

# THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE INDEX 2011

## PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN APPLYING GOOD DONOR PRACTICES

### INTRODUCTION

In late 2011, the United Nations (UN) launched a record appeal for US\$7.7 billion to assist an estimated 51 million people affected by humanitarian crises. The appeal launch followed a familiar and predictable script: humanitarian organisations issued dire warnings about the extent of needs and urgently called on governments to scale up their support for relief efforts. The response was equally predictable: by the end of 2011, only 61% of appeal needs were covered—an average that remains largely unchanged for the past five years, with some crises neglected and severely underfunded (OCHA 2011).

Most of the crises included in the 2012 appeal were also predictable. Of the 16 crises included in the appeal, nine have been among the top humanitarian aid recipients over the past decade (Development Initiatives 2011). This underscores the continued inability of the international community to address chronic vulnerability by strengthening community resilience and increasing capacity for prevention and preparedness at the local and international level.

As the principal funders of humanitarian actions, the world's main donor governments have a special role and responsibility to ensure that aid money is used efficiently, effectively and for the greatest impact for the millions of people affected by crisis each year. Donors recognised this when they jointly drafted in 2003 the declaration of *Good Humanitarian Donorship* (GHD). The GHD set forth a set of principles and good practices intended to make donors' humanitarian aid more principled, predictable and reliable (See [www.goodhumanitariananddonorship.org](http://www.goodhumanitariananddonorship.org)).

Since 2007, DARA's Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) has monitored donor governments' application of the *GHD Principles* with the aim of contributing to efforts to improve the quality, effectiveness, accountability and impact of humanitarian aid. The HRI combines analysis of quantitative data on

donor funding and policies with field research in different humanitarian crises to assess the quality of 23 Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development /Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) donor governments' humanitarian assistance in five pillars of practice:

- Pillar 1: Responding to needs
- Pillar 2: Prevention, risk reduction and recovery
- Pillar 3: Working with humanitarian partners
- Pillar 4: Protection and international law
- Pillar 5: Learning and accountability

Field research for 2011 covered nine crises: Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Kenya, occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan, which together received almost two thirds of international humanitarian assistance funding in 2010 (OCHA FTS 2011). This edition of the HRI also includes a special focus on how donors address gender concerns in humanitarian action (see the chapter *Addressing the Gender Challenge*).

After five years of tracking and monitoring donor performance through the HRI, the reality seems that donors are far from achieving the ideals expressed in the *GHD Declaration*.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The wide scope of the research covering 23 of the world's main donor governments and nine major crises gives the HRI a broad perspective of the trends and challenges facing the humanitarian sector. Unfortunately, our findings for the 2011 edition confirm that the issues raised in previous editions largely persist. The ability of the humanitarian sector to deliver assistance has improved over time, but progress in consolidating good donor practices and reforming the sector has been limited. Based on the experience and findings of five years of HRI research, our conclusion is that most donors have not significantly altered

their approaches in order to apply good practices, and the pace of reform efforts is too slow for the humanitarian sector to be able to adequately meet current needs, much less prepare for, anticipate, mitigate and respond to a trend of increasingly complex crises in the coming decade. The main gaps and challenges found through the HRI 2011 research are highlighted below.

### **GENDER A LOW PRIORITY FOR MANY DONORS AND ACTORS, LEAVING GAPS IN RESPONSES**

The HRI research shows that gender is far from being mainstreamed into humanitarian action. Many actors do not take the time to understand the different needs of women, girls, men and boys in a crisis, and ensure programming meets these needs equitably. This can result in aid that is unsuitable, such as culturally inappropriate feminine hygiene kits in Pakistan, or worse, putting women and girls in danger, such as inadequate lighting and security in camp latrines in Haiti. While the majority of donors include gender in their policies, their funding is not always allocated towards projects that incorporate adequate gender analysis, and few donors actually monitor and follow up on how gender is addressed in programmes they support. Donors have enormous potential to influence the sector by requiring the humanitarian organisations they support to prioritise gender in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, ensuring that aid is not discriminatory and meets the different needs of women, men, girls and boys equally.

### **POLITICISATION OF AID CONTINUES TO DENY MILLIONS ACCESS TO AID**

As in the 2010 report, the HRI 2011 research shows that many governments' political, economic and security agendas continue to undermine the ability of humanitarian organisations to access vulnerable populations and provide aid without discrimination. Anti-terrorism legislation of some governments has led to legal and procedural barriers to access populations in need in crises such as in Somalia or the oPt, and this is having negative spin-off effects on other donors and in other crises. At the same time, the political interests and actions of other parties, such as national authorities or armed groups, have impeded access to and protection of civilians in need. Keeping humanitarian assistance focused exclusively on meeting needs and independent of other objectives is the only effective way to ensure donors' contributions have maximum benefits and impact in relieving human suffering. Donors also need to step up their support for concrete measures to ensure all actors comply with their responsibilities to protect, including supporting prevention strategies and supporting appropriate legal actions to address abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law.

### **PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY DISREGARDED IN AID EFFORTS**

The response to crises like the Haiti earthquake, Pakistan floods or drought and famine in the Horn of Africa show the human consequences of a lack of sustained commitment by donor governments for prevention, preparedness, risk reduction and long-term recovery efforts. Too often, these activities are not prioritised by governments in their development or humanitarian assistance, resulting in missed opportunities to strengthen local capacity and resilience and undermining the ability of the humanitarian sector to anticipate and prepare for and respond effectively to future crises. Given that humanitarian needs will continue to grow exponentially in coming years, reducing the human and economic impacts of humanitarian crises is a critical pending task for all donor governments.

### **THE CURRENT AID REFORM AGENDA IS INSUFFICIENT TO TACKLE CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS**

The HRI 2011 research suggests that efforts to reform the humanitarian system, including the GHD initiative, are generating slow but uneven progress in improving the planning, coordination and delivery of assistance. Nevertheless, after five years of HRI research, it is more than evident that the gaps are essentially the same as when the reform process began, and the pace of reforms may not be quick enough to match increasing needs and a rapidly changing aid context, much less respond adequately to future challenges. Donors must continue to support current reform efforts, but they also need to actively work towards an ambitious programme to strengthen the capacity of the sector to anticipate and adapt to future needs and challenges.

### **DONOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IS WEAK**

Donor governments are not as transparent and accountable as they should be, especially towards the crisis-affected populations. As the HRI research in Colombia, Haiti, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan shows, decisions around aid allocations are not sufficiently transparent, nor guided by humanitarian objectives, and donor governments in general are still reporting their assistance inconsistently. Accountability is still largely conceived as an exercise on fiscal management and control of the partners they fund, rather than on meeting the needs, priorities and aspirations of affected populations as the primary stakeholder in any aid efforts. By making aid transparency and accountability towards affected populations the cornerstone of their assistance, donors would have greater assurance that their aid is effective in meeting needs.

## HRI 2011 DONOR SCORES AND CLASSIFICATION

As in the HRI 2010, a multidimensional statistical analysis was undertaken to classify donors into groups. Donors are scored against 35 quantitative and qualitative indicators, organised into five pillars of donor practices. Quantitative indicators are based on published data on donors' policies, funding and practices, while qualitative indicators are based on a standard field-based survey on perceptions of donor performance in different crises. The results are compiled into scores and a classification, as visually illustrated below. This classification by groups allows donor policy makers and their humanitarian partners the opportunity to compare performance against a smaller set of peers. The grouping is not hierarchical: each group of donors has its own set of strengths and weaknesses, but all have made positive contributions to overall humanitarian aid efforts (See the chapter *HRI Research Process* for more details).

THE GROUPING IS NOT HIERARCHICAL:  
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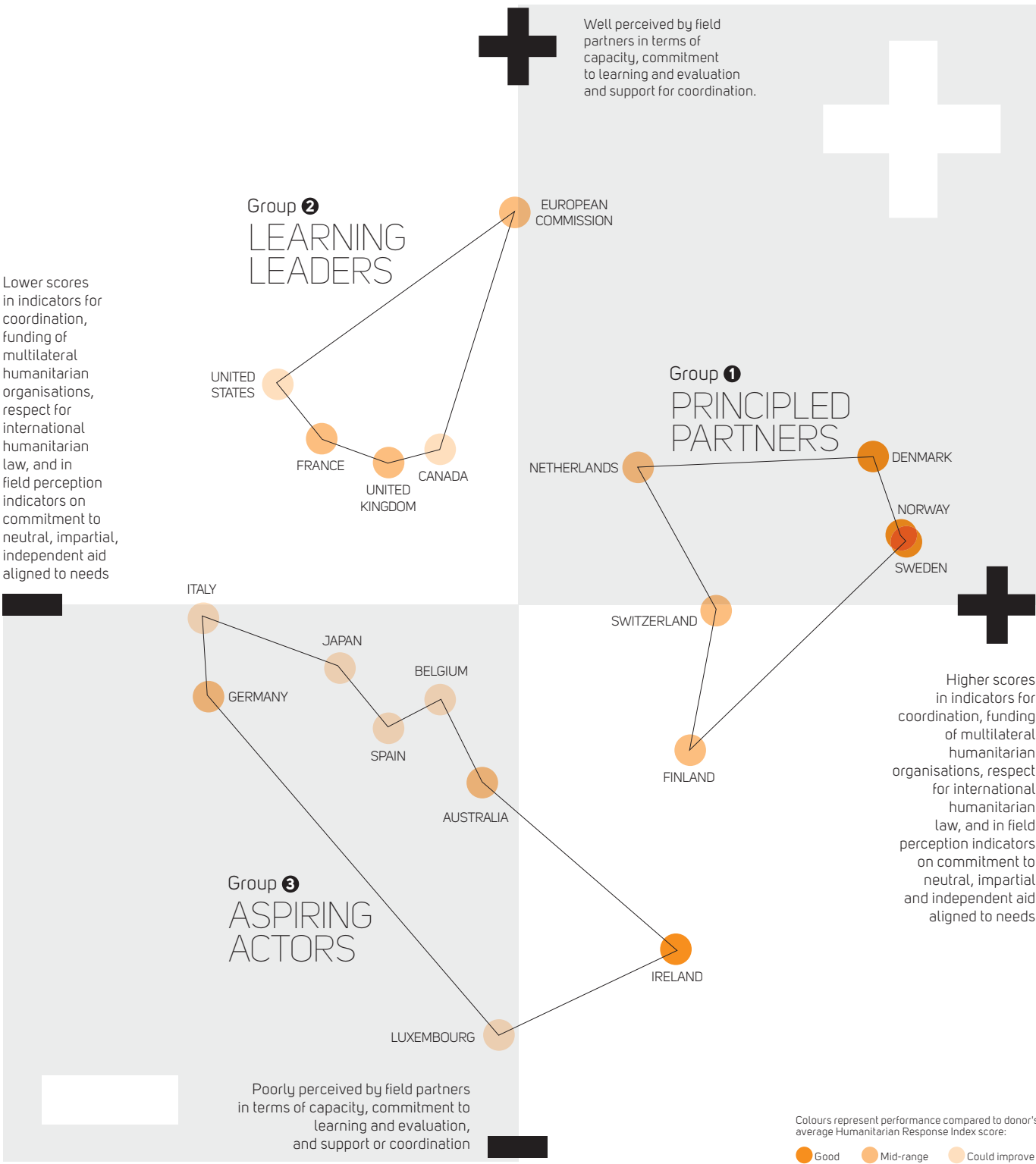
## PARTIALLY-ASSESSED DONORS

This year, four donors were not included in the full HRI assessment due to insufficient data from the field: Austria, Greece, New Zealand and Portugal. In the case of Greece and Portugal, the volume of their humanitarian assistance has been minimal compared to other donors (including new and emerging donors) for several years. Additional aid cuts brought on by the severe financial crisis have further limited their engagement with the sector. Austria and New Zealand, on the other hand, have made concerted efforts to review and improve their aid policies, but the limited number of partners at the field level made it impossible to assess them against the qualitative components of the index.

### PILLAR AND HRI SCORES BY GROUP

	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	PILLAR 5	HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE INDEX (30% PILLAR 1 + 20% PILLAR 2 + 20% PILLAR 3 + 15% PILLAR 4 + 15% PILLAR 5)
GROUP 1 AVERAGE SCORE	7.75	5.51	6.54	7.03	5.92	<b>6.68</b>
GROUP 2 AVERAGE SCORE	7.30	4.44	5.28	5.78	5.11	<b>5.77</b>
GROUP 3 AVERAGE SCORE	7.37	4.84	4.77	5.32	4.50	<b>5.60</b>
OVERALL OECD/DAC AVERAGE SCORE	7.47	4.94	5.46	5.98	5.11	<b>5.99</b>
BEST SCORED DONOR	IRELAND	JAPAN	NORWAY	NORWAY	DENMARK	<b>NORWAY</b>

# DONOR PERFORMANCE BY GROUP



## Group 1 PRINCIPLED PARTNERS

The *Principled Partners* group includes **Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden** and **Switzerland**. The group is characterised by their generosity, as measured by the ratio of humanitarian assistance compared to Gross National Income (GNI), a strong commitment to humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and for flexible funding arrangements with partners. A comment about Norway from an interview respondent in oPt summarises the group's strengths: "Norway is good with flexible and continuous funding and light reporting—agencies need certain amount of flexibility to operate in this context."

This group has consistently performed well in all the HRI pillars and indicators over the past five years, in part due to well-defined policies and a long-tradition of governmental and public support for humanitarian assistance. At the international level, these donors are strong advocates for humanitarian principles and for a well-functioning, humanitarian system coordinated mainly through the UN system.

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### PRINCIPLED PARTNERS ARE GENEROUS, COMMITTED TO HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES, AND ADVOCATE FOR A STRONG MULTILATERAL HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

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However, the group also has some deficiencies. While strong supporters of multilateral agencies (the UN and Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement), un-earmarked funding and pooled funding mechanisms, the group provides less support to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) than the overall average for OECD/DAC donors. In field interviews, many UN and NGO respondents suggested that these donors did not demand enough of their partners, and had unrealistic or idealist expectations regarding the capacity and leadership of the UN system to effectively coordinate international aid efforts. As an example, the majority of these donors are strong supporters of pooled fund mechanisms, which many respondents considered a means of disengaging from operational issues at the field level. "Pooled funding is now becoming an easier option for donors to shed their responsibilities to engage with more demanding partners like international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), or confront the issues," reported one respondent. "Donors are risk adverse, and are therefore using pooled funds, but it doesn't necessarily mean better accountability," said another.

While these donors have a good reputation for maintaining the neutrality, impartiality and independence of their humanitarian aid, in several crises field interviewees

suggested that their aid decisions were equally influenced by political factors like any other donor. There was a sense among many interviewees that while these donors are good partners, some of the group's impetus in leading and consolidating principled approaches has been lost in recent years. Many saw the lack of active advocacy to preserve the integrity of neutral, impartial humanitarian action in the light of increasing aid politicisation as an example of their decline as "moral authorities" in the sector.

Some respondents felt that there was a trend for donors like Denmark, Finland and Switzerland to look for "easy wins" and non-controversial programmes, limiting their engagement with the system, both in debates on where the future of the humanitarian system and in the number of crises supported. Norway, for example, was singled out in Somalia for its unconditional support for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), at the expense sometimes of a more independent stance for humanitarian assistance. Unofficially, many donor representatives interviewed admitted that domestic and foreign policy considerations were indeed factors that influenced where aid was allocated and to which organisations. "Our aid is neutral and impartial when we give it to an organisation," said one, "but of course, the decision on which crisis to support is completely political".

At the individual donor level, compared to 2010, Norway shows substantial improvements in its scores in Pillar 3 (Working with humanitarian partners) and Pillar 4 (Protection and international law). The Netherlands also demonstrates improvement compared to 2010, especially for its scores for timely funding to complex emergencies, un-earmarked funding, and funding towards prevention and accountability initiatives. However, it could improve in aligning funding to gender criteria and follow up at the field level on gender issues. Finland, Sweden and Switzerland also show small improvements, while Denmark drops slightly in comparison to 2010.

## Group 2 LEARNING LEADERS

**Canada, the European Commission** (specifically the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department, ECHO), **France**, the **United Kingdom (UK)** and the **United States (US)** make up the group of *Learning Leaders*. This group of donors is characterised by their leading role and influence in the humanitarian sector in terms of their capacity to respond, field presence and commitment to learning and improving performance in the sector. They tend to do poorer in areas such as prevention, preparedness and risk reduction efforts, and in perceptions around the neutrality, impartiality and independence of their aid (ECHO is a notable exception, as it scores well above most donors in this regard).

In terms of volume of aid, this group has an enormous impact on the ability of the humanitarian sector to respond to needs. ECHO, the UK and the US are by far the three largest donors to international humanitarian assistance efforts, funding more than 50% of the total international resources mobilised in 2010 (Development Initiatives

## LEARNING LEADERS PLAY A LEAD ROLE IN CRISIS RESPONSE AND IN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE IN THE SECTOR

2011). Canada and France are among the top ten OECD/DAC donors as well. A senior representative of a UN aid agency, referring to the US, summarised the importance of this group in the humanitarian sector: “A funding cut from a smaller donor is a challenge, but a cut from the US means millions of people would not receive the humanitarian assistance they need to survive. No other donor could pick up the slack.”

Another example of their leadership role is how these donors contribute to coordination at the field level, and to shaping debate on the direction of the sector overall. For example, the UK recently undertook a major review of its humanitarian programmes, and has transformed its overall aid programme to make resilience and anticipation some of the key focus areas for all programmes: the change in policy direction is being closely watched by other donors. Canada’s strong leadership role in requiring gender-sensitive approaches in humanitarian programmes it funds as well as advocating for gender-sensitive approaches in the wider humanitarian system is another example, as reflected in its top scores in the HRI’s gender indicators.

These donors have also shown a strong commitment to learning and evaluation, and have been the drivers of many of the initiatives to improve aid quality, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. For example, the UK and the US are strong supporters of the *International Aid Transparency Initiative* (IATI), and the US has recently expanded efforts to map all aid projects in a publically accessible *dashboard*. While the commitment to learning, evaluations and transparency is positive, it has not necessarily translated into substantial changes or improvements in their own policies and practices, nor those of their partners and the humanitarian system as a whole.

As a group, these donors tend to provide a balanced mix of support to all components of the system – with some favouring certain aid channels over others. At the field level, there is normally good coordination among these donors, but at the global level, there are differences in their visions of where the system should go and how it should function. This is reflected in different approaches, tools and

systems used to assess, allocate and report aid. The lack of harmonisation has in many ways increased the burden on humanitarian organisations, especially smaller ones. The heavy reporting requirements of each of these donors often require additional staff resources that are diverted away from programming, according to many respondents. “I would prefer the same reporting format for all donors because it is currently time consuming and involves high costs. Standard reporting would simplify the accountability framework,” affirmed one respondent in Sudan.

The downside to this leadership role is that these donors can often be interpreted as overstepping boundaries and negatively influencing the sector. A widespread concern among many stakeholders is that humanitarian assistance from these donors is often dictated by other political or security objectives, undermining neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. The US is most often mentioned for this, but all other donors in the group received criticism about politicisation in field interviews. Several interviewees expressed concern that this was having a negative influence over other donors and how they relate to their partners. However, the field survey scores were significantly more positive than the comments accompanying the responses, in part because humanitarian organisations appeared to understand the difficulties donor field representatives faced. This viewpoint is reflected by the comments of an interviewee working in Somalia: “The US’ humanitarian funding is heavily influenced by domestic political agendas and concerns with public opinion. US aid officials are acutely aware of this inconsistency with principles, and struggle with it constantly.”

Most field organisations appreciated the strong capacity and resources that allow these donors to take on an active role in the response to crises. “CIDA and ECHO have very good technical follow up and field monitoring visits, which in the longer term serves as a capacity building tool for the NGO, making them more efficient and competitive,” according to one respondent in Colombia. However, these same donors are frequently criticised for intervening in programming design and implementation.

Donors in this group are also criticised for imposing too many administrative, reporting and procedural burdens on their partners, and a lack of flexibility. The comments from an interviewee in Sudan summarises the experience of many: “OFDA [US], CIDA [Canada] and especially ECHO aren’t flexible with funding: you can’t move budget lines and you have to do all the activities in the way you said in the proposal that was approved, regardless of changing situations.” Another respondent in Pakistan shared a similar observation: “Often donors’ micro-management was an obstacle, such as the very excessive reporting requirements of DFID [UK].” Others, however, praise these donors for their flexibility in adapting to needs.



At the individual donor level, compared to 2010, France has improved in terms of the perceptions of its partners in the field. The US has made continued progress in the perceptions of its partners in the field, partially explaining the improvement in its overall scores. This may be a sign reform efforts are beginning to show positive results at the field level. In contrast, the UK received poorer scores in field, survey-based indicators, perhaps explained by the uncertainties caused by a major review process of the UK's humanitarian aid programme, which was underway at the time of the HRI field research. ECHO's scores remain largely unchanged, while Canada slipped somewhat in some scores, perhaps reflecting changing political priorities for its aid programmes.

## Group 3 ASPIRING ACTORS

**Australia, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg and Spain** make up the group of *Aspiring Actors*. This group is diverse in terms of their size and capacities, but *Aspiring Actors* have specific strengths that could be leveraged to take on a greater role in shaping thematic approaches in the sector. As a group, they tend to have more limited capacity to engage with the humanitarian system at the field level and score below the OECD/DAC average in the majority of the HRI pillars and indicators.

In contrast to other donor groups, many of the donors in this group lack clearly defined strategies and sustained, long-term financial commitments for their humanitarian assistance. As a result, this has at times undermined efforts to build their internal capacity and experience to engage more fully with the humanitarian sector.

Spain and Ireland are two good examples of this. Both countries made concerted efforts to scale up their

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### ASPIRING ACTORS HAVE SPECIFIC STRENGTHS THAT COULD BE LEVERAGED TO TAKE ON A GREATER ROLE IN SHAPING THEMATIC APPROACHES IN THE SECTOR

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contributions to humanitarian efforts in recent years as part of their aspiration to play a larger role in the humanitarian sector. Spain, for example, became the fifth largest humanitarian donor in 2009. However, the increase in funding was not matched by sufficient investments in building their own capacity to monitor programmes, or

building sustained public and political understanding and support for humanitarian assistance. "Spain is good for flexibility," said one field interview respondent. "But they never go to the field to monitor so they don't understand the context." Similar comments were made for Ireland in other crises. The economic crisis has since led to sharp cutbacks to both countries' aid budgets, which will likely severely limit their potential role and influence in the sector in the years to come. By all accounts, Italy is facing similar challenges.

On the positive side, many of these donors have much more flexibility to find a "niche" where they can develop capacities and expertise to take on a leadership role amongst donors. Australia, for example, recently revised its humanitarian strategy giving it a clearer, more integrated thematic focus on disaster risk reduction, and an ambition to move beyond its traditional geographic focus of the Pacific region to other parts of the world. Germany has also indicated it will prioritise disaster risk reduction, prevention and preparedness as part of their humanitarian assistance strategy. Indeed, most of the donors in this group are above the overall OECD/DAC average in areas like prevention and reconstruction, suggesting that this may be an emerging area of expertise for the group as a whole. The challenge for these donors will be to sustain these efforts over time and build a critical mass of capacity and experience that will allow them to take on a leadership role in the sector.

At the individual donor level, Belgium deserves mention for its concerted efforts to address some of the deficiencies identified in previous HRI assessments. Compared to 2010, Belgium's scores improved significantly in quantitative indicators for the timeliness of funding, un-earmarked funding, funding to NGOs, and for evaluations and support for accountability initiatives. This demonstrates that it is possible to make positive changes to donor practices in a very short period of time if there is sufficient political willingness and commitment. Australia, Germany and Spain have also improved, while Japan remains largely unchanged compared to 2010. Ireland dropped slightly in indicators based on the perceptions of its field partners and quantitative indicators, indicating that the deep cutbacks in its humanitarian assistance are beginning to have negative effects. Luxembourg saw a significant decrease in its overall scores compared to 2010 due mainly to the poor perceptions from its partners in the field. The country is one of the world's most generous donors on a per capita basis, but one with little capacity to monitor and engage with its partners at the field level. The poor field-based survey indicator scores suggest a need for further dialogue with partners to understand and address these perceptions.

## HRI 2011 DONOR PERFORMANCE: MAIN FINDINGS

Similar to the findings from previous HRI reports, in general, donors scored well for the indicators in Pillar 1 (Responding to needs), though the concern about politicisation of aid featured prominently in many of the crises studied. Collectively, donors scored lower in Pillar 2 (Prevention, risk reduction and recovery) and Pillar 5 (Learning and accountability). Both pillars include indicators around greater participation and ownership of affected populations in the design and management of programmes, and longer-term approaches to build capacity and resilience.

### GENDER

#### **A LOW PRIORITY FOR MANY DONORS AND ACTORS, LEAVING GAPS IN RESPONSES**

HRI research shows that gender is not integrated in a meaningful way into the practices of donors and humanitarian agencies. This has implications for donor practices in all five pillars of the HRI.

For example, in Pillar 1 (Responding to needs), inadequate attention to gender in the needs assessment, project design and implementation phases of a response has consequences in terms of being able to ensure that different needs are being met fairly, equitably and without discrimination. HRI research shows that gender is often neglected in the emergency phase, and not prioritised in the recovery phase, leading to gaps in the quality and effectiveness of aid efforts.

In Pillar 2 (Prevention, risk reduction and recovery), the importance of ensuring women, men, girls and boys have equitable opportunities to participate and engage in programmes is a critical element for downward accountability,

but few donors actually monitor and follow-up how their partners ensure adequate opportunities for affected populations in general to participate in programme implementation, much less promote this as part of a gender or accountability strategy. Additionally, incorporating gender approaches into prevention, preparedness, recovery and development is more likely to generate sustainable results and impact.

In Pillar 3 (Working with humanitarian partners), donors could do much more to promote and support equal opportunities for women to work in the humanitarian sector. With women representing over half the world's population, and with women and girls often disproportionately affected by crises, it makes practical sense that women should be fully engaged in the response to humanitarian challenges. However, at the moment, women are underrepresented in the sector as a whole, particularly in management and leadership positions.

In Pillar 4 (Protection and international law), the consequences of a lack of protection and respect for human rights in crisis situations are most often felt by women and girls. Donors could work with their partners to promote and support more gender-sensitive approaches to protection, with an emphasis on prevention of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and actions to end impunity for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In Pillar 5 (Learning and accountability), donors could do more to ensure gender is better integrated into monitoring, evaluation and learning. Systematically including an assessment of how gender is integrated into humanitarian actions, and monitoring whether their funding and support is contributing to gender equality is an effective way to ensure programme quality, effectiveness, accountability and impact.

For more detailed analysis, please see the chapter *Addressing the Gender Challenge*.



# HRI 2011

## THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE INDEX

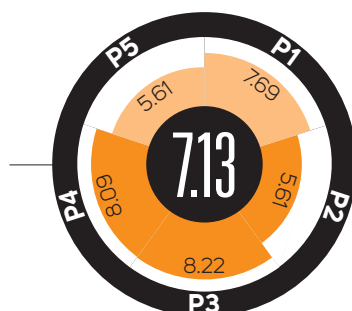
# DONOR CLASSIFICATION

### Group 1

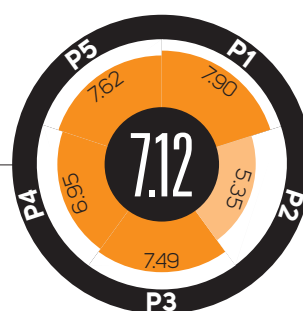
## PRINCIPLED PARTNERS

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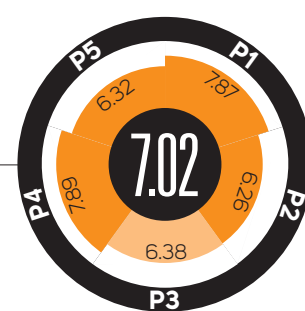
Characterised by their generosity, strong commitment to humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and flexible funding arrangements with partners



NORWAY



DENMARK



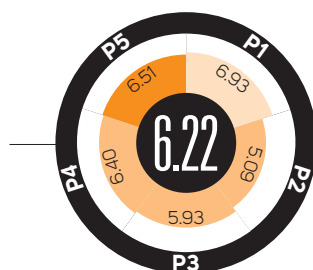
SWEDEN

### Group 2

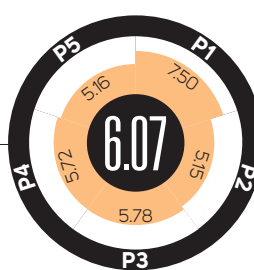
## LEARNING LEADERS

#### LEARNING LEADERS

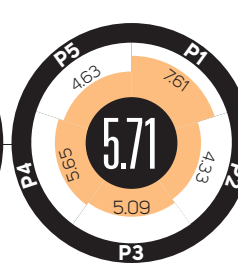
Characterised by their leading role and influence in terms of capacity to respond, field presence, and commitment to learning and improving performance in the sector



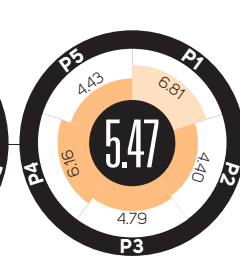
EUROPEAN COMMISSION



UNITED KINGDOM



FRANCE



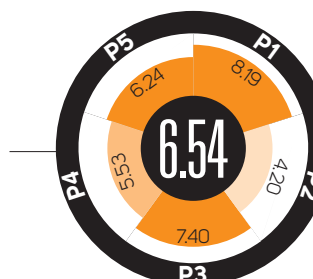
CANADA

### Group 3

## ASPIRING ACTORS

#### ASPIRING ACTORS

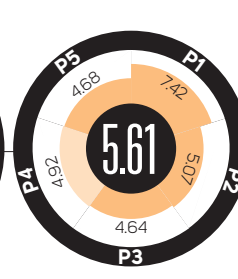
Diverse in terms of their size and capacities, but characterised by their focus on building strengths in specific "niche" areas, such as geographic regions or thematic areas, and their aspirations to take on a greater role in the sector



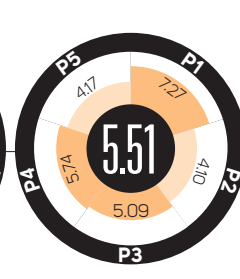
IRELAND



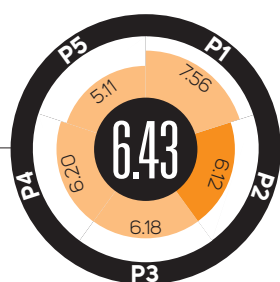
AUSTRALIA



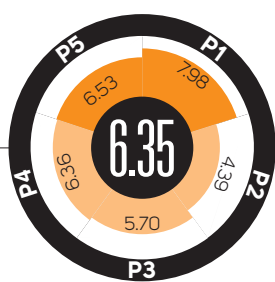
GERMANY



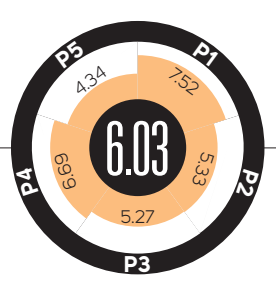
BELGIUM



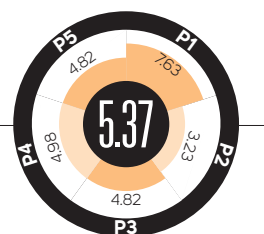
NETHERLANDS



SWITZERLAND

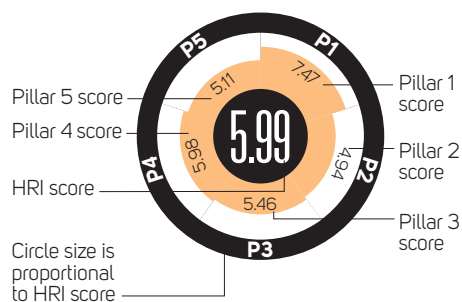


FINLAND



UNITED STATES

### AVERAGE DONOR PERFORMANCE

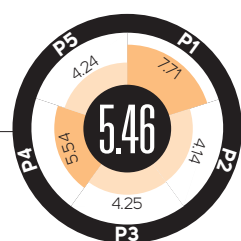


### GUIDE TO THE CLASSIFICATION

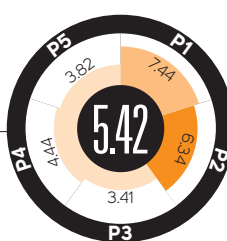
- PILLAR 1** Responding to needs
- PILLAR 2** Prevention, risk reduction and recovery
- PILLAR 3** Working with humanitarian partners
- PILLAR 4** Protection and international law
- PILLAR 5** Learning and accountability

All scores are on a scale of 0 to 10.  
Colours represent performance compared to OECD/DAC donors' average performance rating:

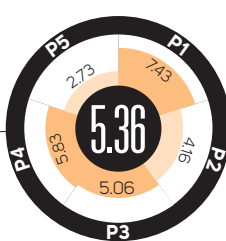
Good Mid-range Could improve



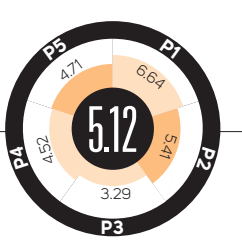
SPAIN



JAPAN



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ITALY

## PILLAR 1

# RESPONDING TO NEEDS

### **POLITICISATION OF AID CONTINUES TO DENY MILLIONS ACCESS TO AID**

The HRI 2010 raised the issue of growing politicisation of aid in ten of the 14 crises studied. The issue was similarly evident in the majority of the crises included in the HRI 2011 research and there is some speculation among many of the organisations interviewed that the “War on Terror” discourse has forever altered the way donor governments will assess and view humanitarian assistance as subordinate to other interests. The most overt examples of this were found in oPt, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan, where many believe that political, security and military interests have driven donor responses, rather than actual needs. In these cases, anti-terrorism legislation and political objectives are seen by many as undermining humanitarian action and placing civilians and humanitarians at risk.

Politicisation of a different sort was seen in Chad, Colombia, Haiti, and Kenya. In these crises, donor governments were criticised by many actors for interposing their own priorities, acquiescing to host governments by not challenging them on issues of corruption, access to affected populations or accepting at face value their assessments on the extent of needs. “Donors shouldn’t use political criteria in their funding decisions, but should provide aid to all affected populations, not only those in the East,” stated one interview respondent in Chad; similar comments were made for donors in other crises.

The generally high scores received by donors for the survey-based indicators on neutrality, impartiality and independence of aid is partially explained by the recognition by many humanitarian organisations that their counterparts in donors’ humanitarian agencies attempt to respect the need for keeping aid independent of other interests, but that other parts of government sometimes undermine this principled approach. A respondent in oPt summarised the experience of many: “For all donors, there are two levels. On one hand, we have the field level, with the procedures, where the donors are neutral. On the other hand, we have the headquarters level in Brussels, Rome, London, etc, where they are not neutral at all. The political agenda determines everything at donors’ headquarters level.”

The most obvious sign that donors are not prioritising and allocating their aid based on and in proportion to impartial

and objective assessments of needs, as called for in the *GHD Declaration*, can be seen in the unequal coverage levels of different appeals. The average appeal coverage of the crises assessed in the HRI was only 65%, generally considered as good. Yet, other crises in 2010 and 2011 such as the Central African Republic, Guatemala, Mongolia, Uganda and Zimbabwe, received less than 50% of appeal funds requested (OCHA FTS 2011).

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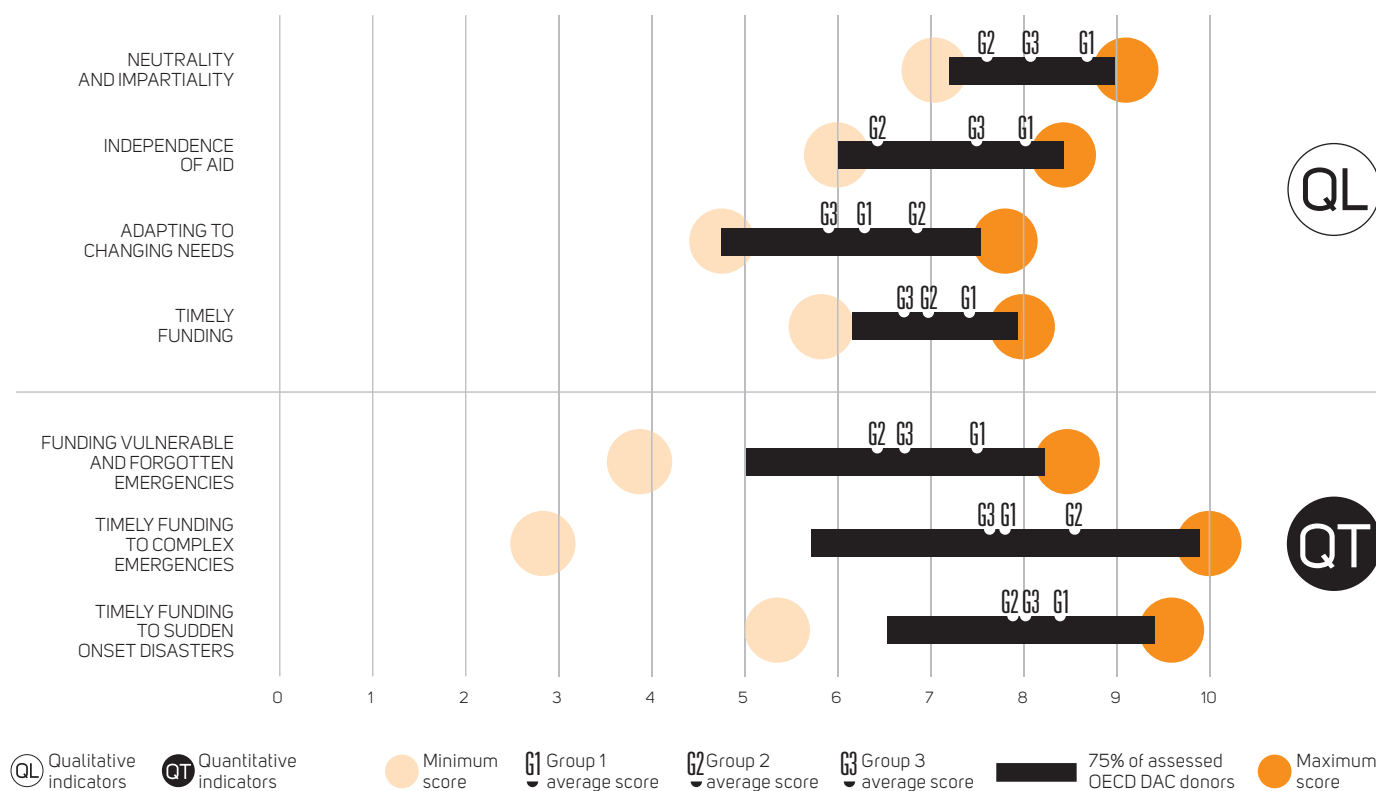
### ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION AND POLITICAL OBJECTIVES ARE SEEN BY MANY AS UNDERMINING HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND PLACING CIVILIANS AND HUMANITIANS AT RISK

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Humanitarian actors, with the support of some donors, have made significant efforts to improve the quality of needs assessments and develop tools to monitor and track risks and vulnerabilities, such as the famine early warning system in place in the Horn of Africa. However, better quality information and analysis has done little to transform donor funding and decision-making processes to be more consistent, objective and transparent. The overwhelming emphasis on emergency relief as opposed to meeting gaps in prevention, risk reduction and recovery efforts is another indicator that donors’ GHD commitments are not being met consistently. Clearly much more work needs to be done to understand the motivations and incentives behind donors’ decision-making processes.

Still, there have been positive moves, as well. The UK Government’s response to the recent *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review* takes an unequivocal stance that humanitarian assistance should be neutral, impartial and independent, “based on need, and need alone.” Australia has also undergone a review of its aid programme and reaffirmed its commitment to this fundamental humanitarian principle. Hopefully, these donors will push other governments to make similar commitments to apply principled approaches in all situations of humanitarian crisis so that aid efforts can meet their objectives in an effective manner.

## OVERVIEW OF OECD/DAC DONOR SCORES



## PILLAR 2

# PREVENTION, RISK REDUCTION AND RECOVERY

### **PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY DISREGARDED IN AID EFFORTS**

Previous HRI reports reveal a persistent lack of political commitment and investment in capacity-building, conflict and disaster prevention, preparedness and risk reduction. On average, donor governments score 30% lower in indicators in this pillar compared to other pillars. This is despite long-held policy commitments to build local capacity and resilience to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises, and widespread agreement that such efforts are cost-effective means to reduce the risks and impacts of crises, and thereby prevent and alleviate human suffering.

The HRI 2011 findings confirm this trend. The inability of donors to respond in a timely manner to the drought and famine in Kenya and Somalia, despite ample early warnings, shows the devastating effects of inaction. The response to Haiti, Chad and Pakistan underline once again the importance of building local capacity and resilience, and dedicating resources for prevention, preparedness and risk reduction. Yet, the overall scores in these areas, and the related issue of ensuring adequate engagement and ownership of vulnerable and crisis-affected populations in humanitarian action, show that this is not a priority for the majority of donors.

### **RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION ARE RELEGATED TO A GREY AREA WHERE NO ONE TAKES OWNERSHIP OR LEADERSHIP**

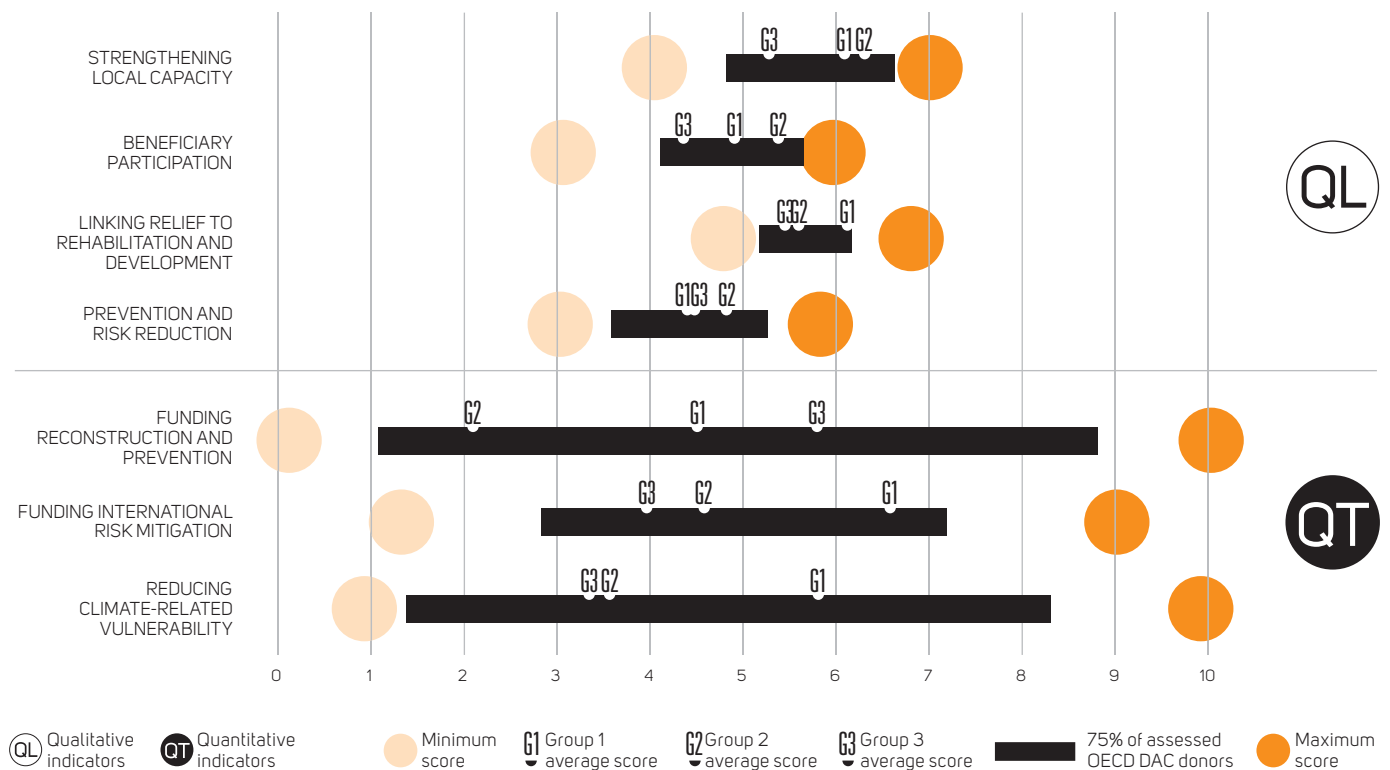
Part of the problem is a narrow vision among donor governments of humanitarian assistance as emergency relief in the strictest sense, with everything else falling in the development assistance remit. However, most official development assistance programmes fail to see risk reduction and prevention as part of their mandate. As a result, these activities are relegated to a grey area where no

one takes ownership or leadership. This is seen in recent studies of preparedness funding which estimates that less than 1% of all official government aid – development or humanitarian assistance – is allocated towards preparedness activities (Kellet & Sweeney 2011). In the words of one respondent in Kenya, “We tried to propose something for early recovery but donors were not interested. They only want to fund emergencies.” The comment was echoed in many other crises, such as Haiti: “Most donors do not fund the transition to recovery and development. It is difficult to find donors once the emergency has passed over.”

Nevertheless, most representatives of donors’ humanitarian departments interviewed were convinced of the need to scale up and integrate prevention, preparedness and risk reduction strategies into donors’ overall aid frameworks. However, most donor agencies were reluctant to actively seek further responsibilities in this area, partly due to worries about their capacity to give adequate support and attention to this area. One donor representative summarised the problem in the following way: “Look, we could argue internally for this, and maybe even get more funding for risk reduction. But let’s be realistic. Our humanitarian team is only four people. If the government decides to scale up funding, it will fall on our shoulders, without any extra staff, and huge expectations for us to deliver an impossible agenda, when we can’t even meet our other obligations to monitor and follow up on the emergency response side the way we would like too.”

There was also some scepticism among donors of the operational capacity of humanitarian organisations to take on an increased role and mandate in the prevention, risk reduction and recovery. “UNDP is not meeting its responsibilities in this area; it’s too focused on MDG’s and political processes. ISDR is not operational. And OCHA has its hands full trying to manage coordination of the UN agencies, so it can’t take a leadership role in this. So where do we turn?” asked one donor representative. “The problems and

## OVERVIEW OF OECD/DAC DONOR SCORES



internal divisions we face are the same for organisations with both development and humanitarian activities,” said another, suggesting the problem was both structural and philosophical.

There are some exceptions. Australia and Germany are becoming increasingly engaged in supporting disaster risk reduction and preparedness efforts with a focus on building capacities at the local level as an integrated part of their

humanitarian assistance. The UK’s revised humanitarian strategy is now centred on how any aid efforts, including development aid, can contribute to building resilience and anticipating future needs. If other donors were to follow these donors’ lead, it could mean a turning point in transforming the humanitarian system from a reactive, response-driven model, to a proactive, preventive and anticipatory model.



## PILLAR 3

# WORKING WITH HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS

### **ONGOING AID REFORM EFFORTS ARE INADEQUATE TO ADDRESS CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS**

For several years now, the humanitarian sector has been engaged in a reform process aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of responses to crises. Initiatives include the creation of the role of Humanitarian Coordinators (HC) and humanitarian country teams (HCT) to lead and coordinate responses, pooled funding mechanisms, such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and clusters. The HRI research findings show that while reform efforts have been generally positive the results are uneven across crises and efforts to date have been unsuccessful at resolving many underlying issues affecting needs and vulnerabilities.

In some crises, such as Kenya and Somalia, clusters and pooled funds seemed to work well to promote better planning and greater coordination and connectedness. Nevertheless, in these same crises, even with a reasonably well-functioning system, humanitarian actors were able to anticipate and predict, but not avert, the impact of the drought and famine for lack of decisive actions and insufficient funding and support by donors. In other crises like Chad, Haiti or Pakistan, results were less positive, with many complaints that clusters were not effectively or appropriately linked to national authorities, leading to duplication of efforts and parallel and competing coordination systems.

There was a certain degree of scepticism of the value and utility of leadership and coordination and pooled funding mechanisms, particularly among NGOs, who sometimes complained that the system was biased towards benefiting UN agencies. In all crises, complaints were frequent about the quality of leadership of the HC (or Resident Coordinator), agency heads, or cluster leads. Committed leadership in the field has been the decisive factor in leveraging the reform agenda to assure an effective and coordinated humanitarian response.

While donors on the whole scored positively for their support for better coordination, many humanitarian organisations clearly stated that they wanted and expected donors to be more actively engaged in coordination efforts by monitoring

progress and holding the HC, cluster leads and pooled funds more accountable. Another message to donors was that they need to coordinate their efforts more closely to avoid duplication or gaps in funding, and ensure alignment, especially in terms of advocacy to local authorities, a survey-based indicator where donors generally scored poorly.

Nevertheless, humanitarian organisations must also shoulder some of the responsibility for this. In several crises, donor representatives said it was the lack of consensus among humanitarian organisations that impeded donors from making consistent advocacy efforts. In other cases, donor representatives complained that many of their advocacy

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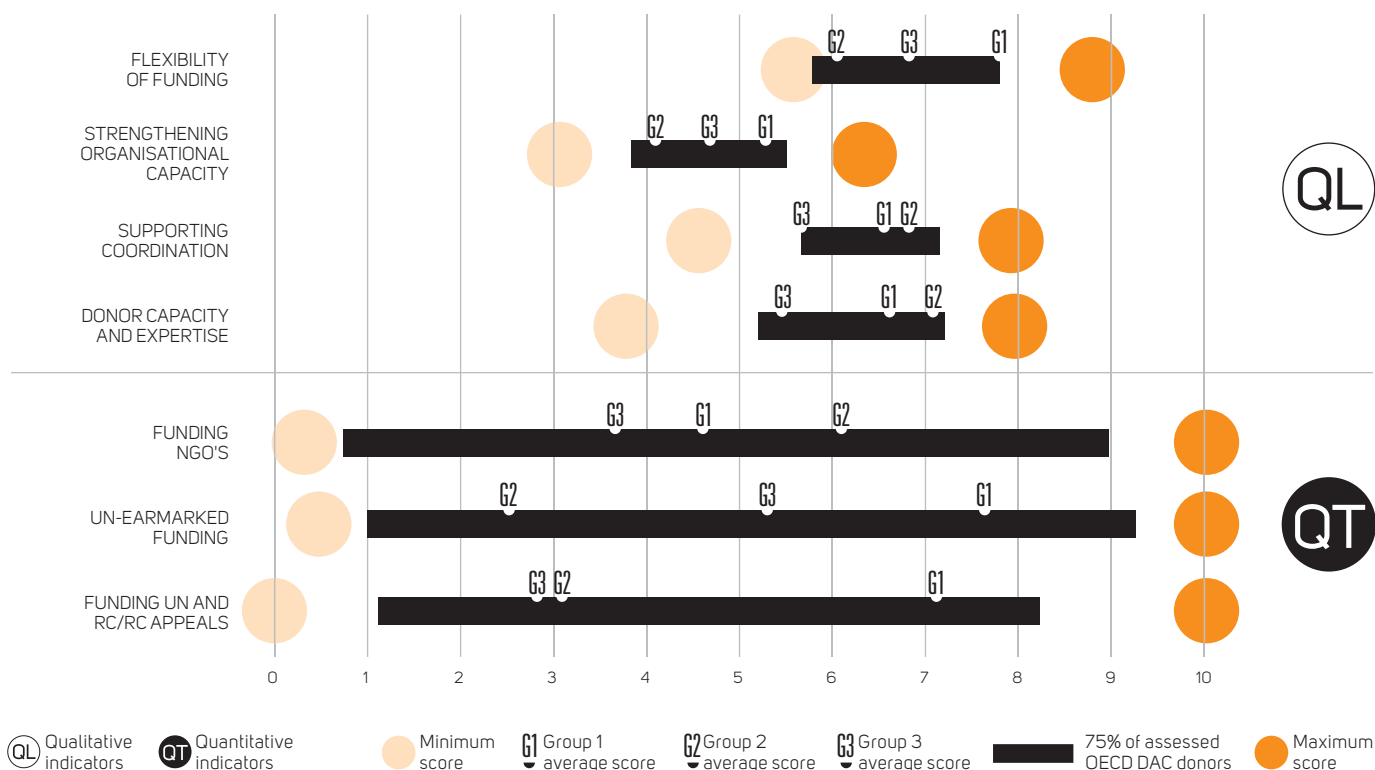
### DONOR CAPACITY TO ENGAGE WITH HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS IN THE FIELD HAS SUFFERED DUE TO CUTS TO MANY GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN DEPARTMENTS

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efforts were through quiet behind the scenes diplomacy and therefore unnoticed by humanitarian partners. “We don’t get enough credit for the work we do to try to get the government to address issues around access, or for trying to convene donor meetings to set common strategies”, said one donor representative interviewed. In some crises, donor coordination groups were a good forum to share information, but in many crises, participation was dominated to the “big three” donors, ECHO, the US and the UK. In other cases, decision-making was clearly at the capital level, limiting the effectiveness of donor coordination in the field.

In many crises, concern was expressed regarding the capacity of donors to provide adequate support, monitoring and follow-up to programmes. “Donors don’t have qualified human resources and don’t focus on building their own capacities, so they don’t understand the context,” claimed one respondent in Sudan. High staff turnover of some of the larger donors

## OVERVIEW OF OECD/DAC DONOR SCORES



was cited as a factor limiting donors' ability to understand the context and engage with their partners. "We have only one contact person in DFID, so when the person changes, everything changes. There is no continuity and we have to re-adapt programmes to new requirements," said another. Haiti was another crisis where high turnover of donor staff was a limitation. Small and medium-sized donors also faced similar capacity issues, but some of these donors were commended for their frequent field visits from donor capitals – a positive example of how donors could overcome this limitation.

Concerns over donor capacity to engage with humanitarian organisations at the field level are partly the consequence of continued funding cuts on many governments' humanitarian assistance departments. The overwhelming majority of donor governments' humanitarian representatives are firmly committed to applying humanitarian principles and good donor practices in order to achieve greater impact of aid efforts. However, most donor aid agencies are under increasing pressure and scrutiny to deliver results with fewer financial and human resources. Humanitarian assistance budgets are still on average around 10-15% of official

development assistance budgets, reflecting the relative lack of importance given to humanitarian action, despite its high public profile and obvious needs. At the same time, political interference or indifference means that donors' humanitarian departments are often placed in the impossible situation of trying to support principled approaches while other parts of governments pursue other incompatible aims.

All this suggests that if governments are truly committed to ensuring aid is effective, they need to invest in building the capacity of their own humanitarian agencies and their partners to meet current needs, increase awareness and political and public support for principled approaches to humanitarian assistance, and adapt good donor practices to respond to future humanitarian needs and challenges. If anything, the financial crisis should be even more an incentive to ensure adequate capacity to monitor the effectiveness of every dollar spent. Donors must also work closely with other actors to go beyond the limitations of the current reform agenda to redefine and reshape the humanitarian sector to become anticipatory and proactive, and capable of responding effectively to increasing humanitarian needs in the future.

## PILLAR 4

# PROTECTION AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

### **ACCESS TO AND PROTECTION OF CRISIS-AFFECTED POPULATIONS IS A MAJOR CONCERN**

One of the main consequences of the politicisation of aid is the continued challenges of safe humanitarian access to populations in need of assistance and protection. As in the 2010 report, the research for the HRI 2011 found that in many crises, civilian populations and humanitarian organisations are often deliberately targeted by armed actors, and as a result, people in need are denied access to life-saving assistance. Governments' policies and practices can be a significant factor in provoking this situation. Anti-terrorism legislation that requires humanitarian organisations to guarantee that there is no contact with listed terrorist groups, and complicated vetting procedures on local staff and partners are a costly and counterproductive measure that does little to ensure that aid is actually reaching people in need.

In oPt, for example, such policies were highlighted as detrimental to aid efforts. "Counter-terrorism legislation is closing down humanitarian space. Humanitarian organisations need contact with Hamas in Gaza in order to deliver aid," commented one respondent. Similar concerns were raised in Somalia by many respondents. "Funding in Somalia is gravely conditioned by the US security agenda in the region and its position regarding Al-Shabaab. Other donors don't want to take risks, so they follow the same line," said another. Donor government support for the TFG in Somalia was seen as indirectly leading to the perception that humanitarian organisations were an extension of donor governments' political agendas in the ongoing conflict there, placing them and the populations they work with at risk.

Beyond politicisation of aid, donors were often criticised for

not funding and prioritising protection activities, especially in natural disaster situations. "Donors only paid lip service to protection of civilians. The two percent funding coverage of the protection cluster is evidence enough of this" affirmed one respondent in Pakistan. In other crises like Haiti, issues of protection were largely ignored by donors, despite widespread media reports of sexual and gender-based violence in camps. In other crises, like Chad and DRC, several humanitarian organisations felt that the presence of multi-national peace-keeping forces, often financed and supported by donor contributions, were seen as more of a problem than a solution. "Security is much better now that MINURCAT (United Nations Mission in CAR and Chad) is gone" claimed one respondent in Chad.

Donor governments are sometime criticised by humanitarian partners for not taking a more active advocacy stance on issues of access and protection. However, in reality, in many of the crises researched, there were mixed feelings about the appropriateness of donors engaging in advocacy efforts. For some interview respondents, it was impossible for donors to advocate for access without jeopardising the neutrality and independence of humanitarian actors. "Donors in general should stop trying to facilitate safe access. If they do, it just contributes to the politicisation of aid," commented one respondent in Sudan. In Colombia, Kenya and Pakistan, some organisations felt that donors' strategic interests meant donors were not assertive enough to advocate for access and protection. "The donors did not stand up to the government's pressure and its decision to declare the emergency over. Therefore they are somewhat responsible for the quality of the response," said one respondent in Pakistan.

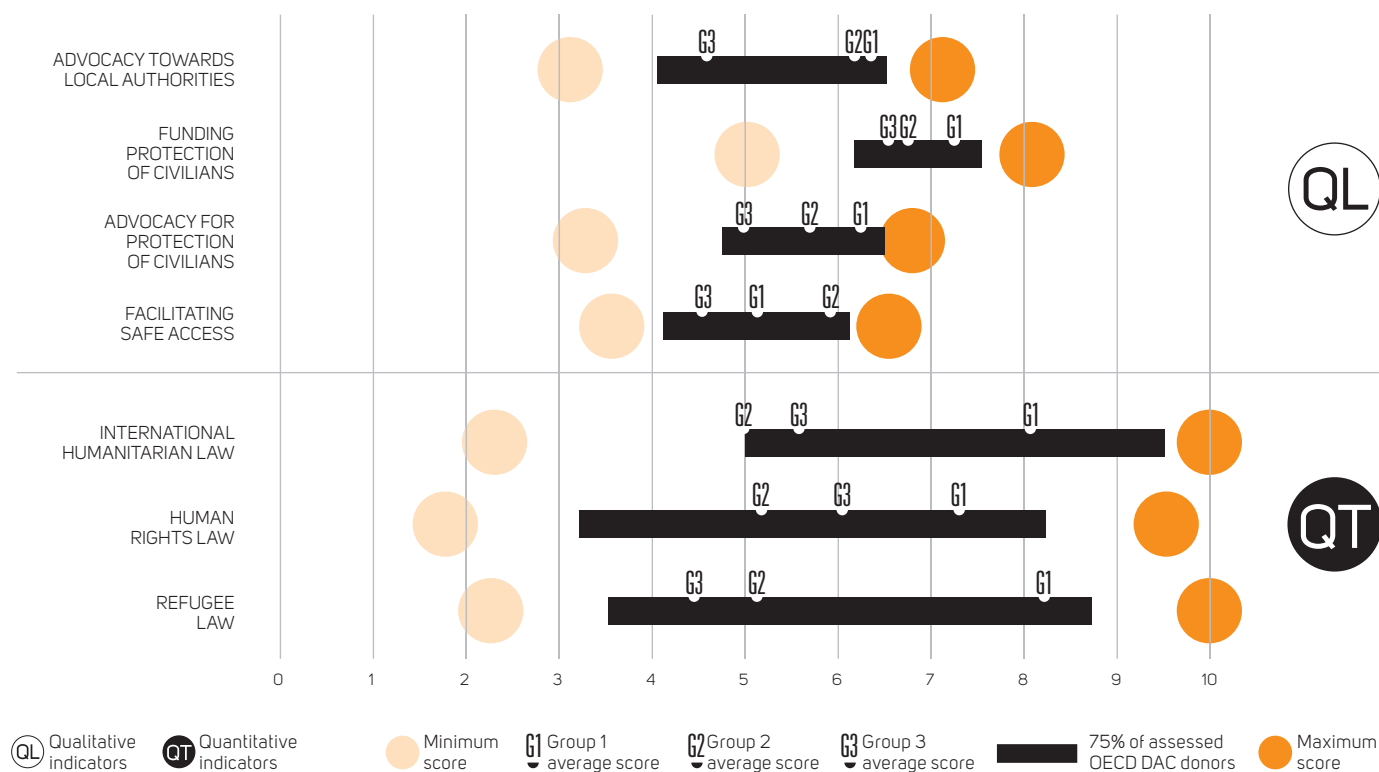
From a donor perspective, this lack of clarity and consensus on what humanitarian organisations expect in terms of donor advocacy make it hard to act in a concerted manner with clear advocacy messages to actors in the crisis. In all cases, any advocacy efforts should be discussed and developed with the specific crisis context in mind, and focused exclusively on the objective of meeting the needs of the population while protecting and preserving humanitarian space.

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ADVOCACY EFFORTS NEED TO BE  
CONTEXT-DRIVEN AND FOCUSED  
ON FINDING THE BEST WAY TO MEET THE  
NEEDS OF AFFECTED POPULATIONS WITHOUT  
JEOPARDISING HUMANITARIAN SPACE

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## OVERVIEW OF OECD/DAC DONOR SCORES



## PILLAR 5

# LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### **DONOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY WEAK**

As in previous years, the HRI 2011 findings found that donor governments are collectively failing to improve their transparency and *downward* accountability towards affected populations. Scores in these indicators are among the lowest of the entire index, with no notable improvements since the HRI began in 2007. In some regards, this is not surprising. The responsibility for ensuring accountability towards beneficiaries is primarily with the organisations directly engaged with affected populations with programme delivery. Donors are also part of the aid relationship, however, and have responsibilities to ensure that their support is transparent, effective, and appropriate to achieve the best possible results for people affected by crises. This is especially true in crises where donors mixed political, economic or security interests with humanitarian actions, at the expense of their accountability for ensuring aid contributes to humanitarian objectives.

According to many respondents, most donors still conceive accountability in terms of exercising fiscal management and control, rather than the underlying obligation to ensure aid efforts meet the needs, priorities and aspirations of affected populations. “There is too little focus on the beneficiaries, and too much emphasis on documentation and assessments at the expense of action,” in the words of one respondent in Kenya. Another respondent in Sudan complained that “rules and regulations are increasingly making us less effective as we are spending all our time on audits. There is a lack of accountability by donors.” Many respondents suggested that donors’ policies around accountability were adornments, with no real commitment towards implementation. “They are breaking their own rules. Donors do what they want and don’t consider the beneficiaries needs anymore,” claimed one respondent in Haiti.

One important element of accountability in humanitarian action is engagement and ownership of the affected population in the design and implementation of aid programmes. However, as the poor overall scores for indicators for beneficiary participation in Pillar 2 (Prevention,

risk reduction and recovery) and the indicators for gender show, donors have not made this a priority. Beyond that, supporting efforts to build and strengthen local capacity is another key element of donor accountability, as expressed in the *GHD Declaration*. However, for many interviewees, donors avoided this responsibility, preferring to work with established international partners as a way to minimise their risks (financial or otherwise) and better control the aid relationship. A respondent in Kenya summarised the sentiment of many: “None of our donors really want us to work with local partners. They see it as a risk, there is a certain fear of working with local NGOs. They have no trust or confidence in local capacities.”

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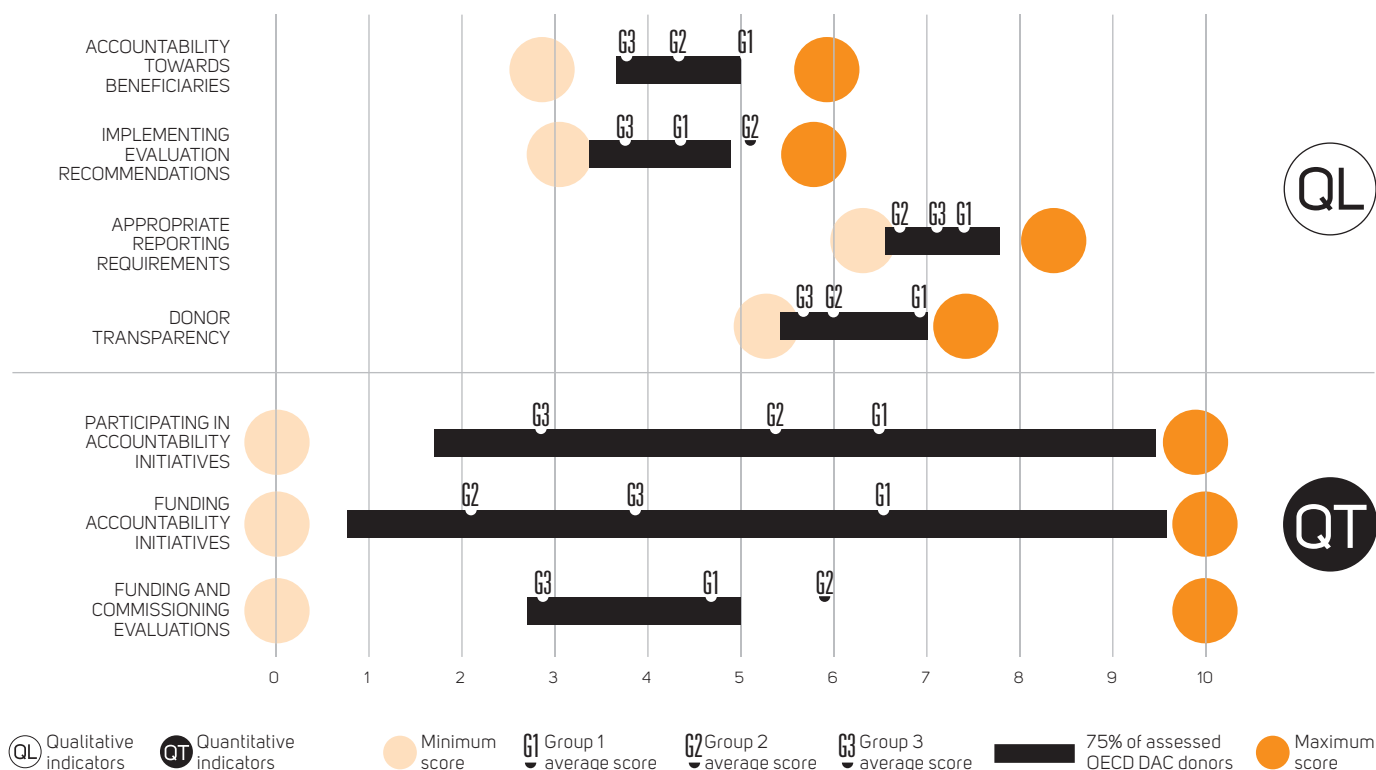
### GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TOWARDS AFFECTED POPULATIONS WOULD HELP ENSURE AID IS EFFECTIVE IN MEETING NEEDS

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The *GHD Declaration* also states donors also have a responsibility for preventing human suffering as one of the key objectives of humanitarian actions. However, poor scores for donors in indicators around support for prevention and preparedness, reinforce the widespread feeling of many humanitarian actors that donors are not fulfilling their accountability in this area. The slow donor response to what was clearly an impending famine in Kenya and Somalia is an example of this. Similarly, donors must assume some of the responsibility for the collective failure of the international community to apply lessons from previous disasters in Haiti and other countries in terms of prevention, recovery and risk reduction efforts.

Transparency of donors funding allocations and decision-making processes was also criticised by many humanitarian organisations interviewed. Haiti is a case in point. It is impossible to track much of the billions of aid promised for relief and recovery efforts. In many other crises, even simple

## OVERVIEW OF OECD/DAC DONOR SCORES



tools like UN OCHA's Financial Tracking System (FTS) are not being utilised consistently by donors, and aid allocations are often not reported in a timely manner. Still, donors in the field were often commended for the transparency around their decision-making processes – to the extent that field representatives exercised decision-making authority.

There are some positive signs, however, that donors are improving in this area. In many crises, donors were commended for their transparency around funding processes. Reporting requirements are on the whole considered as appropriate, though time consuming and too bureaucratic – suggesting that humanitarian organisations see the need and value of reporting as part of their accountability to funders, through the preference of many would be for harmonised reporting. More and more donors are supporting project evaluations as part of the regular procedures, though the challenge remains in supporting implementation of findings.

At the global level, several donor governments are actively engaged in aid transparency initiatives, such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative which is supported by 14 of the 23 donor governments assessed in the HRI. However, this is mostly limited to official development assistance, and there are gaps in humanitarian assistance reporting. Similarity, efforts to align and harmonise several accountability initiatives in the sector like Sphere and HAP-I, will help reduce duplication and complexities for organisations in the field, and renew the focus on making sure aid efforts are focused on accountability and results for affected populations (see [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)).

By making aid transparency and accountability towards affected populations the cornerstone of their assistance, donors would have greater assurance that their aid contributions and the work of all actors are effective in meeting needs.



## CONCLUSIONS

The HRI 2011 findings reinforce many of the same conclusions reached in previous editions of the HRI, and indeed, many other evaluations in the sector. After five years of the HRI, some initial conclusions and lessons are clear.

**FIRST**, despite commitments to ensure their aid is needs-based and based on humanitarian principles, donor governments have shown repeatedly that there are other factors that often determine decisions on aid allocations. Increasing politicisation of aid is one of those factors, and it is having serious consequences in determining whether humanitarian actors can access crisis affected populations and provide assistance and assure protection. Understanding these factors from the perspective of donors' humanitarian agencies is critical to determining how to best preserve and protect the neutrality, independence and impartiality of aid efforts in an increasingly complex environment.

**SECOND**, as the HRI findings on gender and beneficiary participation in programming confirm, the humanitarian sector is still far from working in ways that ensure aid is equitable, contributes to empowering vulnerable communities, and is focused on meeting the needs, priorities and aspirations of people affected by crisis. If humanitarian actors do not invest the time and effort to understand the dynamics of a crisis from the perspective of the people affected, aid efforts can never claim to be effective or have lasting impact. Donors have a clear role in insisting that their partners take the time to do so, and for ensuring that their own support is respectful and aligned to meeting those needs.

**THIRD**, the generalised disregard by donors for tackling prevention, risk reduction and recovery in ways that build capacity and resilience is inexcusable. Time and time again, the humanitarian sectors announces that it will not repeat the mistakes of the past, and will invest in prevention and risk reduction as the most efficient and effective way to address vulnerabilities and reduce the impact of crises. Yet, as the sluggish response to famine in the Horn of Africa and the fractured efforts to rebuild Haiti demonstrate, the humanitarian sector has not systematically applied lessons from the past. Donors have much of the responsibility for creating this situation, and could be part of the solution by re-shaping their humanitarian and development assistance policies, procedures and practices in ways that foster better integration of prevention, capacity building and resilience into all the programmes they support.

**FOURTH**, the current aid reform agenda is unlikely to address existing gaps and challenges facing the sector, such as politicisation or prevention and risk reduction, much less help the sector prepare for and anticipate the challenges on the horizon. These include increasing pressures and needs due to climate change, changing

demographics, and the likelihood of a long-term global economic downturn. What is needed is a dramatic shift in direction for the sector, focused on building the necessary capacities and competencies to anticipate, prepare for and adapt to changing contexts. Part of the shift will require traditional donors and humanitarian actors to reach out to other players, ranging from local actors, new and non-traditional donors, or the private sector. It will also require better understanding of the barriers that have so far impeded efforts to adopt good practices, as well as carefully considering the implications of new developments, such as the outcomes of the Arab Spring for humanitarian actions.

**FIFTH**, improved transparency and accountability of all actors, starting with donor governments, is essential to ensuring aid efforts are principled, and have the maximum impact for affected populations. By putting the focus back where it belongs – on the meeting the needs and respecting the capacities and priorities of affected populations – humanitarian actors can ensure that their policies, procedures and practices are aimed at achieving this end.

# THE FUTURE OF GOOD DONOR PRACTICES: NEXT STEPS FOR THE HRI

All these issues have been part of an unresolved agenda for the humanitarian sector for too long now. Rather than continuing to expound on the problems, it is time to look more closely at the reasons why this is such a challenge for the humanitarian sector, and in particular, look for practical solutions that will allow donors to maximise the value and impact of their contribution to aid efforts.

Through our experience of the HRI over the past five years, we have learned of the limitations of using the *GHD Principles* as the basis for our assessment of donor performance. As a non-binding political declaration, the GHD was, and continues to be, an excellent statement of good intentions. However, the reality of aid politics shows that many of the core concepts of good practice remain difficult to achieve, despite the strong commitment of donor governments' humanitarian aid departments. As our findings on politicisation show, governments too often have competing priorities, relegating principled approaches to a secondary level in aid efforts.

## DONOR PRACTICES NEED TO BE REDEFINED IN LINE WITH TODAY'S CONTEXT AND TO BETTER ANTICIPATE AND RESPOND MORE EFFECTIVELY TO FUTURE CHALLENGES

Since the HRI began in 2007, the GHD group of donors has expanded in numbers, but along the way, the GHD group has perhaps lost some of the impetus and urgency for transforming the way donors act individually and collectively as envisioned by the original group of enlightened donors that drafted the declaration. At the time, political commitment to the GHD was high, as seen in the number of senior representatives of donor agencies involved in process. This should not be interpreted to mean that the current GHD focal points are any less committed, simply that the context has changed, and the GHD no longer appears to be a priority for many donors.

Another disadvantage to the GHD is that the declaration itself is vague and contradictory in many places, leaving it open to interpretation by each donor. Additionally, reforms in the humanitarian sector, such as clusters and pooled funds, have made some of GHD declaration out-dated, and trends such as have the emerging importance of new donors, both government and private, have supplanted many of the original GHD donors in terms of size and influence.

The GHD's lack of clear targets and solid indicators to measure progress and hold donors accountable is a major flaw that has limited its capacity to exert pressure on donors

to act in a more consistent and principled manner. To some extent, the HRI was an attempt to provide such indicators and serve as a benchmark to track progress and promote improvements in donors' policies and practices. However, as we have learned, promoting changes and improvements in donor policies and practices is proving just as difficult as sustaining and extending reforms of the humanitarian system.

This is not to say that there have been no improvements – there have, and donors can take credit for many of these positive changes. Without a doubt, their concerted support and efforts to push humanitarian actors to institute reforms have been critical to the advances made so far. Nevertheless, as the HRI findings suggest, the current humanitarian reform agenda seems close to reaching the limits of effecting substantial changes, and it is time to focus on preparing for the challenges to come.

As we look forward to the next phase of the HRI, DARA intends to investigate these issues in greater detail as part of a renewed approach and orientation to the HRI, focused on understanding the “why?” behind these issues and developing practical guidance on what is needed to ensure all donors can maximise the benefits, results and impact of their support for humanitarian action. We see this as an opportunity to reflect on the lessons and experiences gained over the past five years, and reshape the initiative to go beyond an exercise focused on OECD/DAC donors to include other donors and funders. It will allow the sector to review and , and redefine good donor practices in line with the today's context, and identify the capacities needed for donors to better anticipate and respond more effectively to future challenges. We look forward to engaging with all stakeholders in this process, and hope that this makes a lasting contribution to improving the quality, effectiveness, accountability and impact of aid efforts.

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