

PRESS RELEASE

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According to DARA's 2008 Humanitarian Response Index™

Donor countries' practices leave millions of people without all the assistance they vitally need

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Most of the world's wealthiest countries do not comply with best practices for humanitarian aid, according to DARA's *2008 Humanitarian Response Index™* (HRI), presented today by Silvia Hidalgo, Executive Director and co-founder of DARA, at the Roosevelt Hotel, New York. As a result of donor practices, millions of people affected by natural disasters, epidemics, and war do not receive all the assistance they vitally need.

Disasters caused by natural phenomena affected 281 million people in 2007, equal to the population of France, the UK, Canada and Japan combined. In addition, more than 45 million people are affected annually by armed conflict, the consequences of which are felt for years afterwards.

Despite US\$8 billion invested in humanitarian relief intervention in 2007, the report argues that wealthy nations do not always act in accordance with the principles of "Good Humanitarian Donorship" (GHD) – a set of guiding principles and practices agreed upon in 2005 by 23 members of the OECD and DAC, which includes all 22 donor countries under study and the European Commission.

Sweden is the most effective humanitarian donor country, followed by Norway, Denmark, Ireland and the European Commission. The United States, the world's largest provider of humanitarian aid by volume, ranks only 15 out of 23 donors for overall humanitarian performance.

"Humanitarian assistance - essential for the survival and recovery of hundreds of millions of people affected by conflict and disaster - needs an urgent overhaul", affirms Jeffrey Sachs, US economist and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, commenting on the HRI. *"Though humanitarian emergencies are on the rise, wealthy governments continue to fail to meet their commitments to finance and support efforts that could effectively help the world's poorest tackle the challenges brought on by massive increases in the price of food stuffs, amongst other crises. The rich governments of Europe and the US have mobilised roughly \$3 trillion to bail-out the global financial sector in the past month alone, yet they continue to sideline their own commitments to support humanitarian action and effective long-term development strategies that can end poverty and better prepare the poor to cope with future crises"*.

According to DARA, natural and man-made disasters and conflicts have combined with the global financial crisis, food shortages, high fuel prices, and the continuing impact of climate change to put the world's most vulnerable people at great risk. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the violent conflict has left thousands of innocent civilians dead; in China, nearly 70,000 people were killed and 46 million were affected by earthquakes; when a cyclone ravaged Myanmar, almost 140,000 people lost their lives or remain missing; and in Sudan, more than 6 million people are displaced and living in conditions of poverty due to the violent conflict.

“Aid is not about generosity, it’s a question of responsibility”, said Silvia Hidalgo, DARA Executive Director and co-founder. *“We developed the Humanitarian Response Index as a way of holding governments accountable to the principles of good practice they agreed to. We’re not just talking about numbers and bureaucracy – we’re using the HRI as a tool to help governments identify what works well, and where they need to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid, and saving and rebuilding the lives of people whose world has fallen apart. Today, more than ever, as the financial crisis threatens to reduce humanitarian funding, we must make sure that future humanitarian aid is distributed in the most effective manner possible”*.

The report calls wealthy countries to do better in helping those most in need by:

- Providing aid in an impartial manner, not according to political, economic or security agendas
- Strengthening the capacity of the humanitarian system to respond to future crises, especially prevention strategies at the local level.
- More accurately assessing humanitarian needs, so that aid reaches those who need it most, when they need it.
- Linking relief efforts with long-term development strategies for more lasting impact.

RANKING

- HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE INDEX RANKING -		
Donors	2008	2007
Sweden	1	1
Norway	2	2
Denmark	3	3
Ireland	4	6
European Commission	5	5
Netherlands	6	4
Luxembourg	7	12
United Kingdom	8	9
Switzerland	9	10
Canada	10	7
Australia	11	14
Finland	12	11
New Zealand	13	8
Belgium	14	15
United States	15	16
Spain	16	17
Germany	17	13
Japan	18	18
Italy	19	22
France	20	19
Austria	21	20
Portugal	22	21
Greece	23	23

METHODOLOGY

In its second year, to develop the donor rankings DARA compiled official data from different sources, including donors, the OECD, the World Bank and UN agencies. DARA teams also conducted field research on the ground in 11 countries that experienced crisis in 2007-2008,¹ where they interviewed representatives of more than 350 humanitarian organisations and collected over 1,400 questionnaires on donor practice. By combining this quantitative and qualitative information, DARA measured the performance of each donor country according to 58 indicators that aim to capture the essence of the GHD principles. These indicators are grouped into five pillars of good practice to improve the quality, effectiveness and impact of humanitarian action – (i) Responding to needs; (ii) Supporting local capacity and recovery; (iii) Working with humanitarian partners; (iv) Promoting standards and implementation; and (v) Promoting learning and accountability.

KEY FINDINGS IN 2008 AND DIFFERENCES FROM 2007

- **The top three donor countries remained the same from the HRI 2007: Sweden, Norway and Denmark** each received a number of first-place rankings for the 58 indicators.
- The bottom quarter of the HRI is occupied by **France, Austria, Italy, Portugal, and Greece**, which received generally poor evaluations from humanitarian organisations in the field.
- The **United States** remained in the lower half of the ranking, at 15 out of 23, pulled down by below-average scores for providing aid with “neutrality” and supporting long-term development and a next-to-last score (before Greece) for upholding international humanitarian law and human rights law.
- **Luxembourg** shows the most change from 2007, moving up five places, improving on generosity and “fair share”, where in comparison to its GNI the country does well.
- **Australia** moved up three positions, having done well in terms of funding needs assessments, timely funding, promoting human rights and supporting needs of internally displaced persons.
- **Germany** dropped four positions in the overall ranking, scoring below the average particularly in relation to flexible and long-term funding arrangements.
- And **Canada** moved down three posts, partially because of its low performance in comparison to other countries in funding for forgotten emergencies and crises with low media coverage.

DARA www.daraint.org

DARA (Development Assistance Research Associates) is an independent non-profit organisation committed to the quality of humanitarian action and development aid through evaluation and research. It has a multi-national, interdisciplinary team with wide experience in the sector, and is based in Madrid, Spain, and has offices in Washington, D.C. and Brussels.

DARA has participated in the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) <http://www.tsunami-evaluation.org/> and is Full Member of ALNAP <http://www.alnap.org/> .

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following documents are available at www.hri.daraint.org

- Video News Release (Quicktime format)

¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nicaragua, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Peru, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

- Individual donor country profiles (pdf)
- The Principles and Good Practices of Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) (pdf)
- Frequently Asked Questions: (pdf)

Hard copies:

The Report, published by Palgrave Macmillan, can be ordered online at www.palgrave.com, by telephone at +44 (0)1256 302688, by fax at +44 (0)1256 330688 or by e-mail at orders@palgrave.com

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