

THE
**HUMANITARIAN
RESPONSE
INDEX 2009**



Whose Crisis? Clarifying Donor's Priorities

DARA



The Humanitarian Response Index 2009

Whose Crisis?

Clarifying Donor Priorities



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About DARA (Development Assistance Research Associates)

DARA – Development Assistance Research Associates – is an independent, international, non-profit organisation, which works to improve the quality and impact of development and humanitarian interventions. We do this through research, evaluations, promoting learning and knowledge sharing.

DARA aims to enhance global efforts to reduce human suffering and inequity and encourage prevention. Our focus is on the improvement of humanitarian action, the promotion of international stability and development, and the reduction of disaster risk.

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First published 2010 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS
and 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN 978-0-230-57349-9 ISBN 978-0-230-25042-0 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9780230250420

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10

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Foreword

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Throughout my life I have tried to spread a message of hope and reconciliation, and urged people to do good wherever they are. It is a message shared by The Elders, a group of world leaders that I have the privilege to chair and who are committed to sharing our wisdom, leadership and integrity to tackle some of the world's most urgent problems.

It is difficult for many of us to imagine a world of peace and harmony when we are faced with the discouraging evidence of the hard cruelty of poverty, violence and crises faced by millions every day. Yet I am convinced that despite all the misery and despair in the world, human beings are moved by compassion and solidarity. Good will always prevail over injustice, fear and anguish.

That is why the work of countless humanitarians, committed to making the world a better place for those affected by crises, is so vital. Their work is not only about saving lives and alleviating suffering. It is also about promoting human dignity and restoring hope to people whose lives have been shattered by conflict, violence, disasters and crises. Through their commitments, humanitarian workers epitomise a truth intrinsic to the African saying Ubuntu: "My humanity is bound up in yours."

Governments have an important role to play in supporting the work of humanitarians, so that their efforts reach those who need help the most. That support takes many forms: from the generosity of their funding of humanitarian needs, to facilitating the work of humanitarian organisations and supporting a coordinated approach, to resolving the pressing challenges presented by humanitarian crises.

To their credit, many of the world's governments have expressed their commitment to a principled approach to maximise the quality and impact of their humanitarian assistance. The Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, now signed by 35 of the world's wealthiest countries, is an excellent demonstration that governments can set aside their individual interests in favour of those of humanity. The GHD declaration sets out a series of commitments for donor governments to contribute to improving the quality and effectiveness of their aid.

However, as is often the case, the lofty ideals contained in political declarations are not enough. Concerted actions must follow, and these efforts must be monitored vigilantly so that governments do not slip in their commitments. That is why the Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) is so important.

The HRI is an independent and objective annual assessment that monitors and ranks how well government donors are meeting their commitments to good practice in their humanitarian assistance policies and practices. Produced by DARA since 2007, the HRI annual report helps to put pressure on governments to ensure that aid is used effectively, so that people affected by crises can recover their lives, livelihoods and dignity – their humanity. This year's HRI asks the question, "Whose crisis?" and reminds us again that our focus and priority must always be directed towards preventing and alleviating human suffering.

I have long advocated that the governments of wealthy nations should exercise their power responsibly and that they should be held accountable for their actions. Nowhere is this more evident than when we are talking about meeting the needs of millions of people affected by conflicts and disasters each year. As the HRI makes clear, accountability is not just about how and where government taxpayers' money is spent. It is also about the moral responsibility governments – and civil society and individuals – all share to make sure our efforts to alleviate human suffering have a lasting impact.

I know many government donor agencies dislike the idea of being reviewed and ranked by an independent organisation such as DARA – no one likes to be held up for external scrutiny. But where would we be today if it were not for the efforts of committed individuals and civil society organisations crying out against injustices, raising awareness of the many challenges faced by humanity and calling for greater accountability of the most powerful? Can we simply turn a blind eye to the situations in Darfur, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Colombia or Haiti, or the daily devastation of AIDS, poverty, disasters and violence?

My own experience as an Elder, promoting peaceful resolution of conflicts and promoting reconciliation, shows that sometimes the outsider can shed light on the issues and help create a climate in which attention is re-focused on what matters. The HRI 2009 offers a similar perspective, based on comprehensive research that uncovers how governments are performing and highlighting critical issues that matter today.

First, the HRI 2009 draws attention to the need for governments to work more actively to ensure access to humanitarian assistance for populations in need. In too many crises, affected populations do not have access to the basic necessities to survive or the conditions for recovery of their livelihoods. This has certainly been the case in places that I myself have visited recently, such as Sudan, where needs are unmet due to the challenges and obstacles faced by humanitarian organisations – often created by the very governments charged with protecting their citizens. It is clear that governments can take a concerted, unified stance to advocate and pressure other governments that deny the existence of a crisis, or place barriers to limit or prevent access to humanitarian assistance.

A second important issue raised in the HRI 2009 report is the disturbing matter of protection of vulnerable populations. This may represent the ultimate injustice: people with their lives already shattered by violence, conflict and calamity are exposed to danger, and have their rights and dignity violated. In my visits to many different parts of the world in situations of crisis, I am always deeply moved by the strength, courage and resilience of people who, despite all the abuses and

calamities faced, maintain their humanity. It is simply an unacceptable situation and the international community can and must do more to prevent such abuses and guarantee protection.

Finally, the HRI report reinforces the message of the importance of scaling up efforts for prevention, to reduce the risks faced by the world's poorest and most vulnerable. This is, of course, more than evident now in the area of disaster risk reduction, where an investment in building community preparedness, and strengthening capacity and resilience, pays enormous dividends. Much of the suffering of millions of people in Haiti or Myanmar or other countries facing natural disasters would certainly have been avoided if better prevention measures were in place.

But the HRI 2009 also underscores another issue that is of grave concern: the limited attention given to the prevention of conflicts and violence. This is a particular area to which I have dedicated much of my time and I am convinced that through promoting dialogue, reconciliation and conflict prevention we can avoid countless human suffering. However, it is also a clear responsibility of the international community, and of wealthy countries in particular, to advocate and work towards preventing conflicts before they break out – and, in the event of a conflict, to work tirelessly to minimise the consequences. Helping humanitarian organisations be prepared to respond to conflicts and disasters is also critically important and an area where governments can also do much more.

The HRI 2009 offers us a perspective on how well donor governments support humanitarian action around the world. I sincerely hope world leaders pay close attention to the HRI 2009 findings and renew their commitments to work together and constantly improve humanitarian assistance. I also hope for governments to work closely with civil society and humanitarian organisations to promote greater compassion, morality, caring and accountability in the way we respond to the plight of millions of people affected by crises.

Acknowledgements

Silvia Hidalgo, Director of DARA

The Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) is a shared endeavour involving the collaboration of numerous individuals and organisations. DARA is extremely grateful to all of them.

I would like to begin by expressing special gratitude to the people who were interviewed for the HRI 2009 in the field. Without their help, insight and knowledge, the HRI would not exist. Many of them went above and beyond ‘the call of duty’, providing support for our field teams and constant encouragement. We were also assisted in the field by organisations that took the time to provide logistical and administrative support. We cannot thank you all enough.

We thank the donor agencies of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) who provided us with their feedback and data. We look forward to engaging with them further in a joint effort to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian aid.

Our Peer Review Committee, which works to ensure that the HRI achieves its objectives while continuing to improve, deserves a special mention. We would therefore like to recognise the contributions of Jock Baker, Christian Bugnion, David Roodman, James Darcy, Véronique de Geoffroy, Claude Hilfiker, Manuel Sánchez Montero, Eva Von Olerich and Ed Schenkenberg. I would also like to mention John Cosgrave for providing his input to the HRI’s methodology.

DARA’s Advisory Board helps us broaden our horizon and further policy issues. I would like to acknowledge José María Figueres, António Guterres, Diego Hidalgo, Larry Minear, Iqbal Riza, Mary Robinson and Pierre Schori. We are especially grateful to DARA’s Board member José María Figueres for his leadership, relentless support and motivation. He is truly a driving force for the HRI.

Without the support of independent foundations such as AVINA, the HRI would not be possible. For this we would like to express our appreciation to Stephan Schmidheiny and Evelyn Braun.

We are honoured that H.E. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has contributed to this year’s HRI and thank him for his support and endorsement of the HRI. We would also like to thank Mr. Kofi Annan for his support for the HRI. We would like to express our gratitude to the Global Humanitarian Forum (GHF), the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) and The Brookings Institution for recognising the importance of the HRI and furthering our dissemination efforts.

Finally, sincere thanks go to everyone who participated in the field missions and all of DARA. The HRI is very much a team effort and the entire organisation’s staff contributes to its success. I thank you all for your commitment and enthusiasm. Short of listing all of DARA’s staff, I would especially like to mention Philip Tamminga. Both he and Fernando Espada – who has participated in four HRI missions this year – have a profound understanding of the initiative and practically ‘live’ the HRI. Daniela Ruegenberg and Luis Sánchez together did remarkable work carrying out the quantitative analysis and constructing the indicators and rankings. Marybeth Redheffer, with support from Lauren Hefferon, drafted and edited endless texts, both with great professionalism and serenity.

We are also very grateful to Paula Beardsley, Michelle Kelly, Rebecca Dowman and the design team of Wardour for their dedication and patience on the copy editing and design.

Introduction

Silvia Hidalgo, Director of DARA

In 2008, as the Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) moved into its third year, a global financial and economic crisis of unprecedented dimensions began to unfold. The urgency, immediacy and magnitude of the challenges posed by this crisis have threatened to crowd out efforts to address both ongoing and immediately pressing humanitarian causes. Wall Street's closing bells seemed to silence the cries of people in need – presenting the HRI with a new paradox related to both the meaning and concept of *crisis*.

The HRI 2009, which assesses worldwide donor response in 13 crisis-affected countries, gives rise to several questions: Whose crisis? Is the world able to deal with major global needs and threats? What are wealthy countries' priorities? And, more importantly, how can humanitarian efforts make sure that people are put first?

More than six billion human beings share our small and fragile world. Crises cause immense suffering, affecting more than a quarter of a billion people every year. The common goal must be to avoid human suffering and put affected populations at the forefront of our actions. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, there is a growing expectation that responses must improve, both now and in the future.

Humanitarian needs are evolving and the context is acutely challenging. In 2008, there were more than 230 'natural' disasters worldwide, affecting more than 211 million people and causing more than US\$180 billion in damages. An estimated 70 percent of all natural disasters are now climate-related. Last year also saw 28 major conflicts. Some 42 million people were forcibly displaced in 2008 as a result of conflicts and natural disasters, with massive new displacements in the Philippines, Sudan, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Colombia and Sri Lanka. Last year was also the most perilous year on record for humanitarian workers, with more than 260 humanitarian aid workers killed, kidnapped or seriously injured. Attacks against aid workers increased four-fold in the past decade. Access is an increasing challenge and humanitarian responses are less and less capable of reaching those in need.

The need for vision

It would be careless to allow the global financial crisis and economic downturn to deflect policy attention undeservedly away from addressing and responding to priorities. Those who disproportionately suffer must be put first. Human suffering and its causes, existing emergencies and risk must be tackled. The challenge is to find common ground and to identify and pursue policies that prioritise people.

This principle is not proving easy to achieve in practice. In effect, the global economic slump is being associated with a focus on immediate short-term national issues and a fall in aid. In particular, as competing claims rise on shrinking budgetary resources, budget cuts tend to affect both longer-term policies and external assistance. The latter implies that many will suffer disproportionately in the current context, jeopardising the steps needed both to improve our collective response capacity and prepare for and prevent future crises.

With the necessary vision at national and international levels to avoid the trap of narrow and short-term thinking, we can focus on both ongoing emergencies and future needs posed by the rise in disasters. In particular, policies and programmes to address today's pressing problems can be designed and implemented with a long-term outlook.

The dilemmas of 'Whose crisis?' and 'Clarifying donor priorities' that are faced in this year's HRI, also resonate with Robert Chambers' *Whose Reality Counts?* where he argues that central issues in development have been ignored and many mistakes have arisen as a result of domination by those with power. The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) report captured this same issue when assessing international performance in the tsunami response. Through assessing official donor funding in the context of the TEC, DARA came to understand the complete lack of guidance that donors showed throughout their response.

Areas for action

The HRI 2008 posed the question: “How does the world respond to humanitarian crises?” The response was: “We can do better.” The reality today is that we *must* do better.

The HRI asks what can realistically be done. Resources are, of course, fundamental for appropriate humanitarian response. At a time when aid is arguably most needed, unmet humanitarian requirements are at their highest levels with a funding gap for United Nations appeals of US\$4.8 billion. In September 2008, however, the United States Congress debated and eventually passed a bill that would authorise the US Treasury Department to spend up to US\$700 billion to bail out financial companies and stem the financial crisis. How much are we prepared to invest to respond to current and future human crises? We cannot afford to turn our backs on human suffering.

The findings of the HRI this year underscore the following points:

1 Humanitarian access

Full and unimpeded access is a basic prerequisite to humanitarian action. This year, humanitarian access was a major challenge to the response in ten of the 13 crises covered. Issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity are repeatedly used to hinder humanitarian access, yet claims that humanitarian aid and humanitarian workers can threaten national sovereignty or challenge territorial integrity seem ludicrous.

With some exceptions, such as Ethiopia, the neutrality of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has allowed that organisation access in remote areas and more importantly, allowed it to raise concerns about protection of civilians with all parties in a particular context. In Somalia, the number of international staff working in the country fell to zero.

In many emergencies, local authorities and governments are caught up in internal conflicts, meaning humanitarian assistance is denied to people in dire need. Donors have a strong role to play in advocating and securing humanitarian access in appropriate ways. Our ability to respond to crises is being compromised and those most affected are the world’s most vulnerable people.

2 Protection of civilians

Violence and the threat of violence continue unabated in many conflict areas and the inclusion of protection as a specific objective of humanitarian action in the *GHD Principles* was viewed as an important achievement. Protection covers a wide range of activities that are aimed at ensuring respect for the rights of all individuals. Protection measures include establishing a presence on the ground, negotiating humanitarian access, preventing breaches of humanitarian law and ending such breaches or limiting their effect when they occur.

In the crises covered this year, the ability to carry out protection measures was the determining factor qualifying the international community’s response. Donors are still little inclined to fund protection efforts however, as these actions and forms of assistance are low profile. Even in the DRC, where *GHD Principles* have been piloted and major progress made with respect to needs-based funding, it was found that donors need to provide greater leadership on protection issues. In crises such as Sri Lanka, there is a great need for protection in areas where, although there is no fighting, there is no rule of law. Protection efforts are such a key part of humanitarian response that it is our collective ability to provide the right assistance and avoid further human suffering that is at stake when protection efforts are weak.

3 Prevention measures

There is still an unwillingness or inability on the part of humanitarian actors to engage in prevention, as opposed to response. The difficulty is demonstrating that preventive actions have an impact in terms of saving lives and avoiding human suffering. A serious change has to take place in the way the system frames its humanitarian action so that the key objectives of humanitarian action are acted upon.

Prevention is often associated with natural hazards, but it also has an important function in man-made conflicts. In the crises in Gaza and Sri Lanka this year, all those involved recognised that the catastrophic outcomes in loss of life were foreseeable, yet prevention measures were either inappropriate or absent altogether. Making risk reduction a mainstream component of development efforts and strengthening the links with climate change adaptation is a priority. A key continuing problem is that donor resources are often compartmentalised, complicating full and comprehensive responses.

Prevention and capacity building require resources and focus. HRI findings this year point to insufficient prevention efforts and limited capacity building, especially at the local level. Donors cannot afford not to take serious action in this time of increasing hazards. Efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian response must be a constant goal of joint efforts.

The HRI objective

The HRI is an independent initiative that annually assesses and ranks donor commitments to improving the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian aid. It provides a platform for improving humanitarian action. The premise behind the HRI is that wealthy nations have responsibilities in providing humanitarian action and, as donors, a clear role to play in ensuring that humanitarian action and the humanitarian aid system become more effective. A large proportion of humanitarian assistance depends on the funding of traditional donors. Donor roles and aid are more a question of responsibility than of solidarity.

The HRI 2009 is set against a backdrop of challenges: increased need and threats coupled with decreased access and means. The HRI is a new initiative in the sector with a clear agenda and purpose to improve humanitarian action. It is based on a powerful idea designed to align humanitarian response to need. It focuses on both providing information and analysis on humanitarian aid across the globe annually and communicating the results to prompt positive change.

The HRI helps both question and dismantle some of the 'sacred cows' and deep-rooted myths and assumptions about the humanitarian sector in an effort to encourage greater transparency, accountability, change and improved performance. The bulk of humanitarian funding has been provided, and continues to be provided, by wealthy country governments in the form of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Humanitarian organisations have overwhelmingly relied on this form of funding and are only more recently engaged in trying to source private funding. There are increasing examples of humanitarian agencies rejecting governmental aid, feeling that it compromises their independence and neutrality. The reality for the bulk of agencies, however, is that their engagement in a given context, and the aid programmes they provide, overwhelmingly depend on donor government support.

The HRI process

It was against a backdrop of increasingly politicised aid and decreased humanitarian space that donors conceived the *Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD)* initiative in Stockholm in 2003. There are many virtues in the commitments of *GHD*. The HRI, beyond measuring donor commitment to improving the quality and effectiveness of aid, is an important process that enables representatives of humanitarian agencies in the field to reflect on challenges, donor commitments, and whether policies and actions effectively improve humanitarian response and make a difference in peoples' lives.

The *GHD* initiative relies heavily on a functioning humanitarian system, the availability of comprehensive needs assessments, and strong UN leadership and coordination. While responses should be highly context-specific, and there is no expectation to define an exact blueprint for good donor practice, there is a real need to identify and address shortcomings and challenges in putting *GHD Principles* into practice. Furthermore, there needs to be a growing recognition of the crucial role that donors can and should play in helping the humanitarian system become more effective. Donor involvement can be key in ensuring that affected populations are placed at the centre of our focus and in promoting greater levels of quality and accountability. Despite the virtues of non-earmarked funds, donors that provide agencies with a blank cheque without seeking greater levels of accountability are not helping to improve the system and response.

It is a system of many parts with many actors, and the process is just as important as the product. More than 2,000 responses in 13 different crisis contexts have been gathered for this year's HRI. The cumulative experience and understanding of the state of humanitarian action that the HRI provides, from the vantage point of so many people in different crises, helps us appreciate circumstances, current realities, and ongoing and future challenges. Gaining perspective in this fashion is both an engaging and rewarding process.

Many heads of humanitarian agencies are unfamiliar with *GHD* and its principles and the HRI survey brings the principles to the field, putting them into context. It engages humanitarian staff and enables them to reflect on how the *GHD* can be further put into action. Often, information is further shared at the field level with different groups or associations of humanitarian organisations. In this sense, the HRI as a project becomes far larger than itself. In addition to aid agency interviews, the HRI has involved meetings with beneficiaries, visits to aid projects, and discussions with local authorities and donors.

A living tool

Often aid has been equated with the concept of gifting. The idea of a gift is always positive, something one can only welcome and be grateful for, with the gift never to be returned. Yet we know that aid can also be detrimental. Providing the right aid to the right people in the right way is a complex challenge. Sourcing new methods, concepts and ideas from other sectors and industries in an effort to provide better aid and improve humanitarian response should be a welcome strategy. At DARA, in envisaging the HRI we believe that we can help in this respect by developing a useful and necessary tool for the humanitarian system that is appropriate for the sector. It can use new benchmarks and promote different existing connections, namely agency information and views on their donors.

In developing the HRI, we have set the yardstick high and intend to keep it high. The HRI's Peer Review Committee is essential in this. Members help us focus on our objective and on what is appropriate, without discouraging bold ideas. They, together with the input of the thousands of people interviewed, have accompanied the birth of the HRI and helped shape its feasibility, vindication and fit within the sector.

The HRI has the potential to bring about change. It can be a living tool, providing useful comprehensive and context-specific information on responses and trends in order, ultimately, to improve humanitarian performance. It has the ability to stir humanitarian actors and inspire them to share their experiences and reflect on existing challenges and ways of improving humanitarian action.

Band Aid and piecemeal approaches are not appropriate for the challenges that we face. The key is to find the policy 'levers' that can influence large-scale processes and tackle the issues. Less than three years into the humanitarian reform process, we are rapidly seeing that the focus must be on basic issues but with real means to change. The way forward is probably not to standardise, but to expand and improve. We really must do better.

The HRI 2008 report is divided into four parts. Part 1 analyses the results of this year's findings, the overall rankings and the rankings by pillar. Several overarching conclusions are also drawn – the issues of access, protection and prevention are pinpointed as presenting problems in the response to humanitarian crises and donors need to address them urgently if humanitarian aid is to be as effective as possible.

Part 2 of the HRI comprises thematic chapters written by experts in the field. In Chapter 1, Frederick D. Barton and John Ratcliffe take a close look at the US as a donor and offer a fresh perspective on the criticism of US policy and practice, suggesting specific recommendations on how it can improve. Elizabeth Ferris, in Chapter 2, examines the role of national and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in humanitarian response and the need for international humanitarian actors to include them from the beginning and nourish a more meaningful relationship with them. Chapter 3, by Bekele Geleta, calls for a paradigm shift in the humanitarian system, which will require strengthening partnerships and investing in risk reduction and capacity building in order to face the myriad of crises facing the planet. Finally, in Chapter 4, Raymond C. Offenheiser proposes a new rights-based humanitarian framework which prioritises disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Part 3 includes 11 crisis reports from the field missions to Afghanistan, China, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Georgia, Haiti, Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia and Sri Lanka. These crisis reports examine how well the donors are living up to their commitments to the *GHD* in their response to these humanitarian crises. The authors provide recommendations on how donors can improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance they provide.

Finally, Part 4 consists of 23 donor profiles for each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) donors. Each donor profile describes the donor's strengths and weaknesses, both by pillar as well as for specific indicators.





Part 1
**The Humanitarian
Response Index 2009**



The Humanitarian Response Index 2009

Donor Accountability in Humanitarian Action

Silvia Hidalgo and Philip Tamminga

As the world continues to grapple with one of the worst economic crises in history, disasters, conflicts and emergencies have carried on unabated. There were over 230 'natural' disasters and 28 major conflicts affecting more than a quarter of a billion people last year, all of which required international assistance. International efforts have failed to reduce the scale of internal displacement caused by conflict and the economic crisis is making the situation even worse, with its full effects still unknown.

An estimated US\$10.4 billion was provided by the world's wealthiest countries for humanitarian assistance in 2008 (Development Initiatives 2009) – far less than that required to meet humanitarian needs and leaving serious funding gaps for many emergencies (OCHA 2009a). Making efficient and effective use of this already insufficient amount is critical for the survival of millions affected by crises. How can wealthy governments use their power and influence to help reshape the humanitarian system so it can respond to increased needs and demands today, as well as in an uncertain future? And how can donor agencies be more accountable for ensuring resources and funds are used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the needs of the millions of people affected by crises?

Recognition is growing that humanitarian challenges must be addressed comprehensively. Donor governments have endorsed principled approaches in their funding and support for humanitarian action. Greater effort is now needed to develop guidance and tools to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action. The Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) is an independent initiative that annually ranks and assesses donor commitments to improve the quality and effectiveness of their humanitarian action. It is built on the premise that donors, as both the main funders of humanitarian action and international governmental actors, have a powerful and influential role to play in promoting positive changes in the way the humanitarian sector provides assistance to those who need it most.

The HRI 2009 findings show that the world's most powerful and wealthy donor nations are still underperforming when it comes to providing humanitarian assistance in a principled and effective way that helps people affected by crises to preserve their lives, livelihoods and dignity. Yet this is the basis of governments' responsibilities under international humanitarian law and the driving force behind the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, to which wealthy donor governments committed themselves in recognition of their special role in ensuring more effective humanitarian action.

The HRI 2009 key findings

The scale and scope of its research process allows the HRI to draw attention to areas where governments and humanitarian organisations can work to increase the effectiveness and impact of humanitarian funding and support. This year, four issues affecting the quality and impact of international humanitarian assistance stand out as areas in critical need of attention. These areas are:

- ▶ Understanding good practice
- ▶ Humanitarian access
- ▶ Protection of at-risk populations
- ▶ Conflict and disaster prevention and preparedness

Gaps in understanding good practice, challenges to humanitarian access, shortfalls in protection and a lack of attention to prevention and preparedness were failings seen in many of the crises studied this year. They had serious consequences for the quality and impact of the humanitarian response. Given the widespread nature of these failings, they deserve special attention by donors and their partners.

1 Gaps in understanding and applying good donor practice

Donors face difficulties meeting their commitments and accountability to the people their humanitarian assistance intends to support. The challenges include understanding the context and needs of a crisis, and identifying the best channel and approach for a given humanitarian response. Respondents interviewed by HRI field missions tend to distinguish between those donors that have a presence in-country and those who do not. The donors in the latter group may be less knowledgeable of the situation and less capable of effective engagement and comprehensive support, but they tend to have fewer competing interests guiding their humanitarian response.

Improvements in individual donor policy and practice can have enormous repercussions in terms of improving overall donor performance and, as a consequence, the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action. The HRI rankings offer a synoptic view of donor performance and the results highlight the need for better collaboration between good and poor performers on how best to embed and put into practice the *GHD Principles*. Such a process of sharing good practice would be of particular benefit to those donors who have only recently signed up to the GHD initiative.

2 Barriers to access populations in need of humanitarian assistance

In many of the crises studied in this year's HRI, the lack of access to humanitarian assistance for crisis-affected and at-risk populations was a serious obstacle to efforts to provide life-saving assistance and support. There are growing examples of remote management of operations, where neither donors nor operational organisations have direct access to the affected populations – and therefore little evidence that interventions are meeting actual needs. In all cases, insecurity for both humanitarian workers and affected populations continues to hamper access to assistance.

This is an area where donors, working together with all stakeholders to respect the rights of affected populations to assistance, could be well placed to provide the resources and diplomatic pressure required to facilitate safe access for humanitarian workers.

3 Failures in protection of populations at risk

Protection of civilians in crises is at the core of both the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law. The inclusion of protection in the *GHD Principles* was a major achievement. It recognised that donor governments play an important role in ensuring that the protection of crisis-affected populations is a priority and is respected by all actors. Despite this commitment, there were many crises where the protection of affected populations was weak or inadequate. The results of the HRI field research indicate how widespread the problem is, with many HRI crisis reports revealing that the humanitarian system is ill-equipped to respond effectively to the issue of protection, particularly of internally displaced peoples (IDPs).

The best examples from the research, however, show that donors are in fact in a position to take a more active and coordinated stance around protection issues. For example, donors can provide adequate funding to mechanisms such as the protection cluster; they can help agencies develop institutional and operational capacity for protection and assistance; and they can assertively advocate that all parties respect the rights, physical integrity and dignity of people caught up in crisis.

4 Continued neglect of prevention and preparedness

Much has been said about the importance of investing in prevention and preparedness. Countless lives and livelihoods could be saved if the international community made a concerted effort to prevent human suffering through scaled-up preparedness and risk-reduction measures. Yet support for prevention remains weak within the international community.

While most of the emphasis has been on disaster risk reduction, little has been said about the need for wealthy countries to invest also in conflict prevention and preparedness measures. The HRI crisis reports underscore how ill-prepared the international community is to anticipate and prepare for the humanitarian consequences of disasters and conflict. A serious shift in donor policy and practice is needed to scale-up support for conflict and disaster prevention and risk-reduction efforts at the community level. Prevention needs to be fully factored into the aid system.

Key messages and recommendations

- 1 If donors wish to achieve greater impact with their assistance they need to know how to apply the agreed *GHD Principles* better in their agencies and among their partners in today's complex and evolving environments. This process could be helped by engaging in wider discussions with all stakeholders, including non-traditional donors, about how donors can best support effective humanitarian action. Clear practical guidance is needed to apply concepts of good donor practice in different crisis contexts, and the HRI findings offer evidence and practical examples of good practice to support this urgent task.
- 2 Donor governments should be encouraged to look for ways to overcome the barriers that impede effective access to much-needed humanitarian assistance through the development of policy guidelines

and common but flexible approaches to access issues. These range from humanitarian diplomacy at the highest levels to operational support and resources at the field level.

- 3 More should be done to prioritise the protection of people at risk or affected by crisis in order to protect their lives and dignity. Donor governments should consider supporting agencies with a protection mandate such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in developing and implementing operational guidelines for protection. They should also consider combining this with their own high-level diplomatic efforts to ensure protection is recognised and respected by all parties in a conflict or crisis.
- 4 Donor governments should consider prioritising investment in disaster risk reduction and contingency planning to minimise the impact of disasters. In natural disasters, the role of the state needs to be recognised and local capacities should be considered in the early stages of the response. Donors should also consider developing and supporting conflict preparedness and prevention strategies to minimise the loss of lives and suffering caused by conflicts.

In the sections that follow, these issues are explored in greater detail. The findings help to understand the challenges facing donors and their operational partners, as well as providing examples of good practice that may help donors find solutions to these problems. The first section provides a brief overview of the current context of humanitarian action, with an emphasis on the global economic crisis and its effects on the humanitarian sector. The following sections outline the HRI 2009 donor rankings and changes from last year, as well as overall performance against the five different pillars of good practice that make up the HRI. Some of the emerging issues and critical failings identified from the HRI field research are discussed in the next section, while the final section draws out some preliminary policy implications and recommendations for donors.

Trends and challenges to humanitarian aid effectiveness

Last year, the HRI 2008 report drew attention to a number of issues and challenges facing aid effectiveness. These were: maintaining the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian assistance, improving the quality and use of needs assessments, supporting links between relief, recovery and development, promoting better use of quality standards and investing in the capacity of the humanitarian system to prevent and respond to future crises (DARA 2009). The HRI 2009 research confirms that these issues remain relevant and valid today.

A number of developments over the past year affected how government donors and humanitarian organisations responded to crises. These included the trend towards a shrinking of humanitarian space, problems with access and security for humanitarian workers, growing evidence of the humanitarian consequences of climate change and the effects of the global economic crisis on the humanitarian sector. At the same time, several positive trends and developments helped to strengthen and reinforce efforts to improve the capacity, performance and accountability of the sector to deal with an increasingly complex operating environment. The purpose here is not to review all these trends but simply to provide a backdrop against which to put the HRI findings and results from this year into context.

Increasingly complex operating environments

A number of crises and emergencies last year had extremely complicated operating environments making it difficult for donors and humanitarian organisations to respond adequately to needs. For example, Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti and Sri Lanka – all crises examined in past editions of the HRI, and again this year – show how challenging it is for the humanitarian sector to consolidate gains and move beyond emergency relief to more integrated approaches to stability and recovery. This is not a new situation, but it does reflect a trend that appears to be growing.

The expulsion of aid workers from Sudan following the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of President Bashir was perhaps the best example of how difficult the operating environment is becoming and how inadequate the current approaches appear to be. But the response to the earthquake in China also illustrates a positive trend of growing capacity at the national and community levels to respond to crises – and the corresponding challenges of adapting and integrating the international humanitarian response system to such a context (Cosgrave 2010a).

Increasing and interlinked risks and vulnerabilities

Studies released this year predict a rapid and dramatic increase in the scale and scope of humanitarian emergencies on the horizon. Those addressing the human impact of climate change indicate that the lives and livelihoods of more than four billion people are vulnerable and at risk today. The number of lives lost is predicted to increase by two thirds by 2030, compared with today. Add to this the projections of the humanitarian costs of responding to climate change and its multiplier effects (poverty, health, conflicts, migration, etc.), and the picture becomes truly alarming (GHF Geneva 2009 and Oxfam International 2009). All these studies emphasise that the scale and frequency of disasters, conflict and poverty will increase, with multiple threats combining to have even more devastating effects on the world's poorest and most vulnerable. The evidence from the HRI's field research over the past three years suggests that this trend is already underway and that the humanitarian system is insufficiently prepared for the convergence and combination of risks and vulnerabilities.

Waning interest in humanitarian reform

Progress in carrying forward the humanitarian reform agenda continued over the past year, though it appears that political interest and commitment to reform has diminished. As indicated in the HRI 2008, moving beyond the United Nations system to include other actors continues to be a challenge (DARA 2009). The recent evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) funding has highlighted both positive and negative experiences. There are signs that it is becoming more inclusive and accessible to non-UN actors, yet obstacles remain and the amount of funding available within the CERF is limited. For example, as of October 2009, less than US\$400 million was pledged and committed for the CERF this year (OCHA 2008).

Achieving more effective coordination is still an elusive goal for humanitarian reform, as is the aim of consolidating the role of Humanitarian Coordinators. The effectiveness of the cluster approach has been mixed, depending on the crisis context, showing that there is still room for improvement. However, efforts to establish performance indicators in each cluster are a positive sign that the approach is becoming institutionalised.

Another issue, already highlighted in the HRI 2008, was donors' failure to report regularly to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service (FTS) (DARA 2009). FTS was intended to increase the transparency in donor reporting of humanitarian assistance, in line with *GHD* Principle 23. Without this information, it is difficult for the sector to plan and distribute resources equitably, in proportion to needs. There have been efforts over the past year towards building consensus on standardised definitions and data sources for tracking humanitarian assistance (IATI 2009), but as yet the potential of FTS has failed to be achieved. The level of accuracy and impetus of reporting has fallen from 2005, when donors were far more consistent with their reporting following the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Taking quality and accountability issues seriously

One positive observation is that more and more humanitarian organisations are considering the issues of integrating quality and accountability in the way they provide assistance. For example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) members embarked on a peer review process to examine how their organisations are accountable to crisis-affected populations. As part of the revision process of both the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP-I) and the Sphere Project, there have been more efforts to share learning and liaise at the field level (2009). At a wider level, the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) launched a Humanitarian Outcomes project to benchmark the performance of the humanitarian system and complement its annual evaluation of humanitarian action (Humanitarian Outcomes 2009).

These examples show a positive trend towards better harmonisation and integration of the many different quality and accountability initiatives in the sector – even though there is still no overall consensus on what accountability means in humanitarian action.

An expanding donor club

One of the trends noted in last year's HRI was the expanding humanitarian donor landscape, with more and more actors funding and supporting humanitarian action around the world. The global financial crisis may slow this expansion, but the HRI research this year shows the trend continuing. Knowledge about how these new and non-traditional donors act and how they interpret good practice is still very limited. However, initial research in the HRI 2009 into how these donors and their funding mechanisms are perceived by humanitarian organisations offers insights into how and where to engage with them around issues of good practice, quality and accountability.

Meanwhile, membership of the GHD donor group continues to expand with a number of donor governments joining the original 23 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD–DAC) members, bringing the total to 35 governments (see Table 1). This shows that new and emerging governmental donors are interested in good practice – although progress is slow. The volume of humanitarian assistance provided by the new GHD donors is extremely small, making it difficult to measure and compare with more established donor governments.

Challenges and constraints in donor capacity

Over the past three years, the HRI has regularly stressed the importance of building the capacity of individual donor agencies in order to engage and coordinate more effectively with other donor agencies and the humanitarian system. However, the overall trend this year seems to be that donor agencies in fact have decreasing capacity and fewer resources available for humanitarian assistance. Many donor agencies are reducing staff and budgets, and this creates a real obstacle in their applying, monitoring and following up the implementation of *GHD Principles* in donor practice. HRI interviews with donor representatives at the field level show there is a real lack of practical guidance for donors on how to translate the *GHD Principles* into specific actions or behaviours.

This finding is reinforced by a report on donor coordination at the field level commissioned by the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) on behalf of the GHD (Channel Research 2009). The report notes that donors continue to lack practical guidance in applying and prioritising the *GHD Principles* in different contexts. Donor funding studies that DARA participated in as part of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) reached the same conclusion nearly four years ago, reflecting how difficult it has been to institute changes in the way donors act (TEC 2006). This illustrates why it is important that the GHD group reflect

Table 1: The GHD donors

GHD donors	
Australia	<i>Latvia</i>
Austria	<i>Lithuania</i>
Belgium	Luxembourg
<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>Malta</i>
Canada	Netherlands
<i>Cyprus</i>	New Zealand
<i>Czech Republic</i>	Norway
Denmark	<i>Poland</i>
<i>Estonia</i>	Portugal
EC	<i>Republic of Korea</i>
Finland	<i>Romania</i>
France	<i>Slovak Republic</i>
Germany	<i>Slovenia</i>
<i>Greece</i>	Spain
Hungary	Sweden
Ireland	Switzerland
Italy	UK
Japan (observer status)	US

Countries in italics are new GHD members and non-DAC donors that are not covered in the HRI’s rankings and analysis as the volume of humanitarian assistance is not sufficient to draw comparisons with other GHD donors

on how it can deepen understanding and give practical orientation to donors and their partners in order to make the GHD useful and relevant.

Broadening perspectives on good donor practice

An encouraging development is that one of the principal messages to donors in last year’s HRI has been acted on. At the last Montreux meeting on humanitarian financing, donors made a commitment to continue to explore ways to improve the quality and use of needs assessments (ICVA 2009). The GHD donor group also took positive steps towards understanding the needs and concerns of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) community and the role donors can play to support NGOs in carrying out humanitarian action. The most recent meeting of the GHD group in Geneva included discussions on the ‘Principles of Partnership’ with NGOs that form part of the Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) (2009). This was regarded as a very positive step and it will hopefully lead to closer collaboration in the future.

Greater engagement of the GHD group with the HRI

The past year saw renewed efforts between DARA and the GHD group to engage in a constructive dialogue around the HRI and explore how the HRI can be of use to donors in terms of improving humanitarian action. While the GHD donor group continued to express concerns about ranking donors and the methodology used to do this, more and more staff of donor agencies told DARA that the HRI is a useful tool for internal lobbying within their agencies to encourage and apply good practice.

Constant improvement and refinement of the HRI’s design and methodology is embedded in the HRI process, and this year DARA focused on refining the survey design. The statistical reliability and analysis of many of the indicators and the data sources used to construct the HRI were also refined and DARA is continuing its efforts to improve

communication around the HRI methodology so we can clarify misunderstandings and build more confidence in the instrument. At the same time, the GHD group has refined its own collective indicators to measure the progress of implementation and there is now more alignment with HRI indicators. This shows that the HRI can be compatible with donors' own efforts to measure and improve their performance.

The uncertain consequences of the economic crisis

At the end of last year, the alarm created by the financial meltdown left many wondering whether and how aid budgets would be affected by the economic recession. Official Development Assistance (ODA) experienced a net 14 percent decline in Austria (OECD 2009) but in practice, most traditional aid budgets remained largely unchanged as many were set before the last quarter of 2008. However, the crisis may impact traditional donors' future aid budgets. Ireland has already cut nearly US\$315 million from its 2009 aid budget (a 22 percent decline) and Italy announced aid cuts of 56 percent (Concord 2009). On the positive side, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) announced that "the UK, unlike many donors, is delivering on its aid commitments. Total UK ODA in 2008 was GB£6.8 billion (0.43 percent of Gross National Income (GNI))" (DFID 2009).

While this is true in many countries, currency depreciation has taken a toll on assistance. The change in value of the British pound with respect to the US dollar during the first half of 2009 had a tremendous impact in countries such as Ethiopia where the UK is the largest donor. The ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), whose operational budgets and reserves are in Swiss francs and subject to great fluctuations, have raised similar concerns about the consequences for their response capacity (RCRC Donor Forum 2009).

Table 2: Generosity of humanitarian assistance

Donor	Rank
Ireland	1
Luxembourg	1
Norway	1
Sweden	1
Netherlands	5
Denmark	6
Switzerland	7
Finland	8
New Zealand	9
Australia	10
Canada	11
UK	12
US	13
Belgium	14
Spain	15
Germany	16
Greece	17
Japan	18
Austria	19
Italy	20
France	21
Portugal	22
EC	n/a

The HRI indicator for generosity and burden sharing of humanitarian assistance measures the generosity of a country in terms of its humanitarian assistance in proportion to the country's GNI. The indicator accounts for seven percent of the total weighting of the HRI rankings, demonstrating its importance as a proxy of donor good practice.

This year, four donor countries are tied for first place, as each meets or exceeds an 'ideal' value of total humanitarian assistance of ten percent of total ODA. This percentage is often regarded as the target benchmark for a country's humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, this is one of the HRI indicators with the greatest disparity among donors. It demonstrates that the idea of collective responsibility and burden sharing expressed in the GHD Principles is still far from a reality in donor practice.

How will the generosity of humanitarian assistance be affected in the midst of the global economic crisis? The data so far is inconclusive. With the overall GNI of advanced economies set to decline by 3.8 percent in 2009 (IMF 2009), simply maintaining current levels of aid in real terms would require an allocation of an even greater share of GNI to aid. This is unlikely given the other constraints and priorities facing governments.

An unprecedented shortfall

The global economic crisis has contributed to an unprecedented shortfall in funding for humanitarian assistance. The UN recently revealed that its consolidated aid appeals experienced a record US\$4.8 billion funding gap for their 2009 aid projects, which cover 43 million people in need of assistance (OCHA 2009a). Other studies show that the organisations on the front line of supporting people affected by disasters, conflict and crisis have been hit hard themselves, with falling incomes combining with an increased demand for services. Private funding has increasingly accounted for a larger share of humanitarian assistance, but has declined sharply as a result of the financial crisis. In 2007, US international aid from corporations, foundations, charities and individuals totalled about US\$36.9 billion. This is more than 1.5 times the aid provided by the government that year. The downturn in the economy severely struck private foundation endowments, with US charitable foundations losing US\$150 billion in assets in 2008 (Shimelse 2009). NGOs and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which rely more heavily on private funding, have been hit hard by the crisis.

The funding gap is the equivalent of less than one percent of the money provided to western banks over the first half of 2009. It is the result of both decreased funding (in real terms) and increased humanitarian needs (Foley 2009). Some of these additional needs resulted from the global recession itself. Others resulted from crises, such as that in Pakistan where more than two million people were displaced and where dramatically increasing needs led to a revision of the UN Pakistan appeal to US\$543 million in May 2009 – almost ten times more than the original appeal for US\$55 million (OCHA 2009b). At the time of the revision, with US\$88,524,302 already provided, the balance needed to help an average 1.5 million affected in Pakistan from May to December 2009 was more than US\$450 million.

In September 2009, the World Food Programme (WFP) signalled a funding gap of US\$4.1 billion for its 2009 US\$6.7 billion budget for emergency food rations. In the words of WFP, with regards to East and Central Africa, “We are feeding more people in more inaccessible and dangerous locations for longer periods, which pushes our costs up. At the same time, donors are giving less – leaving us barely one-third funded almost two thirds of the way through the year” (Watch International 2009).

The increase of aid appeals reflects a rise in humanitarian needs combined with the system’s increased ability to respond to those needs. In Kenya, funding requirements rose by US\$187 million because of acute food insecurity and an influx of new refugees fleeing from fighting in Somalia. In the occupied Palestinian Territory (oPT), needs increased by US\$341 million as a result of the military operation in Gaza at the beginning of the year and the continuing restrictions on entry of basic aid to Gaza. In Sri Lanka, humanitarian requirements rose by US\$114 million with 285,000 people displaced in camps and in need of sustained help. In Zimbabwe, aid requirements increased to US\$169 million (OCHA FTS 2009).

According to the UN, the downturn has also increased needs in protracted crises such as Afghanistan, DRC and Sudan. Remittance flows have decreased for all regions of the world, reflecting the difficult conditions migrants are facing. With the decrease in remittances, people in developing and crisis-affected countries receive less aid from their relatives abroad and are less able to cope.

From the NGO perspective, it is their “ability to respond to these disasters that is being tested by increasing needs on the one hand, and reduced security and funding on the other [and] those most affected are the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people” (Concern Worldwide 2009). Similar sentiments were expressed within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (RCRC Donor Forum 2009).

■ Pillar 1 Responding to needs

This pillar assesses to what extent donor funding practices respond to needs, respect the fundamental humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence and that donor’s objectives are aimed at saving lives, preventing and alleviating suffering, and restoring dignity and not other objectives. There are 11 qualitative and 7 quantitative indicators in this Pillar, corresponding to GHD Principles 1, 2, 5, 6, and 11.

■ Pillar 2 Prevention, risk reduction and recovery

This pillar assesses to what extent donors’ support capacity for disaster and conflict prevention, risk reduction, preparedness and response, as well as support for recovery and the transition to development. There are 5 qualitative and 2 quantitative indicators in this pillar, corresponding to GHD Principles 1, 7, 8 and 9.

■ Pillar 3 Working with humanitarian partners

This pillar assesses how well donors support the work of agencies implementing humanitarian action and their unique roles in the humanitarian system. There are 10 qualitative and 6 quantitative indicators in this pillar, corresponding to GHD Principles 10, 12, 13, 14, and 18.

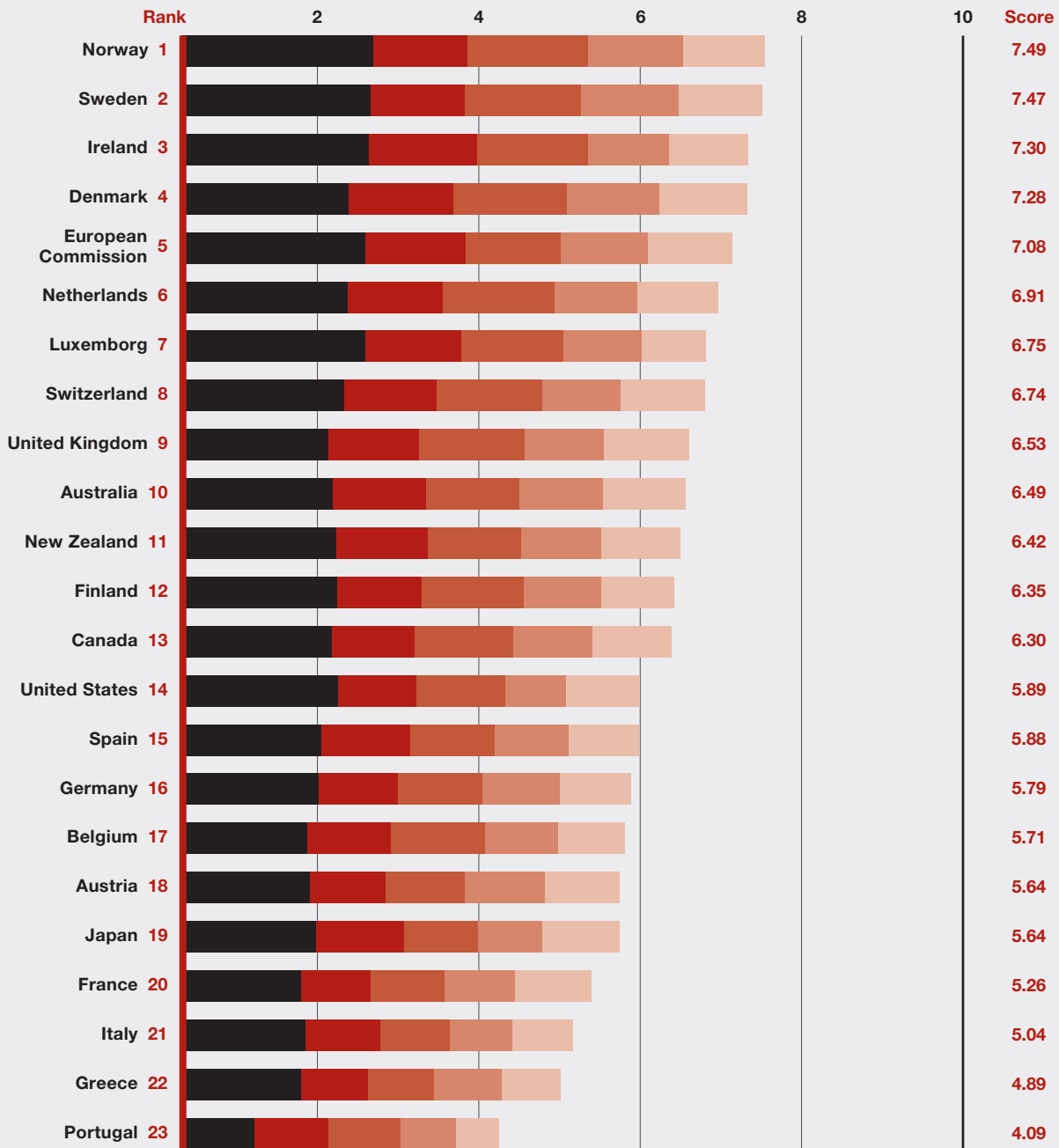
■ Pillar 4 Protection and International Law

This pillar assesses to what extent donors integrate protection and the application of international humanitarian law and other international guidelines and legal mechanisms into their funding policies and practices and ensure that operational actors apply these. There are 6 qualitative and 3 quantitative indicators in this pillar, corresponding to GHD Principles 3, 4, 16, 17, 19, and 20.

■ Pillar 5 Learning and accountability

This pillar assesses how well donors support initiatives to improve the quality, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action. There are 8 qualitative and 2 quantitative indicators in this pillar, corresponding to the concepts outlined in GHD Principles 15, 21, 22, and 23.

Figure 1: Donor Government Rankings



Changes in the HRI rankings

This year's HRI rankings show some interesting changes. Sweden is replaced by Norway at the top of the rankings and falls to second place. Ireland exchanges places with Denmark to take the third slot. Switzerland and the UK also swap eighth- and ninth-place positions from last year, while Australia moves up one place in the rankings, to tenth place. New Zealand climbs two positions to 11th place, while Canada and Belgium both fall three places to 13th and 17th respectively. The US, Spain and Germany all climb one spot in the rankings, to 14th, 15th and 16th places respectively. Austria also shows improvements, climbing to 18th from its 21st place position last year.

In general, the shifts in donor rankings over the past three years show that deliberate and consistent efforts to align national humanitarian policies more closely with internationally recognised principles and standards of good practice do lead to improvements in a donor's performance over time. In contrast, donors that fail to sustain efforts to improve their policies and practices perform less well.

Regardless of a donor's position, the HRI donor rankings and scores for this year show once again that there is great room for improvement among all donors in terms of applying the principles of good practices contained in the GHD declaration.

Overall analysis of findings

The following section examines in greater detail the overall findings according to each of the five pillars that make up the HRI rankings, as well as some of the key indicators that make up the index. Before looking at the specific scores and rankings by pillar, it is helpful to have a general overview of how donors are performing.

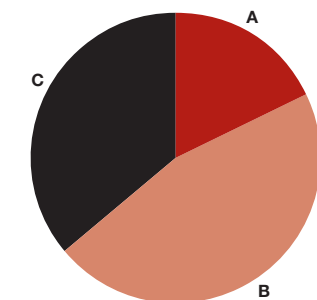
Table 3: HRI rankings 2007-2009

Donor	HRI 2007 Rank	HRI 2008 Rank	HRI 2009 Rank
Norway	2	2	1
Sweden	1	1	2
Ireland	6	4	3
Denmark	3	3	4
European Commission	5	5	5
Netherlands	4	6	6
Luxembourg	12	7	7
Switzerland	10	9	8
United Kingdom	9	8	9
Australia	14	11	10
New Zealand	8	13	11
Finland	11	12	12
Canada	7	10	13
United States	16	15	14
Spain	17	16	15
Germany	13	17	16
Belgium	15	14	17
Austria	20	21	18
Japan	18	18	19
France	19	20	20
Italy	22	19	21
Greece	23	23	22
Portugal	21	22	23

Continued lack of awareness of the GHD Principles

The HRI findings this year once again reinforce how little known the GHD Principles are to donors' main stakeholders. In general, the overall awareness and familiarity of humanitarian organisations with the principles has actually decreased since last year. Only one in five of the people interviewed for the HRI survey considered themselves to be "very familiar with the GHD" – fewer than the number reported in last year's survey, which was around a third of respondents. Less than half said they were "somewhat familiar" with the GHD, compared with a third in 2008. Over one third were "not familiar" at all, similar to last year's results.

Figure 2: Familiarity of survey respondents with the GHD



- A Very familiar – 18%
- B Somewhat familiar – 46%
- C Not familiar – 36%

Unwanted funding

Several organisations reported refusing or declining funding from four main sources:

EC – Some organisations refused ECHO funding, reporting that obtaining funding was labour intensive, with funding not always delivered in a timely fashion and with cumbersome reporting requirements.

US – The organisations that refused funding from USAID often did so in conflict settings as a result of the underlying strategic, political and military objectives in 2008. Others considered USAID conditionality unreasonable, as implementing partners were sometimes required to engage with military forces and stay out of guerrilla-controlled areas. For some, USAID funding implied an even greater security concern in highly sensitive conflict environments.

UN agencies – NGOs that declined funding from UN agencies reported that the agencies often focused more on funding than implementation and added an additional administrative layer, despite not covering the administrative costs of their own implementing partners.

Private companies – Organisations that declined funding from private companies generally did so on the basis of ethical concerns over vested commercial interests. Establishing a code of conduct for private companies, similar to the GHD, may be a good way to address this issue.

This suggests that awareness of the *GHD Principles* is even lower now than a year ago. Even these results may be distorted positively by the HRI process itself, which has been an instrument to raise awareness about the commitments donors made in the GHD. The results include respondents from GHD pilot countries such as DRC, but even here familiarity is less than what would be expected, at around 35 percent “very familiar” with the principles.

The fact that there is such limited awareness and familiarity with the GHD is critical. If donors’ principal partners are unfamiliar with the GHD, it means they do not know what they can expect from donors in terms of good practice, nor do they know the extent of donors’ responsibilities and accountabilities in supporting and promoting a more effective response to crises. While it might be unrealistic to expect representatives of humanitarian agencies to know the *GHD Principles* in detail, one might expect them to have some familiarity with them, especially as survey respondents tend to be the head of mission who has working relationships with donors.

Some donor representatives interviewed were not familiar with the GHD at all. While no hard figures were gathered, there were enough examples in the different crises areas visited to suggest that this is an issue to track. This finding is supported by ECHO’s recent study on donor coordination at the field level, in which many donor representatives stated that they lacked orientation on how to interpret and prioritise the *GHD Principles* and how to integrate them into their work (Channel Research 2009).

In the HRI field research, donors collectively scored highest in Timor Leste and Sri Lanka, followed by Chad, Georgia, Colombia and Afghanistan. The generally higher scores in these crises mask the reality faced by humanitarian organisations, each of which is working under very difficult conditions, and each tackling different issues and experiencing different dynamics with donors. Respondents provide scores for those donors that fund their efforts and are therefore actively providing aid in the crisis.

In Sri Lanka, for example, despite some of the highest scores of all the crises studied, donors were censured by all organisations (UN, Red Cross Red Crescent and NGOs) for not doing more to facilitate access to civilian populations affected by conflict or working more actively to prevent and mitigate the effects of conflict. The majority of donors that were present and active in-country were praised for promoting guiding principles and trying to coordinate a common stance in the response (Hidalgo 2010). In Colombia and Ethiopia, humanitarian organisations were critical of donor complacency in accepting governments’ assessments of the crises without challenging them to recognise the extent of humanitarian needs and supporting the work of humanitarian organisations (Espada 2010 and Solé-Arqués 2010a). In Myanmar, donors seem to have worked around the difficult political issues around access initially, but faced problems later on issues of rehabilitation and development (Cosgrave 2010b) – and yet they scored around the average for all crises.

The crises with the lowest average scores for donors were in Somalia, DRC, China, the oPT and Haiti. It is surprising to see the results for DRC, given the long-term donor engagement there as a GHD pilot country. There are, though, clear examples of good donor practice in DRC, and the lower scores are related primarily to the lack of comprehensive coverage of needs in the country and the view that donors are not addressing root causes or exerting enough pressure on the government to protect its citizens (Gasser and Dijkzeul 2010). Somalia and the oPT, on the other hand, are extremely challenging contexts. The low scores for donors here reflect the frustrations of humanitarian agencies and their expectations that donor governments find a more consistent and coherent approach to addressing the serious issues around protection and access (Hansch 2010 and Solé-Arqués 2010b).

Table 4: HRI 2009 – Rankings and scores by pillars

Donor	Ranking and scores by pillars											
	Responding to needs		Prevention, risk reduction and recovery		Working with humanitarian partners		Protection and International Law		Learning and accountability		Overall ranking	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Australia	12	6.48	8	6.07	13	6.00	5	7.11	6	7.11	10	6.49
Austria	18	5.50	19	4.86	18	5.13	10	6.79	14	6.49	18	5.64
Belgium	19	5.38	15	5.39	12	6.09	17	6.20	19	5.79	17	5.71
Canada	13	6.42	16	5.37	10	6.31	11	6.77	9	6.81	13	6.30
Denmark	6	7.18	2	6.74	3	7.23	3	7.95	1	7.60	4	7.28
European Commission	5	7.86	3	6.52	11	6.11	4	7.39	3	7.29	5	7.08
Finland	10	6.67	14	5.47	8	6.55	14	6.67	16	6.27	12	6.35
France	22	5.11	22	4.48	20	4.73	18	6.06	13	6.54	20	5.26
Germany	16	5.86	17	5.17	17	5.39	15	6.63	17	6.16	16	5.79
Greece	21	5.12	23	4.30	23	4.22	19	5.89	22	5.09	22	4.89
Ireland	3	8.03	1	6.97	5	7.15	7	6.94	10	6.80	3	7.30
Italy	20	5.31	20	4.84	22	4.43	21	5.38	21	5.22	21	5.04
Japan	17	5.76	13	5.67	19	4.77	20	5.52	12	6.64	19	5.64
Luxembourg	4	7.88	4	6.21	9	6.53	12	6.77	20	5.48	7	6.75
Netherlands	7	7.10	5	6.15	4	7.18	6	7.10	8	6.97	6	6.91
New Zealand	11	6.62	10	5.92	14	5.99	8	6.89	11	6.79	11	6.42
Norway	1	8.19	7	6.08	1	7.77	2	8.10	7	7.01	1	7.49
Portugal	23	3.13	21	4.75	21	4.61	23	4.77	23	3.74	23	4.09
Spain	15	5.97	12	5.73	16	5.45	16	6.35	18	6.01	15	5.88
Sweden	2	8.10	6	6.11	2	7.46	1	8.31	5	7.17	2	7.47
Switzerland	8	6.98	9	5.96	6	6.82	13	6.72	4	7.19	8	6.74
United Kingdom	14	6.27	11	5.84	7	6.80	9	6.83	2	7.30	9	6.53
United States	9	6.69	18	5.03	15	5.76	22	5.19	15	6.31	14	5.89

Pillar 1 Responding to needs

Pillar 1 corresponds to the core *GHD Principles*: that the primary aims of humanitarian assistance should be to save lives, prevent and alleviate suffering, and restore dignity, and that assistance should be in proportion to needs. Consequently, this is the most heavily weighted pillar within the HRI, representing 20 percent of the rankings.

The findings in Pillar 1 show that donors continue to lag behind in their commitments to allocate resources equitably among crises and in accordance to needs, leaving millions of people without adequate assistance. This issue was identified in last year's HRI, but progress has been slow. As the most recent Montreux meeting on humanitarian financing noted, "there [is] a proliferation of needs-assessment instruments, which were often deployed to maximise funds raised for individual agencies, without adequate coordination or sharing of information" (ICVA 2009).

On a positive note, some donors, such as DFID, are committed to strengthening more evidence-based approaches to needs assessments, as seen in their support for a comprehensive joint needs assessment in the aftermath of cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (Blewitt et al 2008). However, many organisations that participated in the HRI field interviews cautioned against developing monolithic systems and instead called for flexible and complementary approaches to ensure that all needs are identified and all responses context-specific.

In this pillar, Norway ranked first, followed by Sweden, Ireland, Luxembourg and the European Commission (EC). This group of donors best represents good efforts to align responses to need, maintain generosity in the levels of funding committed and ensure that humanitarian assistance is impartial, neutral and independent. As such, they are an example for others. In this group, Norway stands out, with comments made in many field interviews commending its strong and principled stance on issues around protection and access. As in last year's HRI, the inclusion of Luxembourg and Ireland in the top five positions in this pillar shows that smaller donors can find a niche and use their assistance in ways that complement and reinforce the core *GHD Principles* (see Table 5).

In the crises studied, donors on average performed better in survey questions and qualitative indicators for Pillar 1 in Sri Lanka, Georgia, China and Myanmar, but poorest in Haiti, the DRC and the oPT. Donors' highest average scores in all crises were around questions regarding the respect for neutrality and impartiality, non-discrimination, and alignment with the humanitarian objectives of saving lives and alleviating suffering. In contrast, the lowest average scores were for survey questions asking if the donors' assistance was influenced by other interests, such as political, economic or military/security interests. This was also the question with the highest range of differences between the top-scoring and lowest-scoring donors.

The challenge of humanitarian access

Humanitarian access emerged as the major challenge in far too many areas around the globe this year. In countless crises, humanitarian aid and personnel are prevented from reaching the millions of people in need of vital assistance. In some of the crises studied, such as Georgia, Somalia, Sri Lanka and the oPT, government donors seem unable to advocate successfully or intervene to guarantee access. In the case of Afghanistan, donors were unable to separate security interests from humanitarian efforts. In others, such as Myanmar, Ethiopia and Colombia, donors could have been more assertive, employing 'smart' diplomacy to challenge the host governments' attempts to restrict access, conceal the extent of humanitarian needs and even deny the very existence of a humanitarian crisis. In all cases, insecurity for both humanitarian workers and affected populations continues to hamper access to assistance and remains an issue for donors to address.

The obvious consequence of problems of access is increased human suffering. Needs may not be covered adequately or at the level of quality required. There are growing numbers of examples of remote management of operations, where neither donors nor operational organisations have direct access to the affected populations and where they cannot therefore obtain evidence that their interventions are meeting actual needs. This is creating a situation of 'remote accountability'. Somalia, where 90 percent of humanitarian organisations operate from outside the country, making for enormous difficulties in meeting humanitarian needs (Hansch 2010), is a case in point.

Security has acted as a real concern and a major obstacle in many conflict areas, with relief workers facing difficulties in obtaining safe access to vulnerable civilian populations. In 2008, more than 260 humanitarian aid workers were killed, kidnapped or seriously injured. Too often, access is obstructed, hindered or only granted sporadically with authorities often wanting full control over resources and activities (Concern Worldwide 2009).

In many of the conflicts seen in the past year, the deliberate deprivation and targeting of civilians was part of the political and military strategy. Access was often denied because it was viewed as contrary to the political and military goals of local governments or warring parties. In Somalia, most aid agencies reported that access topped the list of challenges in 2008 and 2009. In this crisis, the number of full-time expatriates working with NGOs, UN agencies, the ICRC and donors dropped from several hundred in 2007 to none at all in 2009. In Somalia, where the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) constantly monitors the level of humanitarian access and agencies refer to access coefficients, "there are many areas where access is completely denied and security is as much a problem as authorities limiting or denying access" (OCHA Somalia 2009). In Afghanistan, as a result of the growing insecurity and limited access in most of the southern and eastern parts of the country, the real dimensions of the crisis are unknown. Access was also restricted in response to a 'natural' disaster in the context of Myanmar. In the South Ossetia crisis in Georgia, it was not until almost three months after the conflict that Russia allowed humanitarian agencies access to a buffer zone around South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Marañón and Redheffer 2010).

In the crises covered by the HRI 2009, key efforts related to ensuring access involved monitoring attitudes towards civil society and the humanitarian community. In Sri Lanka, negative campaigning in the media against the bulk of the international community's aid effort was a cause for concern. There were many instances in which humanitarian workers were accused of collaborating with terrorism or being terrorists (Hidalgo 2010).