OVERVIEW

OCHA’s fourth annual Global Humanitarian Policy Forum took place 1-2 December 2015 in New York, with the participation of more than 100 representatives of agencies, NGOs, think tanks, universities, the private sector and Governments from around the world. Organized by OCHA’s Policy Analysis and Innovation Section within the Policy Development and Studies Branch, the 2015 GHPF saw the launch of OCHA’s newest policy study, “Leaving No One Behind: Humanitarian effectiveness in the age of the Sustainable Development Goals,” followed by two days of workshops addressing key issues and potential solutions. With over thirty nationalities represented, and more than half of the participants being women, the Forum benefited from diverse voices and rich expertise. More than 500 viewers also tuned into the discussion online; an online archive is available on UN Web TV.

The Forum opened with a panel discussion including the following speakers:
- Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme
- Kate Gilmore, Deputy Executive Director, UN Population Fund
- Yasmin Haque, Deputy-Director, Office of Emergency Operations, UNICEF
- Abdurahman Sharif, Director, Somalia NGO Consortium
- Philip Spoerri, ICRC Permanent Observer to the UN
- Marcelle Hopkins, Journalist (moderator)

Panellists offered their perspectives on the applicability of the five shifts within the humanitarian effectiveness study: “reinforce, don’t replace existing capacities and coping strategies”; “enter with an exit: collaborate to reduce and end humanitarian need”; “leverage comparative advantage: strengthen connectivity and strategic leadership”; “see the whole picture: 360-degrees of needs and risk”; and “measure shared results for collective accountability.” Panellists provided a resounding endorsement the study’s direction and a snap poll taken during the discussion revealed that participants viewed “reinforce, don’t replace” and “see the whole picture” as the most important changes for the humanitarian sector to undertake.

“There are three elements we need to think about in strengthening local capacity: funding; supporting management of risks rather than transfer; and strengthening their voices. There needs to be increasing thinking on how we can be more effective in an environment that is increasingly risk-averse.”

Abdurahman Sharif, Somalia NGO Consortium

“It’s really important that even in our preparedness we consider…community capacities and systems that can be best suited to meet the needs of people – they are the first responders. How can we be supporting their capacity even better?”

Yasmin Haque, UNICEF

SNAP POLL
Which of the five shifts from the effectiveness study are most important?

- **Reinforce, don’t replace existing capacities and coping strategies** (37.5%)
- **Enter with an exit: collaborate to reduce humanitarian need** (12.5%)
- **Leverage comparative advantage** (15.6%)
- **See the whole picture: 360 degrees of risks and needs** (25.0%)
- **Measure shared results for collective accountability** (9.4%)

1 Since participating in the Forum, Kate Gilmore has been appointed UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights.
WORKSHOPS AND OUTCOMES

With the overall objectives of encouraging global thought leadership around key trends in the field of humanitarian affairs, while incorporating the views of thought leaders from outside the traditional humanitarian space, the GHPF this year also took on the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by UN Member States in September 2015. Overwhelmingly, participants agreed on the urgency of working together, whether humanitarians, development actors, Governments, local organizations, the private sector, or diaspora members, with the needs of affected populations at the centre. Workshops were designed to foster discussion around how humanitarians can incorporate the SDGs into their work, and which partners or tools are available to overcome challenges. Presentations were made by diverse stakeholders, including various UN agencies, private sector partners, local and international NGOs, and others, with workshops addressing political solutions to humanitarian crises, internal displacement, risk, financing, innovation, and broadly, “new ways of working”.

Workshop presentations and discussions provided a platform for tackling today’s challenges, with the aim of providing long, medium, and near term recommendations for the humanitarian system to focus upon. Some of the top recommendations were as follows:

1. Humanitarians cannot substitute for political solutions as protracted crises proliferate.
2. Promote shared analysis with those outside of the humanitarian system, including understanding context and incentives for action.
3. Overcome humanitarian and development siloes, including joint planning and flexible funding between humanitarian and development actors to ensure shared results.
4. Create a cross-sector alliance that promotes coordination and standards within the humanitarian innovation sector.
5. Ensure the formation of partnerships between business, Governments, humanitarian, and development actors, including those at the local level.
6. Ensure dedicated resources for preparedness, particularly support for local civil society capacity.
7. Address the structural causes of gender exclusion.
8. Adopt area and system based approaches to humanitarian response.

“When humanitarian needs escalate, it is because development needs have failed. This is a total picture that you cannot decide without all of the actors in the room. We need to sit down and talk, without segmentation.”

Kate Gilmore, UNFPA

“We international actors…have to come together to ensure no one is left behind…We need to embed humanitarian ethic within national policy frameworks.”

Amir Abdulla, WFP

Top questions on Pigeonhole, our interactive Q&A system:

What do the UN and other humanitarian organizations need to do to overcome mandate-driven silos & a culture of competition? Or can we continue as is and still be effective?

How can we ensure humanitarian aid is dignified, that it respects and values, and doesn’t undermine, those we are trying to help?

Do we have the right tools to measure effectiveness in urban response, which take into account more than just humanitarians, but also municipalities, private sector, and development actors?
The Forum wrapped up on 2 December with a briefing by the World Humanitarian Summit Chief, Antoine Gerard, and OCHA’s Policy Chief, Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, who offered their thoughts on the utility of discussions around adapting to the enormity of today’s crises and the need for people-centered, multi-stakeholder approaches. Forum participants then shared their workshop recommendations, debating the merits and considering potential challenges. An informal panel also shared its reactions to the Forum’s findings.

The Forum closed with a performance by Syrian author Ghada Alatrash, who recited the inspiring words of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish: We have on this earth what makes life worth living.

As the May 2016 World Humanitarian Summit approaches, the enthusiastic and thoughtful engagement of diverse stakeholders at events like GHPF have been invaluable to the process. In the two years leading up to the Summit, consultations have solicited a wide range of perspectives, paving the way toward accountable humanitarian action. Below are some global perspectives, as illustrated in the soon-to-be-launched 2015 World Humanitarian Data and Trends, an annual OCHA publication.

**TOPIC: AFFECTED PEOPLE**
Which groups were the most effective at meeting your community’s needs?

- National NGOs
- Your own community
- National Government

**TOPIC: PRIVATE SECTOR**
What are the barriers for private sector support in emergencies?

- Logistical challenges/access
- Cost effectiveness
- Unsure who coordinates response

**TOPIC: INNOVATION**
Which areas have the most potential to improve emergency response?

- Improved use of ICTs (mobile phones, internet and social media)
- Improved logistics
- Better communication/participation of affected communities

**TOPIC: PREPAREDNESS AND PREVENTION**
Who has the main responsibility for helping to prepare for/prevent crises?

- The Government
- Local aid groups
- Your own community
- International aid groups

SOURCE: World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat
#GHPF2015 Twitter highlights:

Powerful words from Amir Abdulla that ring true: “We need to think about what they need, rather than what we think they need.”

#GHPF2015 Manage risk, don’t transfer risk to local NGOs

Important qs from @AbdurahmanShar “How can we be more effective in an environment that is risk averse?”

Follow OCHA PDSB on Twitter: @OCHAPolicy
Download the Leaving No One Behind report and 2015 World Humanitarian Data and Trends at www.unocha.org/humanity360
Questions, comments? Write to OCHAPolicy@un.org.