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Managing crises together: towards coherence and complementarity in recurrent and protracted crises

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Background and acknowledgments

This paper was written by Samuel Carpenter of the British Red Cross (BRC) and Christina Bennett of the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). It is one of three commissioned by the British Red Cross for the World Humanitarian Summit. The papers draw on International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement ('the Movement') policies, practices and perspectives to provide reflections on key thematic issues of relevance to the Summit. While informed by the work of the Movement, the papers do not constitute an official position of the Movement.*

* The development of this paper was informed by a roundtable discussion hosted by the British Red Cross and HPG in London on 9 June 2015, involving 21 participants from UN agencies, the Movement, international NGOs, think tanks and independent consultants. Comments on an earlier draft of the paper were gratefully received from Nick Harvey (World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat), Sandra Aviles (FAO), Jan Kellelt (UNDP), Simon Levine (HPG) and Sorcha O'Callaghan (BRC).

Key messages

- Recurrent disasters and protracted conflict and displacement are barriers to sustainable development; they undermine recovery and resilience, whilst slow development progress can trigger a relapse and magnify the impact of crises.
- Recurrent and protracted crises are distinct in important ways: what is feasible and desirable in terms of increasing coherence between humanitarian action and development cooperation will differ significantly depending on the crisis context.
- The World Humanitarian Summit provides an opportunity to build on a series of important and closely related post-2015 global development policy processes, addressing key gaps such as conflict and building on promising practice in the management of crises.
- This paper calls for a collective approach to crisis management, outlining a series of suggestions to increase coherence and complementarity amongst humanitarian and development actors and activities.

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These include: joint planning, context and capacity assessments, more responsive and timely programming to assist people affected by shocks, proactive engagement with the state where possible and appropriate and more predictable, flexible and diversified arrangements for financing crisis management.

- To enable this, the wider aid community must seek to minimise its conceptual and structural divides, in part by forging more coherence across the various post-2015 policy agendas, and by creating greater financial, organisational and career incentives to promote more joined up ways of working.

Introduction

Hundreds of millions of people are affected by recurrent and protracted crises every year (FAO, 2014). In addition to massive human suffering, these crises are undermining sustainable development: the World Bank estimates regional losses from the conflict in Syria at close to \$35 billion (Ianchovichhina, 2014). At the same time, driven in part by climate change, disasters are increasing in frequency and severity – there have been three food crises in the Sahel in the past ten years, rather than one per decade before (IPCC, 2012; UNDP et al., 2014). Looking ahead, it is estimated that up to 325 million extremely poor people will be living in the most hazard-prone countries in 2030, many of them in fragile and conflict-affected states (Shepherd et al., 2013).

Recurrent crises act as a barrier to sustainable development by undermining long-term recovery and resilience, whilst protracted crises block development progress. In both, slow development progress can trigger a relapse into crisis and magnify the impact on vulnerable people. While both recurrent and protracted crises involve high levels of acute need alongside long-term structural vulnerabilities, they are distinct in important ways. Recurrent crises occur in areas of chronic poverty, exposure and vulnerability, where predictable (primarily natural hazard-related) shocks trigger repeated humanitarian crises (USAID, 2012). As such, both short- and longer-term responses to recurrent crises tend to focus on activities that aim to support government efforts to improve the ability of communities and individuals to withstand disasters and other shocks and stresses. Protracted crises, on the other hand, occur where a significant proportion of the population is vulnerable to death and disruption of their livelihoods or access to basic services due to armed conflict or displacement, and where the state

has limited capacity or willingness to meet people's protection and assistance needs (Harmer and Macrae, 2004). Such situations call for approaches that consider the complex political dynamics at play, and may require humanitarian agencies to work outside of state structures. Different still are protracted crises that result in long-term displacement across regions, which may require working with host governments, regional organisations and multilateral development banks.

Since the 1990s there have been attempts to better align relief and development work. Initiatives based on the notion of a linear 'transition' from relief to development sought to link relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) through a sequential handover of responsibility, activities and funds. The recent focus on strengthening resilience prompted new thinking on better integrating humanitarian and development approaches based on a common understanding of risk. The increased policy attention to fragile states has given rise to efforts by donors to link political, security, development and humanitarian objectives and activities, including through 'whole of government' approaches that seek to address security, state-building and development in poorly performing countries through more joined-up institutional and funding arrangements.

Such approaches to improve coherence between humanitarian and development activities have been impeded by different timeframes, a bifurcated architecture and fundamental differences in culture, values, structures and ways of working between the humanitarian and development communities – and within them (Mosel and Levine, 2014). This applies to differences within the 'development sector', which includes economists, agronomists, urban planners, peace- and state-building specialists and climate change specialists, all of whom have different approaches and ways of working, as well as differences within organisations where humanitarian and development professionals often work in isolation from each other.

While the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognise the relationship between shocks, disasters and poverty (Jones and Bahadur, 2013), and the Financing for Development (FfD) negotiations have highlighted the importance of disaster resilience to sustainable development, a tendency to see humanitarian crises as (often highly sensitive) outlier events, rather than the consequences of developmental,

human rights or political failures, has meant that neither process has explicitly acknowledged the importance of relief–development connections, and neither has called for strategies, policies, actions and funds that work across relief and development actors and activities.¹ Similarly, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction makes no reference to conflict and its impacts on vulnerability, risk and sustainable development. Clearly, more needs to be done to place issues around recurrent and protracted crises squarely on the development agenda, and to improve the collective management of such situations.

As the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) follows the agreement of these post-2015 global policy processes, there is an opportunity to build on them as well as to highlight promising practice emerging on the ground. This could culminate in an explicit recognition of the importance of increasing coherence and complementarity between humanitarian and development actors and activities in an agreement at the Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, and the development of an agenda for action to strengthen these connections through collective crisis management following the Summit (WHS Secretariat, 2015).

This paper is intended to feed into the WHS Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risk Theme, specifically the action area on recurrent and protracted crises. It explores some of the fundamental issues preventing improved coherence between the activities of humanitarian actors, development agencies and governments, as well as other aid actors, the private sector and communities.

Planning and financing

Tackling the underlying drivers of disaster risk, protracted conflict and displacement should be at the heart of *both* short-term crisis management *and* long-term risk management strategies. From a crisis management perspective, this requires a collective approach that enables the targeted, appropriate and coordinated use of humanitarian, development, climate change and other aid instruments and activities, based on a common understanding of the context, risks and requirements on the ground and a rational division of

labour according to available capacity and expertise. This section examines ways to move towards collective crisis management through planning and financing tools that focus on the importance of collective vision (understanding risk, context and capacities) and action (based on expertise and complementarity); programmes that start by examining underlying vulnerability and that respond to shocks, stresses and changes in the crisis context in a timely manner; and the flexible financing arrangements necessary to deliver this. Beyond engaging operationally in collective crisis management, humanitarian actors, where appropriate and in consideration of humanitarian principles, also need to encourage others to do more to address the root causes of recurrent and protracted crises. This includes preventing the accumulation of risk in the most hazard-prone countries and pursuing political solutions to protracted conflict and displacement.

Beyond understanding risk: the importance of collective crisis management

In recent years, significant advances have been made in assessing the risk, and thus improving early warning of, humanitarian crises, particularly natural hazard disasters. The World Bank's biannual Understanding Risk Forum, bringing together thousands of climate and hazard scientists, insurance companies, open data specialists and aid professionals, highlights the range and quality of risk information currently available. The humanitarian sector too is making important strides in crisis anticipation, for example with INFORM, a global, open-source risk assessment tool for both disasters and conflict-related crises, providing information on hazard exposure, vulnerability and coping capacity in order to support prioritisation and decision-making about investment in different aspects of crisis prevention, preparedness and response.²

While improving understanding of risk and conflict early warning are vital to improving the effectiveness of preparedness and development investments, on its own estimating the risk of humanitarian crises is not enough. Assisting people affected by recurrent and protracted crises requires reorienting approaches towards collective crisis management. This involves gaining a clear understanding of the context, the specific requirements of a crisis and the available capacities to meet needs

1 See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf> and <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/1ds-zero-draft-outcome.pdf>.

2 INFORM is a collaboration of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team for Preparedness and Resilience and the European Commission. See <http://www.inform-index.org>.

on the ground, beginning with joint assessments that consider the activities of at-risk and affected people, local organisations, state institutions and businesses, regional organisations and international aid agencies.

In recurrent crises this is likely to require a high level of government leadership and involvement, utilising international capacity only as a last resort to augment national and local capabilities. In protracted crises, particularly in sensitive conflict situations, engagement of the state and other political, peace and security actors may need to be more limited. In large-scale regional displacement crises the state is likely to be a core player in any collective effort to manage the crisis. For example, the Syria Crisis Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan – or 3RP – is a promising initiative which has sought to better involve and support states hosting large refugee communities in the development and delivery of longer-term and more sustainable response plans. This has involved increased attention to the needs of host communities and greater support for the host government's contribution to the response, particularly through basic service delivery.³

Any collective effort to manage recurrent crises requires joint planning and results frameworks (based on common objectives and outcomes, not individual agencies' activities and outputs) for ongoing preparedness, response and risk management interventions. Such joint planning could facilitate a rational division of labour across the full range of community, local, national, regional and international actors. Developing common objectives, outcomes and theories of change would be an important step in supporting joint planning and improving coherence between humanitarian, development, climate change and other actors (Bayat-Renoux and Glemarec, 2014).

Progress in this area has been made in the Sahel, where ten countries have moved to multi-year appeals which incorporate a strong resilience component and a greater concentration on coherence with development activities.⁴ Models such as the Global Alliance for Drought Resilience in the Horn of Africa and AGIR in the Sahel are also examples of attempts to improve complementarity between the activities of different actors, at different levels (from community to local

authorities to national government and international agencies). The OECD's Resilience Systems Analysis tool, which has been piloted in eastern DRC, Lebanon and Somalia, is another example of a collective approach to crisis management planning. The tool attempts to more effectively translate resilience from a political concept into a practical approach to designing a roadmap for interventions to increase the ability of different levels of society to withstand shocks and stresses without compromising people's long-term prospects.⁵ In Lebanon, for example, the roadmap informed the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan's focus on investment in basic services and social welfare systems and job creation.

In protracted crises, a focus on collective action should lead us from thinking about linking or bridging actors and activities to the targeted, appropriate and coordinated use of humanitarian and development instruments and activities, in line with the sort of common risk, context and capacity analyses set out above. This is not to question the distinctiveness or principles of humanitarian action. Instead, the question is what intervention is most needed, and when. Sometimes this will be activities delivered by humanitarian agencies, sometimes it will be development cooperation and often it will be the activities of local associations, the private sector and faith-based organisations (Carpenter et al., 2012). Ultimately, the decision as to which actors and activities are required at what time to meet the needs of affected and at-risk people should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Shock-responsive programming

An important component of collective crisis management is a recognition that crisis response should be dynamic and able to adapt to fluid crisis situations as they evolve. Risks should not be treated as outliers, confined to the risks and assumptions column of the log frame. Instead, they should form the basis on which monitoring indicators are set, and guide the intervention logic of both development and humanitarian programmes. Approaches and tools are being developed to improve decision-making to enable more flexible responses to slow-onset shocks.⁶ These

3 See <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/the-3rp/strategic-overview>.

4 This includes the Sahel regional response plan and the nine specific country appeals within the region (Swithern, 2015).

5 See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/risk-resilience.htm>.

6 For example, the Situation and Response Analysis Framework, developed by Oxfam, Save the Children UK and Concern (see <http://www.sraf-guidelines.org>) and operational research led by IFRC, in partnership with Save the Children, Oxfam, FAO and WFP, on mechanisms for rapid decision-making in drought preparedness and response (IFRC, 2014b).

developments have been facilitated by the increased use of cash transfer programming, which provides opportunities to make assistance more responsive to increases in the levels of need, with either the size or frequency of transfers increased to meet emerging needs before they diminish assets, trigger distress strategies and threaten lives.

Similarly, shock-responsive social protection mechanisms that can flex to take on increased needs or new beneficiaries in times of acute crisis could potentially make a major contribution to managing risk and mitigating impacts, particularly in recurrent crises. If action can be taken earlier, acute humanitarian needs will be reduced, while longer-term support may help to move people out of chronic vulnerability and extreme poverty into more stable and sustainable livelihoods. Building on Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), specifically its Risk Financing Mechanism, which enables it to increase transfers to address transitory food insecurity more quickly than is possible through humanitarian appeals (see Hobson and Campbell, 2012),⁷ there is significant interest from donors and humanitarian and development agencies in how other government-led safety net mechanisms can be scaled up (i.e. through increased transfer amounts, more transfers or new beneficiaries) to facilitate more rapid responses to recurrent crises (Slater and Bhuvanendra, 2014).

In recent crises, however, the available evidence shows that the process of aligning longer-term development and crisis caseloads and objectives can be complicated (Slater and Bhuvanendra, 2014). Safety nets, like those in Ethiopia and Kenya, that target the chronically poor and respond to natural hazard disasters, are likely to be better placed than those targeted at older people, for example, to scale up to meet the needs of those hardest hit by a crisis. It may also be easier for safety nets to scale up by providing more money to the same people who are already receiving longer-term support, as opposed to providing assistance to new people, as this requires pre-crisis poverty assessments and monitoring beyond those already assessed and targeted for longer-term support (Slater and Bhuvanendra,

2014; Bastagli, 2014). Moreover, arriving at approaches to social protection that deliver on both the aims of government and development agencies on the one hand, and humanitarians on the other, may be challenging given that humanitarian agencies tends to focus on measures to guarantee relief from and avert deprivation, and are less concerned with those focused on enhancing real incomes and capabilities and addressing social equity and exclusion (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Shock-responsive social protection holds great promise in recurrent crises, but it is important for those promoting it to be alive to the challenges of designing effective systems.

In protracted crises, and conflict-affected situations more generally, formal, government-led social protection coverage is typically weak, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, due to limited institutional capacity and information and insecurity and associated access constraints, which prevent the delivery of predictable and regular transfers (Carpenter et al., 2012). Much more work is needed to understand the necessary preconditions for developing effective social protection systems in protracted crises, including whether developing shock-responsive or risk management mechanisms is desirable and, if so, at what stage (Harvey and Holmes, 2007). Even in richer countries with very large humanitarian expenditures and large-scale social protection programmes (Iraq and Pakistan, for example), there is little experience or experimentation with using social protection programmes for emergency responses (Slater and Bhuvanendra, 2014; Bastagli with Holmes, 2014).

Despite these challenges, this is an area ripe for exploration as a means to promote greater coherence between humanitarian and development actors and activities, especially following the inclusion of a target on the development of 'social protection floors'⁸ and a focus on 'leaving no one behind' in the draft SDGs.⁹ The WHS should build on this and call for the scale-up of shock-responsive safety nets in recurrent

7 When the PSNP's Risk Financing Mechanism was triggered in August 2011, funds were disbursed six weeks after the request was made, with additional assistance delivered to 6.5m existing PSNP clients and 3.1m people who did not receive PSNP assistance in normal years. The humanitarian appeal, launched in March 2011, took until the following December to achieve 94% funding (Hobson and Campbell, 2012).

8 Social protection floors, as defined by the International Labour Organisation, are 'nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees that should ensure, as a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security'. See <http://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/policy-development-and-applied-research/social-protection-floor/lang-en/index.htm>.

9 See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf>.

crises (where appropriate),¹⁰ with built-in research and evidence components. In protracted crises, and in recurrent crises with weak or non-existent social protection systems, greater investment in traditional, non-shock-responsive safety nets or social protection systems should be considered.

Financing collective crisis management

Collective crisis management requires coordinated, predictable and responsive financing arrangements. There is a need for more flexible arrangements not only to fund humanitarian and development activities, but also to finance a more agile approach to the management of recurrent and protracted crises. There is no single right option for financing collective crisis management. Instead, what is required is a mix of traditional and non-traditional tools, including multi-year humanitarian funding or commitments; more flexible application of donor funds across budget lines or sources (for example development and climate finance) and devolution of donor decision-making to the country level to promote more timely and informed response decisions; new modes of interaction with and instruments within multilateral development banks and agencies to facilitate early investment in protracted crises; and greater understanding and use of non-humanitarian and non-aid resources for crisis management.

The increased use of multi-year humanitarian funding (moving from one-year appeals and budgets to plans of up to five years) would allow for greater flexibility and efficiency in response to both recurrent and protracted crises. There is some evidence from the food assistance sector that response times can be halved through predictable, multi-year funding, while commodity procurement costs can be reduced by up to a third (Cabot Venton, 2012). Such arrangements might also provide programme managers with the foresight and flexibility necessary to preposition supplies and scale up programme activities to address shocks and stresses as they arise, as well as providing the predictable funding necessary for longer-term efforts to strengthen the capacity of local humanitarian actors (McElhinney, 2014; Cabot Venton, 2013).

If multi-year humanitarian funding is to be rolled out at scale, more empirical evidence is needed on its efficacy and how it can best be used, particularly

in terms of facilitating relevant, timely and effective humanitarian action, not simply dragging humanitarian action into a substitutive role to fill gaps in development funding and activities.¹¹ Beyond individual agency funding agreements, there is also a need for increased funding for joint context and capacity analysis to consider risks and benefits and available expertise.

In recurrent crises in particular, a more holistic and anticipatory approach to financing activities is needed, with greater coherence across sources of finance and diversification in terms of financing approaches. Recent research on preparedness financing, for example, shows that it is significantly fragmented, undermining collective action and potential efficiency gains. Resources for preparedness should focus on strengthening the capacity of national and local actors to respond to a range of hazards, including natural hazards and conflict (Kellett and Peters, 2014).

Flexibility in international aid instruments can be facilitated through contingency funding or so-called ‘program modifiers’¹² (which can also be part of multi-year funding arrangements),¹³ allowing relatively small amounts of funding to be re-allocated across development, emergency and recovery activities as situations evolve, without the usual restrictions on moving between different budget lines. Devolving decision-making within donor agencies from headquarters to the country level can also help with the timely initiation of early response activities, for example commercial destocking and measures to improve animal condition for pastoralists affected by drought crises (Cabot Venton et al., 2012). Financing mechanisms (both traditional aid and insurance-based) that are automatically triggered by early warning/forecasts, particularly for flood risk (see Coughlan de Perez et al., 2014) or livelihoods impact assessments in areas at risk of drought also hold significant promise for improving the timeliness of assistance in recurrent

11 A major study is currently under way to evaluate DFID’s multi-year approaches to humanitarian action in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Sudan. For the evaluation’s inception report see Gray et al. (2015).

12 Program modifiers are adapted versions of what USAID previously called crisis modifiers. They are defined as a ‘provision included in a funding mechanism that is designed to allow flexibility without the need for modification to the mechanism’. See <http://usaidlearninglab.org/learning-guide/example-program-modifier>.

13 See Hillier (2012).

10 For further information on enhancing the ability of social protection systems to respond to crises see Bastagli (2014) and McCord (2013).

crises (Poole, 2014). As highlighted in the work of the Future Humanitarian Financing Initiative, '[a]n added advantage of the early release of funding on the basis of pre-agreed triggers is the possibility of making low-key resource transfers without the need for high-profile humanitarian fundraising efforts, which are sometimes politically unacceptable for affected governments' (Poole, 2015: 7).

In protracted crises, what Leader and Colenso (2005: 12) call the 'standard model' – the traditional move from funding individual agency projects under a consolidated appeal to support for specific sectors and then general government budget support – is not fit for purpose, and the tools used to bridge this transition, Multi-Donor Trust Funds and Sector-Wide Approaches, are often slow, inefficient or absent. In middle-income countries in particular, the financing tools of multilateral development banks and actors are ill-suited to crisis management because development actors and banks invest in middle-income countries for very different reasons, and using very different tools, than in least developed countries (Scott, 2015). It is therefore important that dialogue with multilateral development banks, helping them to see opportunities to protect economic and social progress through the adaptation of their tools and approaches, occurs as early as possible. The use of instruments such as concessional loans for improving infrastructure, for example, can help absorb requirements associated with both refugee inflows and future population growth (Scott, 2015).¹⁴

Proposals to address this situation within the WHS consultations have focused on top-down measures such as dedicated liaison points for joint engagement in crises from the outset, regular assessments of the economic and social impacts of crises and periodic briefings on progress by humanitarian agencies and development banks to each other's governing bodies. While such directives would be an important step forward, it is the culture and incentives within organisations that are critical to transformative change, a point we return to in the following section.

Climate change adaptation finance is another tool that could provide resources at the scale necessary to make a major contribution to efforts to address recurrent crises.

With developed countries committed to mobilising \$100 billion a year from public and private sources by 2020 (around four times the current level of humanitarian financing), humanitarian actors (both donors and operational agencies) need to better understand how to tap into climate finance,¹⁵ where appropriate, and to advocate for its use to address the root causes of humanitarian crises by preventing the accumulation of risk in countries most prone to climate hazards.

Financing collective crisis management also requires thinking not only beyond humanitarian funding, but also beyond the charity model. Remittances, for example, are a significant source of financing, totalling \$436 billion in 2015 (over three times ODA) (World Bank, 2015). Humanitarian agencies could explore ways to advocate for reducing the cost of remittance flows from diasporas in times of crises,¹⁶ reducing the vulnerability of the remittance sector to closures or restrictions due to concerns about counter-terrorism legislation and seeking closer alignment between diaspora and aid-based contributions. Remittance flows can also be vital to meeting the needs of affected people in protracted crises where international agencies do not have reliable access, as in Somalia, although it should be recognised that they do not always reach the most vulnerable as the poorest households may not be able to afford to send a relative overseas (Hammond et al., 2011). Other types of resource flow include commercial savings, loans and insurance, social/humanitarian impact bonds, welfare payments and temporary or subsidised access to goods and services. More evidence and analysis is needed to investigate the potential of these mechanisms and how they might best work in tandem with humanitarian aid.

In recurrent crises, international humanitarian agencies also need to be more disciplined about when and how they respond, augmenting and not overriding national and local capacity. This will reduce the likelihood of moral hazard (i.e. the likelihood that the at-risk state will not invest in disaster risk management institutions and programmes because it can fall back on the international humanitarian community, which will fly

¹⁴ Concessional loans are repaid on more generous terms than market loans, with either or both reduced interest rates or extended grace periods prior to repayment (Scott, 2015).

¹⁵ For an introduction to the current climate finance landscape and considerations for humanitarian organisations seeking to access climate finance see IFRC (2013).

¹⁶ Africa's diaspora pays on average 12% to send \$200 – almost double the global average. Reducing charges to the 5% G8 target would increase transfers by up to \$2.3 billion annually (Waktins and Quattri, 2014).

in times of disaster), increasing discipline on the part of governments and development actors to enhance response capacity and risk management efforts (Poole, 2015). Moreover, by adequately resourcing domestic disaster management institutions and programmes from domestic revenues in countries prone to recurrent crises, and by avoiding excessive reliance on international donors, national governments will be poised to more fully steer emergency relief within their territories (Zyck, 2015). By the same token, outreach and advocacy with development partners and the public and private sectors on risk-informed programming and investments will remain vital to the prudent management of humanitarian resources.

Getting the incentives right: making the case for collective crisis management

While improvements to planning and financing are vital, making the case for collective crisis management goes well beyond technical solutions. Many of the impediments preventing collective action strike at the very foundations of humanitarian and development work – the assumptions, principles and incentives inherent in each sector’s approaches and ways of working. The solutions, therefore, involve questioning these foundations and finding ways to reorient them towards more complementary action.

Cultural differences

Despite countless coordination mechanisms and tools to bring together humanitarian and development agendas, meaningful and substantive interactions between humanitarian and development actors and activities at both global and country levels are still lacking. Part of this is based on the conceptual divides – operating principles, mandates, values and assumptions – that have separated humanitarian and development actors and action since the sectors came of age after the Second World War (Otto and Weingärtner, 2013). These different approaches juxtapose the ‘humanitarian imperative’ to assist the victims of conflict and disaster, based on the core principles of humanity, neutrality and need (impartiality), against the state-enabling longer-term approaches to poverty reduction and societal transformation that development actors espouse (Macrae, 2012).

These cultural differences lead to incoherence in international aid agendas, whereby donors are expected to uphold commitments to a range of

often competing global aid commitments and good practices. There are inherent tensions between the neutral and impartial approaches promoted by the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles (2003), the state-building objectives of the Fragile States Principles (2011) and the principles of national ownership and leadership in the Paris Declaration (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and the Hyogo Framework for Action II (2015).

The tradition of humanitarian exceptionalism is particularly visible in protracted crisis, where humanitarian activities, which often include recovery and basic service provision, are developed outside of government frameworks (focusing on communities) and are separate from development funding and activities (which focus on strengthening state institutions).

Making the case for collective crisis management by humanitarian and development actors, as well as climate change and peace- and state-building counterparts, involves reconciling the different imperatives, approaches and levels at which these actors operate. However, distinctions must be made where such coherence is neither feasible nor desirable, particularly in sensitive and complex conflict situations where a focus on humanitarian distinctiveness, manifest in humanitarian principles and the promotion of international humanitarian law, should be rigorously applied. But even in the most complex and violent crises, humanitarian actors have found ways of working through local institutions and systems, while ensuring impartiality and neutrality.¹⁷

Initiating discussions on the application of humanitarian principles in different crisis contexts, working more proactively to link current global agendas and seeking coherence in their language and proposals, particularly around risk, vulnerability and resilience, would be steps in the right direction.

A divided architecture

Many aid organisations and donors maintain separate humanitarian and development teams with distinct portfolios, remits and reporting lines. While many

¹⁷ For example, the ICRC works with local water boards to restore water, sanitation and power in conflicts across the Middle East, including in Syria, negotiating access for local engineers to conduct repairs rather than trying to set up parallel systems (ICRC, 2015).

donors have integrated humanitarian and development structures in capitals, only a few, notably Australia, Sweden and the United Kingdom, have extended such integration to embassies and country offices. Where whole of government approaches have prompted the creation of interdepartmental coordination committees, dedicated funds and hybrid cells, for example in Canada, Denmark, the United Kingdom and the United States, such crossover mechanisms still focus on connecting disparate agendas and structures, rather than enabling truly holistic responses. For most donors humanitarian policy-making and funding decisions are centralised within humanitarian departments in donor capitals, whereas development decisions are largely devolved to embassies and country offices (Bennett, 2015).

Aid organisations with dual relief and development remits mirror such bifurcation. Part of this has to do with the cultural and conceptual divides described above, but part also has to do with a preoccupation with the bureaucracy of the aid industry, how individual organisations feature and operate within it and donors' expectations of their operational partners. For example, multi-mandated agencies often feel pressure from donors to assign their activities as either 'humanitarian' or 'development' to meet donor funding requirements. At an individual level, there are few opportunities or professional incentives for crossover between humanitarian and development career paths. Doing away with such labels, distinctions and institutional requirements and refocusing operations on the requirements of the response, based on an analysis of risks and vulnerabilities on the one hand, and available skills, capacity and resources on the other, would help in achieving a more rational alignment of aid requirements and capacities in crisis contexts.

Where it makes sense to do so, localising leadership in crisis preparedness and response may play an important role in facilitating greater coherence and complementarity. The classification of aid as 'humanitarian' or 'development' is likely to be less of a concern for local organisations, and has little bearing on how affected people make decisions about what they require. In addition, national and local actors, from governments to national NGOs, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and local businesses, can enhance connectedness as they are present before, during and after crises (Zyck, 2015; IFRC 2014a).

Perverse incentives

Perhaps the most significant obstacle to collective crisis management has to do with the financial and organisational incentives that run counter to collective action and joint ways of working. The fact that aid organisations generally rely on limited grants from the same set of institutional donors makes them highly susceptible to donor interests and influence, is inherently competitive and creates powerful disincentives to share information, engage in joint analysis and work in complementary ways (Seybolt, 2009). Incentive structures also discourage emergency preparedness, early humanitarian response and investments in strengthening resilience. The outcomes of these activities are harder to measure and evidence than the outputs of a humanitarian response, meaning that the incentives to respond to a crisis are greater than to avert one.

Competition for market share among a limited number of international agencies drives the need to expand their activities, sometimes irrespective of their relevance and technical expertise, in order to maintain a high profile in crisis settings. Aid organisations are incentivised to diversify their individual capacities and work on all things in all crises, rather than specialising and working collectively. As long as such incentives are in place, agencies will continue to deliver against organisationally-defined objectives, to the detriment of their own longer-term benefit, overall performance and, most importantly, the communities they purportedly exist to serve (Ramalingam, 2011).

Politics

Political pressures also work against collective action in protracted crises. Both humanitarian action and development cooperation are used implicitly and explicitly by governments as a useful source of influence and soft power. Donor support of humanitarian relief, while impartial in theory, can be highly selective in practice (Seybolt, 2009), either instrumentalised for political or strategic gain or used as a means of avoiding more substantial engagement in difficult contexts (Harmer and Macrae, 2004). Donor development priorities are often influenced by strategic and foreign policy considerations, or used to uphold global aid commitments. These often run counter to the requirements of need-based assistance in protracted crisis contexts, which often involve working in countries or areas of countries outside of development cooperation priorities (Bennett,

2015). Host governments too are reluctant to see humanitarian models of neutral and impartial action exported to development activities because this means less money and control.

Making the case for collective crisis management requires that humanitarian actors, in particular, insist that they will not be left to pick up the pieces when political solutions fail. While humanitarian action should not be a substitute for political inaction, humanitarian actors need to be more politically aware, both in terms of being cognisant of the political dynamics in crisis contexts and the implications humanitarian work has for these dynamics. This includes better understanding the possibilities and limitations of the influence humanitarian actors have in bringing about political solutions to protracted crises, and where there is potential for influence, and being more active in putting pressure on governments for political solutions. Just because this is a role humanitarian actors are neither particularly skilled at or comfortable playing does not make it less necessary.

Recommendations for the Summit and beyond

The World Humanitarian Summit is an opportunity to formulate an agenda for action that upholds humanitarian values, while committing governments, organisations, businesses and communities to a collective approach to the management of the most difficult and long-standing crisis situations.

1. **Jointly develop high-quality risk, context and capacity assessments at the regional and national levels to help inform common mechanisms for coherent planning and financing in recurrent and protracted crises.** Joint analyses should be developed by government, humanitarian, development, climate change and other actors (the level of involvement of these actors will depend on the context) to determine the most appropriate constellation of instruments, actors and activities to facilitate the most effective response possible in light of prevailing risks and/or politico-economic trajectories. This analysis should include assessments of the role of at-risk and affected people, state institutions, the aid system and the private sector. Shared objectives, outcomes and theories of change should be developed to enable preparedness and risk management planning based

on complementarity and comparative advantage amongst humanitarian, development and climate change actors, amongst others.

2. **Scale-up shock-responsive programmes and approaches, including through greater use of cash transfer programmes and government-led, shock-responsive social protection systems (where appropriate) in recurrent crises, and increase investment in traditional social protection systems in protracted crises.**¹⁸ This is essential in order to facilitate more appropriate, timely and predictable response and burden-sharing of chronic caseloads in recurrent crises. Research and evidence-building should be strengthened in existing and new programmes to better understand the necessary preconditions for shock-responsive social protection systems in recurrent crises,¹⁹ and effective social protection more generally in protracted crises and conflict-affected states. In all crises, the momentum gained by the inclusion of a target on the development of social protection floors and a focus on ‘leaving no one behind’ in the draft SDGs should be harnessed in dialogues with donors, governments and development agencies.

3. **Proactively engage the state, where possible, in order to promote coherence between the humanitarian and development communities.** Reversing the state avoidance inherent in traditional humanitarian response and understanding the potentially positive role and capabilities of different parts and levels of the state is critical to delivering on this agenda. Humanitarian agencies should let go of notions that working apart from state institutions is the best way to safeguard humanitarian principles, and should instead take pragmatic, context-specific decisions on whether working with the state and through local institutions and systems will help meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The share of domestic disaster management institutions and programmes resourced from domestic revenues should be increased (avoiding excessive financial

¹⁸ Social protection mechanisms should not seek to incorporate an explicit shock-response or risk-management mechanism until the system has proven itself able to effectively meet the needs of its regular clients.

¹⁹ This should build on initiatives such as the new DFID Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme Shock Responsive Social Protection Systems research project: see <http://www.opml.co.uk/projects/shock-responsive-social-protection-systems>.

reliance on international donors). While such a recommendation is critical to responses to recurrent crises, due consideration must be given to engaging the state in sensitive protracted crises (particularly armed conflict), where states may be unable or unwilling to participate in the response and where humanitarian principles must be rigorously applied.

- 4. Roll out multi-year financing (or commitments) and planning that allows for more flexible programming, and expand financing sources, placing greater emphasis on non-humanitarian and non-aid resources for collective crisis management.** In recurrent crises, specifically, the use of contingency funding or ‘program modifiers’ should be increased. To support this, the evidence base on the effectiveness of multi-year humanitarian financing should be strengthened in order to help make the case for scale-up and expansion. Greater flexibility is also needed in the application of donor funds across budget lines or sources (for example development and climate finance). In protracted crises, mechanisms for dialogue between humanitarian agencies and multilateral development banks and actors should be promoted. A more diverse and differentiated approach to financing protracted crises will involve developing new modes of interaction and instruments with multilateral development banks and actors to facilitate early investment in protracted crises (particularly those involving large-scale, regional displacement). It will also require a better understanding of the role of non-aid resource flows in all crises, and how they can be harnessed to meet acute needs and promote longer-term recovery and resilience.

To do this, the wider aid community must:

- 5. Minimise conceptual divides.** This requires finding common objectives and principles, and common approaches to common problems. It also means delineating where humanitarian objectives diverge and activities should remain distinct, based on a nuanced understanding of the operational application of humanitarian principles and where certain approaches may be counter-productive. Adopting a shared vocabulary that picks up on many SDG concepts, for example ‘shared humanity’ or ‘leaving no one behind’, could help build a stronger sense of common purpose. The focus should be on the full set of requirements of a crisis response, and the available assets, skills and capabilities of communities and local, national and international organisations, with a division of labour and resources based on complementarity. This requires empowering affected people and local action; devolving international programmatic and funding decisions to field level, where comparative advantages can be best identified and implemented; and incentivising competent staff and experienced leaders to work across humanitarian and development career paths, both at headquarters and in the field.
- 6. Ensure coherence across the post-2015 global policy agendas.** Better aligning the global aid commitments of the post-2015 development agenda and the outcomes of the WHS is critical to shaping the incentive structures for more coherent action over the next 15 years. It is also an important opportunity to inject into the DNA of development actors a stronger sense of the links between vulnerability, risk, crisis and development, and to avoid many of the contradictions global aid commitments have created in the past. The WHS needs to be a conversation driven by humanitarian values, but not a conversation only amongst humanitarian actors. A bridging conference linking the SDGs with the Secretary-General’s proposals for the WHS would be an important step in this direction.
- 7. Create positive incentives for coherence and risk-informed approaches.** Improving system-wide performance in recurrent and protracted crises will mean exploring ways to change the economic and political pay-offs so that the drivers for coherence, cooperation and preventative action, including joint planning, programming and reporting around common outcomes at the country level, outweigh the incentives for crisis response and going it alone. To some extent this is already happening, as the OECD-DAC is working with humanitarian and development counterparts from among its members to change both the processes and tools and the narrative around coherence and preventative action. But more is required to shape incentives from the top of the food chain by making a strong economic/business case with donors, with a more powerful narrative around economic growth and the benefits of risk management even if a crisis doesn’t occur (see Tanner and Rentschler, 2015).
- 8. Play to politics, where appropriate.** Humanitarian organisations need to rethink the limits of their

political engagement in crisis contexts, become more politically savvy and find new ways of finding political leverage to benefit crisis-affected communities and reduce humanitarian need in the longer term. It is not for humanitarian agencies to prevent the accumulation of disaster risk through public and private investments or to find solutions to political conflict, but they can catalyse others to do so. The Summit must highlight the limits and distinctiveness of humanitarian action, while also pointing to the roles and responsibilities of others in helping to reduce human suffering in the long term.

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