

# HPG

Humanitarian  
Policy Group



# Who we are

The Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is one of the world's leading independent research teams working on humanitarian issues. We are dedicated to improving humanitarian policy and practice through a combination of high-quality research, dialogue and debate.

Our analytical work is directed by our Integrated Programme (IP), a body of research grounded in field studies that span a range of countries and emergencies. IP projects cast a critical eye over the pressing issues affecting humanitarian policies and operations.

Our dynamic communications and public affairs programme promotes and disseminates HPG's research findings, links our research to current humanitarian debates and works with local and global media outlets to bring humanitarian concerns to the wider public.

We provide a critical link between policy and operations on the ground through the Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN), an independent forum for humanitarian practitioners to share and disseminate information and experience.

Learning and academic engagement are central areas of our work. We edit *Disasters* journal, and offer annual courses for senior policy-makers and practitioners in the sector.

We also offer consultancy services, policy advice and bespoke research and analysis related to our core themes and objectives.



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Cover image: Women making bread in Adi Harush refugee camp, Ethiopia. Selling food and services in the camp is one way for refugees to earn extra money. © Gabriel Pecot/ODI 2016.

# HPG in numbers

2016–17



public events, roundtables and conferences

16 ODI public events



5,704 people

attended in-person and online across 38 countries



Blogs, op-eds, infographics and multimedia

104 external speaking events in 30 countries\*



\*Australia, Austria, Belgium, China, Canada, Denmark, Fiji, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Slovakia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States

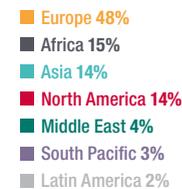


people reached through our Facebook page



Twitter followers whom we engage with daily

## HPG newsletter subscribers



## Our most popular publications in 2016–17

- 1 **Time to let go:** remaking humanitarian action for the modern era
- 2 **Closing borders:** the ripple effects of Australian and European refugee policy. Case studies from Indonesia, Kenya and Jordan
- 3 **World Humanitarian Summit:** what to watch out for
- 4 **Constructive deconstruction:** making sense of the international humanitarian system
- 5 **Livelihood strategies of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia:** 'We want to live in dignity'

# Our strategic priorities

Women collecting sorghum and oil following an airdrop conducted by the ICRC in Unity State, South Sudan.  
© ZOCHERMAN, Jacob/ICRC.



**1. Principles, politics and the humanitarian system** analyses the issues impeding meaningful reform of the international humanitarian system. We explore the impact of national interests and international policies on crisis response, inform how aid agencies operate in difficult political and security environments and examine how cash assistance can enable a more effective response.

**2. Civilian security and protection in conflict** explores the roles of different actors in civilian protection. We aim to deepen understanding of the threats faced by communities in different contexts, the steps taken to reduce risk, and the extent to which international, national and local civilian and military mechanisms offer effective protection.

**3. Displacement, migration and urbanisation** assesses the changing dynamics of displacement, with a particular focus on urbanisation and gender. We explore the factors affecting forced migration and the challenges that protracted displacement in particular pose to humanitarian response.

**4. Livelihoods in crises** explores how humanitarian assistance can support – or undermine – livelihoods, with a focus on food security and economic opportunity in protracted crises.

**5. Humanitarian and development links** explores how humanitarian assistance operates alongside development, security and political interests.

## Our work

During the next two years, we are adopting a ground-level view to explore and analyse what local humanitarian action means in practice and how it will affect international response.

HPG's Integrated Programme of research for 2017–19 – 'From the ground up: understanding local response in crises' – critically analyses key aspects of this debate.

**As local as possible, as international as necessary: understanding capacity and complementarity in humanitarian response**

Capacity strengthening is often seen as the solution to perceived weaknesses in local humanitarian action. But while there has been greater commitment by the international system to invest in local organisations, there is limited understanding of what local



humanitarian capacity actually means, or how it is understood by those working in crises.

Through our research, we are providing insights into how capacity is perceived in the humanitarian sector, and how international counterparts can better connect with and invest in the capacity of local organisations in crisis response.

We are also identifying what capacity currently exists among local, national and international actors in specific contexts and exploring the incentives and power dynamics that promote or inhibit their ability to work in complement.

### Driving the debate on system reform

Our major report *Time to let go: remaking humanitarian action for the modern era* analysed why, after decades of reform, the international humanitarian system is still unable to respond effectively to crises. Drawing on the report's findings, we are developing a radical new understanding of the global humanitarian architecture as part of a critical dialogue with donors, aid agencies and affected people, moving beyond a diagnosis of the problems to enable more appropriate and effective humanitarian action.

Above: Jowle camp in Garowe, Somalia. © European Commission DG ECHO/Agata Grzybowska.

## The tip of the iceberg? Understanding non-traditional sources of aid finance

While discussions around humanitarian financing often start and end with 'traditional' sources of international donor government funding, it is imperative also to examine the support and services provided by 'non-traditional' actors. These sources of assistance are difficult to track and are not typically factored into international responses.

Our research is contextualising assistance from the formal humanitarian system within the wider range of

resources available to crisis-affected people via family and friends, community organisations, diaspora groups, the private sector and faith-based communities.

In doing so, the research aims to provide a better understanding of how informal resources can be better identified, tracked and channelled to supplement international funding flows.

Below: A cash transfer recipient in Tanahun District after the Nepal earthquake. © Poul Henning Nielsen/Danish Red Cross.

### Improving the evidence on cash assistance

Following our work with the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, we completed a substantial body of research analysing the obstacles to and opportunities for putting the Panel's recommendations into practice, with case studies in Iraq, Ukraine, Nepal, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). With Development Initiatives, we established the most accurate estimate yet of global expenditure on humanitarian cash programming in *Counting cash: tracking humanitarian expenditure on cash-based programming*. Our research on cash programming and its role in humanitarian response and the wider system will be a valuable source of critical analysis in our continuing engagement with donors, aid organisations and financial services companies on the policies and implementation of their cash assistance programmes.



## Understanding the role of informal non-state actors in protecting civilians

Communities affected by conflict are not passive in the face of threats to their safety and security. As well as taking action to protect themselves, they look to political, military and other actors – including those operating outside international networks and in the informal sphere, such as tribal networks, faith-based organisations and youth groups.

This project seeks to understand who these informal non-state actors are, how they define themselves and what motivates their behaviour as ‘protectors’ of civilians in armed conflict.

The research will also assess the extent to which the protection provided by informal actors improves or undermines the safety and well-being of people in need.



A family that fled fighting in Mosul, Iraq. © EU/ECHO/Peter Biro.

### Building understanding of refugee lives and livelihoods

Through our research, we have explored the lives and livelihoods of refugees in protracted displacement in Cameroon, Malaysia, Turkey and Jordan. We mapped refugees’ experiences to understand how their priorities change over time. We explored the networks and institutions refugees engage with, and the factors that shape this interaction.

Nine recommendations targeting donors, host governments and aid agencies identify the key principles of a more effective livelihood response.

## Dignity in displacement: from rhetoric to reality

Promoting dignity is a key aspiration of humanitarian action, but it is poorly understood in concept and in practice.

Our research is adopting a local lens to explore whether, and in what ways, humanitarian interventions uphold or undermine the dignity of displaced people. In particular, we are applying a gender lens to explore the different ways in which dignity is understood by men and women in crisis contexts.

We are drawing out key lessons from local and international refugee responses to investigate how dignity has been understood and operationalised, and how humanitarian responses can be better calibrated to refugees’ perceptions of what it means to lead a dignified life in displacement.

Above: A Rohingya refugee in the doorway of his home in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. © The Spacemen.



### Informing the 2018 global refugee framework

We continue to engage with governments, aid agencies, civil society, businesses and foundations on issues around displacement and migration. We began a joint initiative with the think tank Chatham House to provide a platform for open and frank discussion of policies around refugees and migrants, with the aim of feeding into the more formal discussions of the new global refugee and migration compacts to be presented in 2018. We are also providing substantial research and analytical support to the World Commission on Forced Displacement, a high-level panel initiated by the Chumir Foundation to shape ongoing debates, encourage constructive public dialogue and create an environment for effective political action on forced displacement.

## Our global reach

Our work spans the globe, with critical engagement in six continents.

We conducted in-depth field research in crisis-affected countries and held powerful events and closed-door roundtables in key humanitarian hubs.

Our researchers have travelled around the world to present our work and ensure that it reaches donors, aid agencies, civil society groups and governments in affected countries.

- HPG engagement and field research
- 📍 Events and speaking engagements



## Engaging with practitioners

The Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) is a global forum for policy-makers, practitioners and others working in the humanitarian sector to share and disseminate information, analysis and experience. Established in 1994, HPN's aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

HPN commissions and publishes analysis, opinion and operational guidance written by and for practitioners. Through *Humanitarian Exchange* magazine, network papers focused on a specific region or issue and operational guidance in the form of good practice reviews, HPN captures current initiatives

and good practice, and documents this information for field staff and policy-makers.

HPN also plays an active networking and coordination role, and engages with individuals and organisations involved in humanitarian action in more than 130 countries, including academic institutions, governments, non-governmental organisations and the UN and other multilateral agencies.

The HPN website and social media channels are popular sources of information for practitioners. HPN has attracted more than 195,000 unique users to its website, and engages with more than 10,000 followers on Facebook and Twitter.

Above: Syrian refugees come ashore in Lesbos, Greece. © Ben White/CAFOD.

## Influence and impact

We disseminate and communicate our research findings and analysis through an extensive communications and public affairs programme aimed at generating debate and discussion around key humanitarian issues and promoting understanding of the sector among the wider public.

### Shaping the debate

HPG continues to catalyse discussion and shape the debate around humanitarian action. In 2016–17, we hosted 29 conferences, courses, roundtables and public events. We co-hosted events with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in China and Indonesia on humanitarian access in conflict zones. We convened a roundtable with aid organisations working in Somalia to discuss options for early action ahead of the food crisis there, and helped catalyse regional engagement in humanitarian action through our initiation of the Regional Organisations Humanitarian Action Network (ROHAN).

We reach global audiences through external speaking engagements. Our researchers are invited to high-level events to connect our research with key institutions and policy-makers. In 2016–17, our researchers addressed 104 external events in 30 countries; highlights included a post-World Humanitarian Summit workshop in Dehong in China, the Arab Foundation Forum annual assembly in Tunis and a panel on 'Agency in displacement: livelihoods in the Syrian refugee crisis' at the Refugee Studies Centre's 2017 conference in Oxford.

### Media engagement

Our researchers engage with media around the world to shed light on the causes and consequences of current crises and draw attention to under-reported emergencies. We speak on a wide range of issues of humanitarian concern, including food crises, humanitarian financing, conflicts, disasters and refugee responses. We have featured in a range of media, including BBC World, *Deutsche Welle* (Germany), Associated Press, Reuters, *The Guardian* (UK), Thomson Reuters and regional media, including in India, Kenya and Lebanon.

### Policy advice

We advise aid agencies, donors, government bodies, regional organisations, the United Nations, academic institutions, private businesses and foundations on key policy issues. Highlights include membership in the Global Future Council of the Humanitarian System of the World Economic Forum, participation in the United Nations Economic and Social Council independent team of advisers on UN reform, advising on the European Consensus for Development and informing a study reflecting on the challenges facing German humanitarian aid.

## Academic engagement

Engagement with the academic community is a core component of our work. HPG collaborates with academic institutions to deliver courses on conflict and humanitarian response in London and Doha, attracting participants with extensive humanitarian experience in a range of contexts. We also edit *Disasters*, a leading academic journal in the sector. *Disasters* is accessed by more than 12,000 institutions worldwide.



Above: HPG Head of Programme Christina Bennett chairs a discussion on the Rohingya refugee crisis, 2017. © ODI.

Left: Research Fellow Veronique Barbelet speaking at an Oxfam GB event in Moscow, Russia on the current system of international humanitarian assistance. © Oxfam GB.

## Our funding

HPG's Integrated Programme is funded by a range of governments, NGOs and private foundations. This support allows us to pursue an independent, multi-year research agenda. IP funding is supplemented by commissioned work chosen for its relationship to, and complementarity with, our core research topics.

Current donors to the 2017–19 Integrated Programme are the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the British Red Cross, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the IKEA Foundation, Irish Aid, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and World Vision International.

## Advisory Group

Our research programme is designed in consultation with our Advisory Group, comprising senior representatives of humanitarian and other organisations from around the world.

### Members (as of September 2017):

Luca Alinovi, PP Sherpas Ltd, CEO and Founder

Sultan Barakat, The Doha Institute, Director of Research

Mia Beers, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development, Director, OFDA Humanitarian Policy and Global Engagement Division

Margie Buchanan-Smith, Independent Consultant

Stephen Close, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Assistant Director, Humanitarian Policy and Partnerships Section, Humanitarian Response Branch, Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division

Pascal Daudin, International Committee of the Red Cross, Head of Policy Unit

Hany El-Banna, The Humanitarian Forum, Founder and President

Jessica Eliasson, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Humanitarian Methods and Policy Specialist

Vickie Hawkins, Médecins Sans Frontières UK, Executive Director

Per Heggenes, IKEA Foundation, Chief Executive Officer

Myeonjoa Kim/Gina Hong (alternate years), Korea International Cooperation Agency/

South Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Humanitarian Assistance Specialist (Emergency relief and DRR)/Second Secretary

Nicolas Lamadé, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Senior Manager, Security, Reconstruction and Peace

Alexandra Mackenzie, Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Development and Trade, Director, International Humanitarian Assistance Directorate

Ewen MacLeod, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Head, Policy Development and Evaluation Service

Jehangir Malik, Muslim Aid, Chief Executive Officer

Alexander Matheou, British Red Cross Society, Executive Director of International

Dennis McNamara, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Senior Humanitarian Advisor

Zlatan Milisic, World Food Programme, Deputy Director, Policy and Innovation Division

John Mitchell, ALNAP, Director

Marielle Mumenthaler, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Programme Officer, Humanitarian Policy and Migration, Directorate of Political Affairs, Human Security Division

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J. Alexander Thier, Overseas Development Institute, Executive Director

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Nigel Timmins, Oxfam Great Britain, Humanitarian Director

Henrike Trautmann, European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office, Head of Unit, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

Jelte van Wieren, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head of the Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction Division of the Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid Department

Helen Young/Dan Maxwell (alternate years), Tufts University, Feinstein International Center, Research Director for Nutrition and Livelihoods/Professor in Food Security, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy

Ambassador Hesham Youssef, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs

Roger Zetter, University of Oxford, Emeritus Professor of Refugee Studies, Refugee Studies Centre

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