
is pleased to invite

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for the

National Consultation

in preparation for the

World Humanitarian Summit 2016

on 10th June 2015 at 9:00 am

at the Auditorium

Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BCIS)
BMICH Bauddhaloka Mawatha
Colombo – 07

Chief Guest
Hon. Harsha De Silva MP
Deputy Minister, Policy Planning and Economic Affairs

Guest of Honor
Mr. W M Bandusena
Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management

RSVP:
Svetlana 0776601316 info@cha.lk
Sonali 0777314761 procoord@cha.lk
Indika 0773785452 indika@muslimaidsl.org

(Please be seated by 0850 hrs)

Meeting Agenda/progamme

Time	Programme	Facilitator / Speaker
08:45	Arrival of Guests & Registration	
09:15	Arrival of Chief Guest Lighting of the Oil Lamp & National Anthem	
09:25	Welcome Address	Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah
09:30	Introduction – The Humanitarian Forum	Dr. Ghassan Elkahlout
09:40	Humanitarian Services – Context of Sri Lanka	Dr. Mohammed Saleem
09:50	Address by Chief Guest	
10:00 - 12:15	**Plenary Sessions** Four parallel working groups	
	Group 1: Humanitarian effectiveness 1) Coordination 2) Supporting community needs 3) Empowering 4) Communication and collaboration – stakeholders 5) Private sector partnership 6) Changes to improve humanitarian coordination structure 7) Regional role	**Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah (CHA)**
	Group 2: Reducing Vulnerability, Managing Risk 1) Future threats and challenges – country and region 2) Role of humanitarian actors 3) Resilience 4) Reflect community priorities and needs 5) Funding and sustainability 6) Addressing urban disasters	**Ms. Annet Royce (Sevalanka)**
	Group 3: Transformation through innovation 1) Partnerships 2) Resilience strengthening 3) Empowering local innovators 4) Use of information and communication technologies 5) Adoption of new technologies 6) Logistics and delivery 7) Use of local markets 8) Feedback to affected communities 9) Innovative Solutions – Humanitarians	**Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne (Sarvodaya)** **Dr. Jehan Perera (National Peace Council)**
	Group 4: Serving the needs of people in Conflict 1) Role of the humanitarians - prevent the conflict from occurring. 2) Protecting reputation of neutrality, impartiality and inclusivity. 3) Internal organisational changes in conflict settings. 4) Transition - Humanitarian to early recovery and then to development programmes in conflict settings.	**Mr. Amjad Saleem**
12:15 - 13:15	**Lunch** – Mihikatha Medura Canopy	
13:15 - 14:45	**Plenary** - Four groups will formulate recommendations and findings	
14:45 - 15:00	Tea	
15:00 - 16:00	Group Presentations (15 minutes each per group for presentation and questions)	Moderators
16:00	Organizational /Individual action plan and feedback	Dr M. Saleem – Chief Moderator
16:30	Conclusion and Vote of Thanks	Muslim Aid

Agencies in Attendance

Government Representation

Disaster Management Center

Divisional Secretariat Kayts

Hambantota District Secretariat

Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS)

Ministry of Disaster Management

Ministry of Policy Planning and Economic Development

National Building Research Organization

National Disaster Relief Service Centre

National Youth Service Council

Sri Lanka Comprehensive Disaster Management Programe (SLCDMP)

Sri Lanka Youth

Private Sector and Individuals

3y Net Youth Group

Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (representing the private sector and their membership)

Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Yarlpanam (CCIY)

Dialog Axiata PLC

Meezan Sri Lanka

Mr. A. Francis

Mr. H. C. M.Ibrahim

Mr N. M. Farhan

Mr. U. L. Ali Zakky

North-East Interfaith Forum for Reconciliation (NEIFR)

Humanitarian & UN Agencies

Al-Furqan Islamic Foundation

Ampara District - Muslim League

Batticaloa Inayam

Casimiyya Arabic College

Centre for Children's Happiness

Centre for Policy Alternative

Centre for Social Reform (CSR) Trincomalee

Christian Alliance for Social Action

Church of Ceylon (Anglican)

Civil Citizens Council, Batticaloa District

Community Centre, Jaffna

Community Protection Network (CPN)

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA)

District Disaster Management Coordination Units (DDMCU) - AUSAID (Campus)

Diakonia

Edens Organization

Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka

Family Rehabilitation Centre

Forut

Gandhi Seva Sangam

Institute of Human Rights

International Alert

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Islamic Relief Sri Lanka

Jamsth Islam

Lanka Evangelical Alliance Development Service

Laughing Waters

Mahathma Ghandi Centre

MJF Charitable Foundation

Muslim Aid

Muslim Foundation for Culture and Development (MCFD)

National Institute for Paraplegics (NIP)

National Peace Council

People Rural Development Association

Plantation Rural Education and Development Organization (PREDO)

SAFE Foundation

Samasewaya Anuradhapura

Sarvodaya

SERVE

Sewalanka Foundation

Society for Welfare of Children & Women

Sri Lanka Centre for Development Facilitation (SLCDF)

Thiyahie Charitable Trust (TCT)

United Nations

United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

United Nation World Food Programme (UNWFP)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Women and Media Collective (WMC)

Women in Need (WIN)

Women Organization for Development, Equality, Peace and Temperance (WODEPT)

Women Rural Development Societies (WRDS)

Women's Entrepreneurship Development Foundation

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Vison

ZOA Sri Lanka

Discussion Questions/Surveys Used

Humanitarian effectiveness

- What steps you propose to strengthen the accountability of humanitarian assistance?
- What are the best practices you can adopt to enhance the local and national level responses to emergencies?
- What models (guidelines, standards and code of conduct) you can propose for engagement in different contexts?
- What mechanisms you can suggest to support better inter-operability among actors engaged in humanitarian action?
- How can you/ your organization make humanitarian action more effective?
- How can the humanitarian community make better use of organizing data so that that it can be used efficiently for actors to respond to people's needs?

Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risks

- What are the steps you can suggest for humanitarian preparedness and response?
- How can you better manage predictable and recurrent shocks?
- What behavioral and investment changes are needed to manage future uncertainties and unprecedented shocks?
- Tell us how you can effectively be prepared and mange conflict-induced displacement and how to cope and adapt to the recurrent shocks faced in protracted, conflict affected settings?
- How can you support to address the rising risk of humanitarian need in urban areas?
- What changes you suggest to current financing mechanisms to enhance preparedness and risk management?

Transformation through Innovation

- What are the ethical standards and principles needed for humanitarian innovation?
- How bottom-up innovation by affected communities can be enhance empowerment, self-reliance and resilience?
- How to promote an open innovation culture across the entire humanitarian ecosystem with great scope and incentives for new partnerships and collaboration?
- How to improve organizational learning within organizations to enable piloting and scaling of good ideas?
- What are successful models for moving innovations to scale (also from models beyond the humanitarian sector)?
- What are current roles and opportunities for new forms of donorship and financing of humanitarian innovation? How could funding be better utilized to support transformation of the humanitarian system through innovation?
- What are Emerging practices within non-traditional humanitarian actors – including the private sector and the military that could be better applied and matched to fill specific gaps to support humanitarian action?
- What Emerging models from beyond the humanitarian sector – particularly among actors that

do not necessarily define themselves as humanitarians (or solely humanitarian organizations) on how to best manage innovation which can be applied to resolve humanitarian challenges?

Serving the needs of people in Conflict

- What are the particular needs of people affected by conflicts?

- What principles and professional standards that guide humanitarian action in conflict?

- In your opinion how should humanitarian action in conflicts look like in order to better meet the needs of people?

List of speakers/Moderators/Rapporteurs

Speakers

- Dr. Ghassan Elkahlout, Advisor, The Humanitarian Forum

- Dr. Mohammed Saleem, President, Mahatma Gandhi Centre

- Mr. W.M. Bandusena, Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management

- Hon. Dr. Harsha de Silva, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Policy Planning and Economic Affairs

- Mr. Faizer Khan, Country director, Muslim Aid, Sri Lanka

Moderators

- Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies

- Ms. Annet Royce, Sevalanka

- Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, Sarvodaya

- Mr. Amjad Saleem, International Alert

Rapporteurs

- Ms. Deepthi Herath

- Ms. Kanthi Perera

- Ms. Sulochana Pieris

- Ms. Minoli de Soysa