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Global aid index reveals donor governments are not fulfilling their commitments to keep their humanitarian assistance independent from other interests

Governments' humanitarian aid increasingly driven by political interests

- **The Humanitarian Response Index 2010 ranks 23 leading donor governments' performance in 14 crises – in 10 of these, political interests influenced aid decisions**
- **The UK - ranked at 8th – is amongst the top ten donor governments but could do more to ensure its aid is not linked to political concerns.**
- **Report urges governments to go “back to basics”: support neutral, independent humanitarian aid based on assistance and protection needs of affected populations, and also invest further in prevention .**

Brussels, December 7th - A significant number of humanitarian organizations believe that donor governments are not keeping humanitarian assistance independent of political, economic or military objectives, according to DARA's *Humanitarian Response Index 2010* report, launched today during the European Development Days in Brussels.

Denmark, Ireland and New Zealand lead the Humanitarian Response Index 2010, followed by Norway, Sweden and the European Commission. These donors do well in prioritizing the needs of people in crisis areas and keeping aid independent of other objectives. Nevertheless, challenges persist across all 23 donor governments analyzed.

The UK is amongst the top ten donors when it comes to applying good practice in its humanitarian assistance and is well regarded for its support for aid effectiveness and reforms to the humanitarian system. But it is widely perceived by humanitarian organizations as mixing aid with political, economic or security agendas. The report recommends the UK government engage with the humanitarian organizations it funds in order to address concerns about the perceived lack of impartiality and independence of its humanitarian aid.

“Political agendas have impeded the delivery of essential humanitarian assistance to millions of people in need,” said Ross Mountain, Director General of DARA and Former Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo – the world's largest humanitarian and development programme to date.

The Humanitarian Response Index 2010 analyzes 14 humanitarian crises across the world, which received over 60 percent of global humanitarian funding in 2009 and includes a foreword from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, and chapters by UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President, Jakob Kellenberger.

The politicization of humanitarian aid effectively means that access to affected populations is threatened and civilians are not receiving the protection and assistance they need. The lives of humanitarian workers have also been endangered by this worrying trend. In many countries, aid workers are no longer perceived as neutral, impartial and independent from donor government objectives.

“Attacks on humanitarian workers, both local and international, have increased nearly threefold in a little more than a decade” underlines António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in the foreword to the report.

For example, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan, the ability to provide effective protection by humanitarian organizations to vulnerable populations was often hampered by political, military or security agendas of both donors and governments of crisis-affected countries. The lack of effective protection of civilians in humanitarian crisis is of special concern.

“The primary responsibility for protecting citizens from violence is held by the state – neither the United Nations nor any number of peace keepers. Donor governments must impose tougher terms when providing assistance to countries which abrogate this responsibility” underlines Margot Wallström in this report.

The Humanitarian Response Index highlights the growing concern that vulnerability due to climate change is set **to increase needs in the immediate future**, further stretching the capacity of the humanitarian system to its limits.

In 2009, 23 donor governments (including the European Commission) provided over US\$11 billion of humanitarian assistance. This is a decrease of about 8% compared to humanitarian funding in 2008, with more cutbacks expected in 2011. However, the UN appeal for humanitarian operations in 2011 calls US\$ 7.4 billion, one of the largest appeals ever, dramatically highlighting the need for increased efforts to support effective, impartial and independent humanitarian aid across the world.

“Donor governments are making vital contributions to saving lives in crises and catastrophes. Yet maximisation of aid impact for those in need requires donor recommitment to the agreed basic principles. It is the shared responsibility of the international community to make sure the best possible support is available and that civilians are adequately protected,” said Ross Mountain, underlining DARA’s commitment to contributing to a more independent, impartial and effective humanitarian system – for the benefit of populations in need.

THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE INDEX 2010

Between November 2009 and June 2010, HRI field teams interviewed 475 senior representatives of humanitarian organisations working in the 14 crisis-affected countries studied this year. Teams met the majority of the operational response agencies that receive donor government funding for the crisis, as well as government officials, local authorities and civil society organisations. In addition, teams interviewed over 75 donor representatives in the crises studied.

Crisis countries visited: Afghanistan, the Central African Republic (CAR), Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Indonesia, the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Yemen, Haiti and Zimbabwe. These crises (except Haiti) received over 60 percent of the funding mobilised to respond to crises in 2009.

The Humanitarian Response Index aims to identify and promote good donor practice and ensure greater transparency, accountability and impact of humanitarian assistance for the millions of people suffering the effects of crises – all the more important in these times of increased need and reduced aid budgets. For more information, please visit <http://www.daraint.org/humanitarian-response-index/>

DARA

Founded in 2003, DARA is an independent organization committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of aid for vulnerable populations suffering from conflict, disasters and climate change. For more information, please visit www.daraint.org