

World Humanitarian Action Forum (WHAF) Project Concept Note

SUMMARY

Project title: World Humanitarian Action Forum - Bridging the Gaps

Project type: Biennial forum (every 2 years)

Project 1st main event: November 28th 2017, QE2 Conference Centre, London, UK

Overall Aim: To enhance partnership and coordination amongst humanitarian actors and share effective humanitarian practices and responses. This will be achieved by initiating a biennial Humanitarian Action Forum tackling pertinent issues especially those affecting local and national NGOs from the Southern hemisphere.

BACKGROUND

- Since January 2014, and as part of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) process, The Humanitarian Forum (THF) has been working with partners across the globe to reassess the current humanitarian system. The process involved collecting analysis from a variety of stakeholders including affected communities, the private sector, government representatives, INGOs, national NGOs and grass roots organisations. Together with our partners in 35 countries, we organised 39 consultations in which nearly 2,000 representatives of national and local humanitarian NGOs participated. The purpose of these meetings was to gauge perspectives on how to improve the humanitarian system, and make their voices heard on international platforms.
- THF found that the multiple, parallel humanitarian crises of the last decade imposed several challenges to the traditional humanitarian system. International humanitarian organisations have encountered constraints to their access, an urgent need to adapt their programmes and a greater need for increased funding. At the same time, 'non-traditional' actors have had a great impact. Recent crises have been close in geographical location and time and so provided an opportunity for non-traditional actors to fill the gap as they responded sooner than the international community, utilised better links into the local community, and understood informal governance structures. The formal humanitarian system has traditionally been led by United Nations initiatives, funded by a relatively small number of wealthy countries and managed by those actors together with several large international NGOs. That no weight is given to the capabilities and impact of organisations in the so called 'global South' assumes a weak local or regional humanitarian community in terms of scale, principles and coordination. Evidence shows that 'Southern'

humanitarian agencies have demonstrated outstanding work in volatile areas. There are scores of NGOs that provide humanitarian assistance in many parts of the world. Despite excellent individual work by humanitarian actors, there remains room for improvement. There is, for example, a self-confessed lack of coordination and a focus on humanitarian work at the expense of development work.

- Despite increasingly open political contexts taking shape across parts of the Southern hemisphere, civil society organizations (CSOs) still have only limited influence on policy. The reasons for this vary, but factors include a lack of capacity from project staff, lack of sufficient funding, gaps in knowledge of the policy processes, and a shortage of time available for their staff to engage in policy issues – as well as a lack of willingness in many countries to allow CSOs to engage in policy processes. CSOs need to improve their ability to communicate effectively and to present their findings in an accessible, timely fashion. This would help to articulate the needs of the communities they represent and increase the ability of CSOs to obtain funding and support. Many CSOs consider networking as key to the success of their policy engagement; through information sharing, learning and communicating with other actors. However, CSOs do not work together often enough, which is perhaps due to the fear of competition for funding and influence. Further constraints in coordination between CSOs, researchers and policymakers are because their priorities and incentives do not always align.
- Collective agreement is required on regional priorities and mechanisms for organising humanitarian responses that promote long-term thinking. For NGOs, there is a clear recognition of the need to better connect with other responses through operational partnerships. Building a broader support base through engagement with more diverse stakeholders is essential to strengthen the acceptance, perception and relevance of humanitarian aid. There is also a need to invest more in the workforce and the way in which NGOs manage, support and retain staff. Striking the right balance between diversity, developing leadership and striving for the highest professional standards is crucial in a workforce that is increasingly required to respond in highly complex and demanding contexts.
- To keep the momentum flowing for reinforced partnership and coordination amongst humanitarian actors in the ‘South’ and ‘North’ post WHS 2016 and to ensure enhanced coherence in humanitarian response, THF proposes the establishment of the **World Humanitarian Action Forum to facilitate communication and collaboration between key stakeholders and increasing effectiveness in policy engagement strategies.**

APPROACH – the added value

World Humanitarian Action Forum (WHAF) is not a new organization, it is an initiative to better coordinate humanitarian work and address common issues affecting the sector.

Other key aspects of the initiative is that it will be;

- **Action orientated**
 - Agreed themes that members will commit to action with monitoring and evaluation.
- **Managed by partners**
 - An effective balance of representatives between South and North to be ensured.
 - Working Group members (partners) to steer the initiative
- **To develop joint campaigns & Initiatives**
 - The partners will agree on joint campaigns and issues to address throughout the year thus facilitating improved coordination and cooperation in humanitarian work

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Vision: Effective humanitarian work that better serves beneficiaries

Overall Aim: To enhance partnership and coordination among humanitarian actors from the North and South and share effective humanitarian practices and responses.

Objectives

- 1) Develop strategies for informing policy on key issues affecting humanitarian organisations particularly those from the global south
- 2) Develop joint initiatives and campaigns for collaborative working at local, national and international levels

Activities throughout the two years (post- WHAF 2017)

- Follow up on recommendations and actions from WHAF 2017
- Carry out consultations and events to address the following issues:
 - Review the recommendations of the World Humanitarian Summit.
 - Environment and climate change.
 - Women and youth.
 - Conflicts and communities.
 - Diseases and epidemics.
 - De-risking and its impact on the effectiveness of humanitarian work

- **Advocacy:** Jointly tackle key issues affecting the humanitarian sector and especially those impacting on the work of Southern NGOs
- **Partnership and Networking:** Bring together experts from humanitarian and non-humanitarian organisations, such as those from the public and private sectors
- **Learning and Information Sharing:** Discuss and exchange experiences, new trends and innovations in humanitarian aid and development.
- **Visibility:** Increase the visibility of both local and international humanitarian work and that of CSOs in particular. Support leaders of southern NGOs to position their organizations at the international platforms
- **Capacity strengthening:** Provide members with the latest news, the trends, innovations and success stories, effective and innovative implementation approaches through formal and informal training programmes.

WHAF 2017

The main themes chosen for the first WHAF are:

- A. **De-risking and financial access:** Impact on the work of NGOs
- B. **Localisation agenda:** Sustainable investment and core capacity
- C. **Conflicts and crises:** Forced migration, coordinated response and protection (GBV focus)

Each theme will attempt to make reference to the relevant UN SDG/s and WHS commitments.

PROPOSED PROGRAMME

World Humanitarian Action Forum 2017			
8:00 – 9:00	Registration		
9:00 – 9:30	Welcome and opening remarks		
9:30 – 10:30	Introduction to the program and roundtables		
10:30 – 11:00	Break		
Session 1 11:00 – 12:30	Roundtable A Session 1	Roundtable B Session 1	Roundtable C Session 1
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break		
Session 2 13:30– 15:00	Roundtable A Session 2	Roundtable B Session 2	Roundtable C Session 2
15:00 - 15:30	Tea Break		
Session 3 15:30 – 17:00	Roundtable A Session 3	Roundtable B Session 3	Roundtable C Session 3
Final Session 17:00 – 18:00	Feedback on Session Outcomes		
	Final Statement		

Roundtable themes and Steering Groups:

The themes of the Roundtables have been put together by a number of lead organisations and several supporting organisations. Each Roundtable has a steering group which met regularly to discuss the content, structure and objectives of their topic. The topics of each roundtable were shared with a wider network of organisations than those mentioned below

A: De-risking & financial access: Shared risk, Shared responsibility

Led by Humanitarian Policy Group at The Overseas Development Institute (ODI), The Humanitarian Forum and The London School of Economics, and supported by Islamic Relief Worldwide, Al Rayan Bank, Human Appeal, Al Khair Foundation, Human Security Collective, Charity & Security Network, The Norwegian Refugee Council, Muslim Charities Forum

B: Localisation agenda

Led by the NEAR Network and supported by The Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Christian Aid, CAFOD, British Red Cross,

C: Conflicts and Crises

Islamic Relief Worldwide and supported by Disasters Emergency Committee

Session plan: The 'Triple P' Approach

Session 1: The Problem - To identify and highlight the problem/s

Session 2: The Practice - To share models of good practice, experiences and solutions

Session 3: The Policy - To agree on recommendations to inform policy and action

Who is it for?

Representatives from INGOs, local and national NGOs from the so called 'global South', Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, public sector officials, philanthropists, donors, academia, media.

Speakers:

We will have a number of keynote speakers and panellists sharing their experiences on these key issues. That said WHAF is not a conference but a Forum consisting of 3 Roundtables for delegates to take part in and contribute to the conversation and follow up actions.

Venue & Date

The Queen Elizabeth II Centre, London, United Kingdom

Tuesday 28th November 2017

WHAF Partners

The World Humanitarian Action Forum 2017 brings together over 35 different organisations to shape and contribute to the key discussions affecting the humanitarian sector.

In partnership with:



In collaboration with:



WHAF SECRETARIAT CONTACT INFORMATION

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