

Executive Summary

Humanitarian interventions are perceived to be falling short of existing humanitarian needs and are often not guided by recognised principles of proportionality, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Donor policy and decision making have, at times, been compromised by conflicting domestic and foreign policy considerations, resulting in inequitable, unpredictable, and untimely funding allocations. Supply-driven aid, earmarking, short funding cycles, unrequited pledges, and late funding have all further reduced the effectiveness of humanitarian action.

The international donor community has resolved to strengthen its responses to humanitarian crises by improving effectiveness, efficiency and accountability through application of the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, established in 2003, which enshrines those *Principles* that are widely accepted as representing best practice in the field, and establishing a normative benchmark for donors.

The *Principles* define the objectives of humanitarian action as “to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.” They not only spell out the ethics that should guide humanitarian action, namely humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence, but also reflect those principles already embedded in the body of international human rights and humanitarian law. The *Principles* also set out good practices in donor financing, management and accountability.

The aim of this publication is to present the Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) as a tool for improving humanitarian response, measuring the behaviour of donors against their commitment to the *Principles*, and promoting system-wide change for better humanitarian action.

Part One: The Humanitarian Response Index

Chapter 1, “The Humanitarian Response Index: Measuring the Commitment to Humanitarian Best Practice,” by Laura Altinger, Silvia Hidalgo, and Augusto López-Claros, gives the reader an in-depth analysis of the Index, its vision and rationale, form and methodology. After outlining the GHD *Principles* in detail, the authors offer a brief overview of accountability initiatives already underway within the international humanitarian community, which are complementary to the HRI. This is followed by a detailed description of the methodological underpinnings of the Index, including its main objectives and the Survey questionnaire in which humanitarian stakeholders recorded their views about how donors active in their area of operations were faring in relation to the *Principles*. The authors then show how the content of the GHD was organized into five “pillars,” each with soft and hard data indicators which formed the basis for the Index and its rankings.

A key component of the HRI is a field survey of various stakeholders involved in humanitarian activities. The aim was to record the views or opinions of implementing agencies about how donors active in the agencies’ area of operations have fared in relation to the GHD *Principles*, across a representative selection of complex emergencies and natural disasters. The crises countries chosen were Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, Niger, Pakistan, Sudan, and Timor-Leste.

The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the tables illustrating the rankings and summary evaluations of a representative sample of countries: Sweden, Norway, the European Commission, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the UK, Switzerland, the United States, Spain, France, and Italy.

The authors chose the following five categories, on the basis of the 23 GHD *Principles*, grouping them

under “pillars” that deal with broadly similar aspects of humanitarian assistance:

- Responding to humanitarian needs
- Integrating relief and development
- Working with humanitarian partners
- Implementing international guiding principles
- Promoting learning and accountability

Twenty-five of the 57 indicators in the HRI constitute the hard data, capturing some dimension of the *Principles*, with the remainder drawn from the Survey and addressing, likewise, a specific GHD Principle. The methodology used resulted in the following rankings, taken from the Humanitarian Response Index 2007. Full details on the rankings are presented in Chapter 1.

Sweden is the best-ranking donor in the Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) 2007. Chapter 1 contains a description of its good performance in both hard and soft data indices, across all five pillars, and in the variables for each. This same data is presented for each of the 12 donor countries mentioned earlier.

Table 1. Humanitarian Response Index rankings 2007

Donor	HRI rankings	HRI scores
Sweden	1	5.37
Norway	2	5.13
Denmark	3	5.01
Netherlands	4	5.01
European Commission	5	4.91
Ireland	6	4.86
Canada	7	4.80
New Zealand	8	4.80
United Kingdom	9	4.76
Switzerland	10	4.68
Finland	11	4.58
Luxembourg	12	4.51
Germany	13	4.45
Australia	14	4.44
Belgium	15	4.42
United States	16	4.39
Spain	17	4.29
Japan	18	4.19
France	19	4.06
Austria	20	4.01
Portugal	21	3.95
Italy	22	3.87
Greece	23	3.17

The Humanitarian Response Index is intended to complement the voluntary endorsement donors have made to the GHD *Principles*. Its aim is to provide a platform of both qualitative and quantitative indicators to help donors assess their own humanitarian performance in relation to others, and, over time, in relation to their own past. The focus of the HRI is, therefore, on individual donor performance vis-à-vis the *Principles*.

Part Two: Perspectives on Good Humanitarian Donorship

To complement the presentation on the Humanitarian Response Index and in order to give a perspective on other dimensions of the humanitarian field, we are pleased to include a number of special chapters, written by eminent specialists, each of whom has shared insights in a particular area. These include the birth of the GHD initiative, the nature and effects of multilateral action, the link between humanitarian assistance and long-term development, and the role of the media.

In **Chapter 2**, the “Birth of Good Humanitarian Donorship,” Johan Schaar tells the story of how the GHD initiative came into being. He describes how he and a number of colleagues channelled their deep concerns over the “dysfunctional,” and often “irrational” situation obtaining in the field of humanitarian aid at the beginning of the millennium into a new consultative process to “move humanitarian donors towards more principled behaviour.” He writes briefly about donor behaviour of the period and then presents the vision of principled action and the negotiation process that led to the GHD *Principles* and the accompanying strategy to for action. Citing the important earlier work done by many individuals and organizations, he outlines the steps taken to set up the well-known “Stockholm Conference of June 2003 and the consensus document resulting from it.” He then assesses the emerging changes in donor behaviour after Stockholm, pointing out the role of “hidden assumptions” which stood in the way of improved donor practice. Finally, he expresses the factors which allow him to feel optimism about the ultimate impact of the GHD process.

Chapter 3, “Progress on the Front Lines,” by Jan Egeland, shows how many of the “somber predictions” which accompanied the crises in such countries as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Eastern Congo, South Sudan, Kosovo, and Nepal, or the terrifying disasters which befell South Asia, Pakistan, and the Horn of Africa were, in large measure, “averted because multilateral action,

building on local capacities, turned out to be infinitely more effective than what is even now recognized by much of the world's media and national parliaments." Stressing the collective international responsibility for humanitarian action and the vital importance of "unity of purpose," Egeland shares his conviction that "endless ongoing suffering" in a number of conflict-torn countries is "a product of either senseless bickering or passive neglect among those leading nations that could untangle these conflicts." He goes on to describe the four advocacy campaigns building in the coming years, which he feels will contribute to strengthening the core features of the Principles of GHD, many of which he concludes—based on his experience at the UN—have been ignored in recent massive humanitarian operations. Egeland ends his article with a plea, given the shrinking of the UN's relative share of the total humanitarian response, for a "broadening of partnerships" to make humanitarian efforts "less "UN-centric," offering four key recommendations for the improvement of the international humanitarian system.

Chapter 4, entitled "Opening Space for Long-Term Development in Fragile Environments," was contributed by Sarah Cliffe and Charles Petrie. As the name suggests, their paper explores the links between humanitarian aid and longer-term development. They argue that the "relief-to-development" continuum has been extensively debated in the past, but has received relatively little recent attention and is not measured in the GHD indicators. The authors explain the importance of preserving human and institutional capital in the face of conflict, and they express the view that "global policy discussions and the experience of delivering aid in the most fragile and politically contentious environments have tended to move humanitarian and development actors in somewhat different directions as regards strategy and organizational culture." As the links between humanitarian assistance and long-term development become both more important and more complex, the authors offer some initial ideas for strengthening them in order to make the gains of the former more sustainable, focusing particularly on the post-conflict recovery period in collapsed or repressive regimes. Stressing the importance of more realistic planning between national authorities and humanitarian partners before and during the post-conflict recovery period, they urge development actors to acknowledge more fully the value of continued large-scale interim humanitarian and NGO activities, and provide better support with analysis of local conditions, advising actors in both sectors to

"strengthen the political understanding" of the post-conflict recovery period.

In **Chapter 5**, called "The Media-Driven Humanitarian Response: Public Perceptions and Humanitarian Realities as Two Faces of the Same Coin," Michel Ogrizek discusses the media not only as the conveyors of "news" about crises, but also as manipulators of public attitudes about, and the actual conduct of, humanitarian needs and responses. Ogrizek describes the humanitarian movement as a "vector of globalization" and media networks as "the vehicle through which human suffering has become universalized and interventions borderless." He concedes the importance of images as generators of "empathy," and "indignation," but draws on a wealth of real-life examples to show how the media "capitalize on visual emotion" and "neglect the need for reason." On the positive side, he points out the critical importance of radio and new media in community development, and the role of media in exposing both delays and drawbacks in rescue operations as well as leadership responsibilities and failures, such as official denials of crisis severity or politically motivated refusals of foreign assistance. But as an experienced field practitioner, Ogrizek is critical of how the pervasive sense of critical emergency generated by "salesmen of hot news" interferes with the genuine humanitarian mission, distorts facts and priorities, purveys misinformation, arouses false anxieties, and leads journalists to corrupt footage, sometimes paying staggering sums for videos shot by "citizen journalists." He expresses concern for the way in which the frequent dependence of short-notice global network reporters on local authorities—even the military—for protection jeopardises the development of local media. Stressing the incompatibility of the "media business" with GHD Principle 11, he urges recognition of information itself as a form of humanitarian aid.

Part Three: Crisis Reports

This section of our publication presents an analysis of the eight crises analysed in this year's Humanitarian Response Index: Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, Niger, Pakistan, Sudan, and Timor-Leste. Each crisis report contains an initial box summarizing the country and the crisis "at a glance," followed by a brief outline of the humanitarian response. The historical and factual background of each crisis is then provided, and this is followed by a detailed

description and analysis of the successes and shortcomings of the international humanitarian response. A summary of 2006 emergencies is also provided.

Part Four: Donor Profiles

Part Four of this volume, prepared by Laura Altinger and Daniela Ruegenberg, offers full data on humanitarian aid for each of the 22 countries ranked in the HRI, as well as the European Commission. Taken together, they provide a comprehensive overview of countries' humanitarian aid programmes, including how much aid countries are giving, how timely it is, to which emergencies, parts of the world, and sectors it is directed, capturing essential elements of each donor's humanitarian actions.

The reader will find a list of the many acronyms used throughout these chapters, as well as a Glossary of terms referred to frequently, and an Appendix, containing the full Survey forming the basis for the qualitative measures of the Humanitarian Response Index.