



Towards Better Humanitarian Donorship

12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews

humanitarian action
saving lives, alleviating
human suffering and
maintaining human dignity...



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Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

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PREFACE

Peer reviews of OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members are based on the dual principles of peer pressure and peer learning. The reviews are the only international process to regularly examine key bilateral development co-operation systems and offer constructive commentary for their reform. In doing so, peer reviews constitute a yardstick against which the DAC can measure the influence – or lack of it – of its good practice principles on donor behaviour, both in the field and at headquarters.

The ultimate aims of DAC peer reviews are to:

1. help improve the quality and quantity of aid
2. provide credible analyses based on common principles that can be used by both OECD countries and the wider international community
3. enable donors to share experiences, identify good practices and improve co-ordination.

As part of each review, the DAC aims to hold donors accountable to the Principles and Practices of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), initially endorsed by a group of donors in Stockholm in June 2003 (see Annex). These GHD principles seek to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of donor action, as well as improve accountability, co-ordination, learning and evaluation. The principles define the objectives of humanitarian action as: to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of crises, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations (GHD principle 1, see Annex).

No two donors are alike – legal environments and business models differ, political contexts and interpretations of national interest change over time, budget volumes go up and down, and operational challenges continue. Accordingly, donors are implementing the GHD principles in different ways, dealing with various realities and building on individual comparative advantage, to deliver principled and effective humanitarian funding as best they can.

This publication outlines the 12 most important humanitarian lessons from the DAC peer reviews, profiles examples of good donor behaviour highlighted in the peer reviews, and sketches out the challenges donors still face as they move towards better humanitarian donorship. Lessons are grouped under the following headings: the strategic framework; delivering effective funding; an organisation fit for purpose; and learning and accountability.

This publication was prepared by the OECD's Humanitarian Aid Advisor, Rachel Scott, drawing on the work of her predecessors, Henrik Hammargren and Steve Darvill. Valuable comments and feedback were provided by Michael Ward and Megan Kennedy-Chouane. Australia, Canada, Japan, Norway and Poland provided much-needed oversight as members of the editorial board.

The 12 lessons series, covering a range of issues and targeted at development policy professionals, has been developed under the direction and guidance of Karen Jorgensen, Head of the Review, Engagement and Evaluation Division of the OECD's Development Co-operation Directorate.

INTRODUCTION

By J. Brian Atwood, Chair of the Development Assistance Committee, OECD

Humanitarian action – saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity during and in the aftermath of crises – remains a clear priority for DAC donors. Over USD 11.2 billion of public funds were disbursed as humanitarian aid in 2009¹ by the 24 members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), representing nearly 9% of the total allocation for official development assistance (ODA). Volumes are important, of course, but it is the quality and effectiveness of development assistance that the DAC peer reviews seek to assess and improve.

In demanding contexts, humanitarian donors must respond to a wide range of challenges in order to meet the needs of those suffering from crisis and its aftermath. In responding to these humanitarian challenges, DAC members are now committed to: *i)* through development assistance, preventing crises, or at least minimising their risk to people and development; *ii)* through humanitarian assistance, to respond to crises; and *iii)* using a mix of humanitarian and development assistance, to achieve a better transition from a humanitarian situation to longer-term development. This challenge becomes greater when partners are calling for more timely and predictable funding, and pushing for stronger relationships accompanied by higher levels of core funding. Taxpayers and politicians want an increased focus on value for money in a climate where staffing cutbacks are limiting monitoring capacity. There is clearly a need to adopt new and more strategic approaches to funding – allowing humanitarians to better address rapid onset emergencies, while responding more appropriately to the structural challenges that prolong vulnerability in protracted crises. In addition, there is also the challenge of designing solid humanitarian programmes that, at the very least, do not undermine longer-term recovery – and this remains problematic.

Donors are also facing increasing internal and external pressure to stretch their humanitarian budgets beyond the traditional humanitarian imperative. Humanitarian teams are now being pressed into covering the full range of disaster risk reduction activities, and to tackle longer-term tasks such as post-disaster reconstruction, statebuilding and delivering peace dividends in fragile state contexts – clearly areas that are beyond the scope of merely saving lives. Donors must also learn how to work better across government, especially with their military counterparts – a major challenge in the new security environment. This has led to a need for more transparent funding

allocation policies and processes as proof that donors are remaining true to their humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, humanity and independence.

Humanitarian donors have had to learn and evolve as they face each of these challenges. The DAC peer reviews have noted many areas of improvement and innovation as donors – each with their own individual reality and comparative advantage – seek to implement the principles for Good Humanitarian Donorship as best they can. In the process, a broad set of 12 lessons, and a corresponding set of good practices, have come to light, and these are outlined in this publication. Donors are also learning that there are some areas – supporting co-ordination, promoting protection and standardised reporting, for example – where individual efforts are not enough, and they must work together to achieve results. The GHD group's work towards overcoming these challenges will remain important, alongside the DAC's continued support for efforts to promote better humanitarian donorship.



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Chair of the Development Assistance Committee, OECD

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THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Lesson 1: Provide clear strategic vision

WHAT: A cross-government policy and/or strategy for humanitarian assistance is a critical first step towards ensuring consistent humanitarian responses that respect the GHD principles and highlight important areas such as gender equality. This must be anchored in relevant legislation and accompanied by a realistic implementation plan. Humanitarian frameworks are more effective when they are based on the donor country's comparative advantage

and take into account other policy directives (*e.g.* on climate change or on migration issues). In setting out the strategy, policy makers must be wary of broad generalisations. Instead, they should base their strategy on a focused and realistic vision that will allow the donor to take a targeted approach to funding and supporting its humanitarian programme.

Full participation from key partners and other interested stakeholders in the policy development process is an important determinant of success. Consultation across all concerned ministries is especially critical to ensure that the policy framework has full buy-in from all areas of government. Donor development staff should also actively participate to promote cross-programme linkages and understanding.

WHY: Without a cross-government framework, donors risk political pressure to stretch their humanitarian budgets beyond the traditional humanitarian imperative of saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity. Opportunities to promote collaboration across institutional boundaries and between humanitarian and broader development objectives will be missed. A policy vacuum could also allow other ministries to propose policy – for example, on migration issues, which is inconsistent with overarching humanitarian objectives.

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Denmark, Poland (Special Review OECD, 2010), Spain and Switzerland have incorporated their humanitarian programmes into wider development strategy documents. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid includes a solid implementation plan and has just been subject to a mid-term review. Many donors now have a solid legislative framework for humanitarian assistance. Denmark and Norway have ensured that their humanitarian policies outline clear strategic directions based on their individual comparative advantage. Denmark has gone one step further, ensuring the wide participation of partners and consultation across government to ensure that the Danish national humanitarian policy is realistic, inclusive and widely owned.

Box 1. Overview of Denmark's humanitarian strategy 2010-15

Denmark, with its partners, will reach out to the most vulnerable people in crisis situations by:

- meeting the immediate and early recovery needs of those affected by natural disasters, and promoting disaster risk reduction
- responding to the needs of people affected by armed conflict, and supporting prevention, resilience and early recovery efforts.

Denmark's strategic directions for this humanitarian work are:

1. Vulnerability: women's empowerment, risk reduction, emergency preparedness and early recovery.
2. Climate change and natural hazards: disaster risk reduction and the increasing humanitarian needs resulting from climate change.
3. Protecting conflict-affected populations: civilians in armed conflicts, International Humanitarian Law, gender-based violence, durable solutions for internationally displaced persons (IDPs).
4. Co-ordinated, principled and informed humanitarian action: central co-ordination role of the United Nations (UN), full adherence to the GHD principles, focus on a limited number of protracted crises.
5. Strengthening partnerships: partnership framework agreements; increased division of labour between humanitarian donors; increased Danish field-level capacity.
6. Focus on results, innovation and communication: focus on impact and accountability to beneficiaries; promotion of innovation and best practices, and regular communication of results.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of Denmark, 2011.

Lesson 2: Promote recovery and resilience

WHAT: Donors continue to struggle to “deliver humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery” (GHD principle 9, see Annex) – something that should be a key element of their overall strategic framework. At a bare minimum, donors need to ensure that humanitarian programming does not undermine future development work, and verify that development programming is building on humanitarian knowledge and results. Ideally, donors should also go further, using their humanitarian funding to support spontaneous, community-led recovery initiatives and

focusing on strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities – including women, who play a central role – to likely future crises and shocks.

To do this, donors need to: improve co-ordination between humanitarian and development instruments; review the sometimes cumbersome procedures, lack of predictability and flexibility, and short funding timeframes that restrict holistic responses in protracted crisis situations; systematically integrate the humanitarian context and programming objectives into their country strategies; and support innovative approaches, such as cash-based programming, to rebuild livelihoods and repair small-scale infrastructure. A large body of evidence is now building around cash-based approaches as effective livelihood support.²

This does not mean that donors should rely on humanitarian mechanisms to support the full recovery process. In many situations, in the longer term, stability and/or development budget commitments would be more suitable. Donors should instead mix and match their tools to provide the most appropriate funding for the evolving recovery context – and work towards providing flexible development funding earlier in the recovery process. In this light, donors are encouraged to implement the recommendations in *Supporting Coherent Transitions from Conflict to Sustainable Peace: Policy Guidance* (OECD, 2012).

WHY: While the initial response to any crisis is necessarily focused on saving lives, the overall objective remains the recovery of conflict- and disaster-affected communities. The sooner work to build a sustainable recovery begins, the more effective it will be, allowing affected communities to return to normal lives and livelihoods as quickly as possible, and helping prevent the recurrence of crises (UNDP, 2008).

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Denmark has integrated humanitarian programming into its partner country strategies so as to develop a coherent overall approach to recovery challenges. A growing number of donors, including Sweden, Denmark, New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom, are promoting joined up approaches between humanitarian and development actors, on both strategic and operational levels. Spain has made all development desks responsible for supporting recovery and linking to the humanitarian programme – moving away from the usual donor model where the onus is on humanitarians to build the bridges.

Operational flexibility is required if partners are to continue to adapt to an evolving recovery context, and Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden now offer multi-annual funding to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in protracted crises, allowing them to adapt to an evolving context and to react to emerging opportunities that target community recovery. Promoting multiple-entry point programming, where humanitarian funding is supported by donor policy and advocacy work, is a useful approach in complex environments, and Denmark, the United Kingdom and the United States work this way in several countries. Germany, Spain and Switzerland focus on ensuring appropriate humanitarian exit strategies. Spain is also promoting 50% humanitarian co-financing of recovery-focused projects, to stimulate the entry of Spanish development funding earlier in the recovery and state-building process. Sweden and Switzerland are supporting innovative approaches to recovery programming, and are ensuring that lessons learnt are widely disseminated.

Box 2. Switzerland's cash-based recovery programmes

Switzerland's agency for development and co-operation, SDC, has developed a cash-based approach to accelerate recovery in crisis-affected communities. These schemes provide humanitarian beneficiaries with the opportunity to use a proportion of assistance to replace lost livelihood assets and thus more quickly reduce dependency on relief assistance. An independent evaluation of one scheme in Sri Lanka drew a highly positive picture of the project in terms of appropriateness, efficiency and impact, and stated that given the difficult, post-tsunami context, the project could be seen as a remarkable success.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of Switzerland, 2009.

Lesson 3: Reduce disaster risks

WHAT: Donors are beginning to recognise the importance of risk reduction in their strategic frameworks and programming, and this is to be commended and encouraged. However, many donors continue to see this important area as a purely humanitarian issue, despite its significant role in reducing the vulnerability of the poorest.

Donors are expected to strengthen capacity to “prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises” (GHD principle 8, see Annex), and to implement donor and partner country commitments under the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. In practical terms, this means anticipating disasters, reducing risk exposure, strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities, using risk transfer mechanisms where appropriate, and strengthening national and international response capacity and leadership. Humanitarians should focus on preparedness, including work to strengthen early warning systems and to boost the capacity of local communities and civil society organisations to respond to crises.

To do this, donors should develop a risk reduction policy with high-level buy-in, advocate for risk reduction to be mainstreamed across all development planning and programming, focus on crisis mitigation opportunities in partner country strategies, and adjust funding streams to ensure a continuous risk reduction focus throughout the crisis cycle. But above all, donors need to change mindsets – ensuring development staff and partners are aware of why risk reduction is important, providing the tools to implement the often very simple and common-sense measures to reduce risks, and investing in risk training for key staff.

WHY: Risk reduction is critical if donors are serious about reducing the vulnerability of people and property, and about protecting economic growth. This is particularly important as the world faces the challenges of climate change. Already, the number of disasters occurring each year is steadily rising – mostly smaller-scale events in areas of high human vulnerability. Effective risk reduction serves as an important insurance strategy for development investments in these high-risk countries, and as a key mechanism for avoiding costly future emergency responses. The earthquake in Haiti set back its development by many years and destroyed significant development investments in infrastructure and human capacity. It was also expensive: USD 9.9 billion was initially pledged³ to support post-earthquake reconstruction – more than three times the total amount spent on Haiti’s development over the past ten years.

LESSON 3

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Australia, the European Union, Japan, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have developed disaster risk reduction policies or strategies to guide investments in risk reduction across all their development programming. Denmark and Switzerland have established disaster risk reduction as one of the priority areas of their overall development strategies, and include risk reduction in partner country poverty reduction strategies, as does Poland.

Switzerland has developed guidance on the role of risk reduction in the project management cycle, and Australia has a useful toolkit to support the integration of risk reduction into sector strategies. A number of donors, including Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom, have budget earmarks for risk reduction. New Zealand, Poland, Portugal and Sweden fund their domestic civil protection mechanisms to build the capacity of similar systems in partner countries.

Box 3. Germany's approach to disaster risk reduction

Germany plays a leading role in disaster risk reduction (DRR), addressing it at the inter-ministerial level and actively promoting the issue on the international stage. In the humanitarian context, Germany takes the following approach, based on the Hyogo Framework for Action:

- Federal Foreign Office: risk reduction programming is focused on saving lives and protecting livelihoods by promoting measures designed to reduce the impact of disasters. Early-warning mechanisms are a major priority, as are innovative disaster preparedness projects that can then be scaled up and adopted in new areas. Local people should participate in the design and implementation of preparedness projects, and local structures should oversee the ongoing management of preparedness projects. Projects are implemented by both German and local aid agencies, up to a maximum duration of two years. Risk reduction actions of international partners such as the UN and the European Commission are also supported.
- Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ): risk reduction is mainstreamed into projects funded under the Development Oriented Emergency and Transitional Aid budget. Partners are asked to conduct risk and vulnerability analysis to determine whether disaster prevention can be included in their disaster recovery programmes. Support for local and national disaster risk management structures is promoted. Normal funding modalities apply.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of Germany, 2010.

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Lesson 4: Prioritise participation

WHAT: Donors have made little progress towards promoting beneficiary participation in the humanitarian programme cycle, or including this in their overall strategic framework. GHD principle 7 (see Annex) calls upon donors to support the “adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a humanitarian response”. In particular, women tend to be excluded from decision-making, and yet they make up at least half the population. Promoting

participation, therefore, will help ensure that real humanitarian needs are met: delivering not just a rapid response, but the right response to the right people at the right time.

WHY: As the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership points out, crisis survivors often have acute needs, and can no longer rely on their usual economic, social or psychological support systems. Recipients of aid cannot choose between delivery agencies – so they cannot signal they are unhappy with a service by switching provider. Survivors – particularly women – often lack access to formal procedures for participating in assistance decisions, as traditional governance and representation structures are under considerable strain in a crisis situation. Systems to register and respond to complaints about relief programmes are rare. Donors and aid workers – the usual decision-makers – do not consume the aid, and thus have only a limited basis for judging its utility. Finally, in humanitarian situations, the consequences of decisions can be particularly severe. Insufficient volume or inappropriate targeting of food aid could have life-or-death consequences for those who are left out (HAP, 2012).

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Some donors, including Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, actively promote the accreditation of their partners under the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership standard – an initiative that was launched to promote accountability to disaster survivors. This is a clear move in the right direction but, as the policy paper for the GHD Initiative on participation (Grünewald and de Geoffroy, 2008) points out, promoting stronger participation now requires a full paradigm shift on the part of both donors and the wider humanitarian community. The policy paper recommends:

- increasing resources to ensure full participation from the outset – an investment that will eventually reap dividends in terms of greater programme impact

LESSON 4

- gaining expertise in social sciences to improve understanding of social and power structures within affected populations, and to ensure that the right voices – and not always the voices of the most powerful – are heard
- encouraging openness from both donors and aid agencies – listening and remaining flexible about programme goals and delivery
- committing to gender-balanced participation, which requires an appropriate cultural approach and perhaps a new approach to communications
- making serious commitments to transparency and accountability to build and maintain the confidence of the affected population, and allow for full participation
- streamlining donor reporting – allowing field aid workers more time to engage with populations, and to adapt programming based on their feedback and the evolving situation.

Donors could also consider further research aimed at documenting and promoting field-level good practice in supporting beneficiary participation, such as that conducted by the Listening Project (CDA, 2012). The recommendations from research on this subject should be integrated into donor policy and guidelines for working with partners, and widely disseminated through practical training modules. Particular attention should be paid to new technology solutions that could support better participation, especially those using mobile phones, including crowd-sourcing and other crisis mapping techniques such as those used and promoted by Ushahidi (Ushahidi, 2012) and the International Network of Crisis Mappers (Crisis Mappers Net, 2012).

Finally, donors will need to provide more flexible funding if participation is to become a useful reality. Partners must be given the flexibility to adapt their programmatic approaches based on the feedback they are receiving from affected communities. This flexibility will come from funding agreements and budgets that allow operational agencies to adapt their programmes without the need for excessive paperwork and without the risk of financial penalty. Changes could include altering the type and scope of activities, adjusting expected results, modifying the timing of the response, and even expanding or shifting the targeted population groups. Agreements should also allow partners to stop or suspend programmes if feedback indicates that the response is either not meeting its objectives or, worse, doing harm.

DELIVERING EFFECTIVE FUNDING

Lesson 5: Match your vision with your money

WHAT: Providing an appropriate level of predictable and flexible humanitarian funding is not an optional extra for donors. All DAC donors have made – directly or indirectly – a commitment to the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, which call for “funding in proportion to needs” (GHD principle 6, see Annex). There is currently no comprehensive, objective measure of global humanitarian need, complicating advocacy for more appropriate humanitarian funding levels. The closest approximation is the Consolidated

Appeals process – and on average, 30% of the needs listed in these appeals go unfunded every year.⁴

Some donors prefer to provide goods and services – “in-kind” aid – rather than providing cash to humanitarian non-government organisations (NGOs) and multilateral agencies, especially when responding to sudden-onset emergencies. Donors need to take care with this type of aid, making sure that they carefully evaluate if sending goods is the best and most effective way to focus on real and evolving humanitarian needs in crisis situations.

WHY: Humanitarian departments must have sufficient funding to allow them to properly deliver on the commitments they have made – both under the GHD principles and under their own humanitarian strategy. European Union member states have made deeper commitments by also jointly agreeing to the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008) where, in addition to confirming the importance of the GHD principles, they commit to providing “adequate and effective humanitarian aid, and to consider increasing their bilateral humanitarian aid contributions within the increase in [their] overall ODA”.

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Finland has formally committed to spending between 10-15% of its overall development co-operation budget on humanitarian aid. Denmark publishes its humanitarian budget commitments on an annual basis, showing funding intentions projected out five years. The United Kingdom commits to increasing humanitarian aid spending in line with projected aid budgets, so long as there is proven need.

LESSON 5

Donors should ask the following questions before sending “in-kind” aid: are the goods appropriate for the local climate, culture and religion? Does the affected population actually need the goods? Could the goods be purchased locally? Is the cost of transport good value for money? Will the people receiving the goods be able to afford to fix the donated item? If the answer to any of these questions is “no”, or if there is significant risk that an influx of donated goods will clog ports and logistics channels, then the donor should probably provide cash to a credible humanitarian actor instead (Lesson 8: Develop rapid response mechanisms).

Box 4. The United Kingdom’s policy on humanitarian aid volumes

The United Kingdom’s humanitarian assistance is disbursed according to need. The UK Department for International Development’s (DFID) humanitarian policy, *Saving Lives, Relieving Suffering, Protecting Dignity*, commits the UK to prioritising assistance to the most serious threats to life.

However, the policy also notes that there is a diversity of humanitarian need that is likely to become even more apparent over the coming decades: “[P]andemic disease, climate change, environmental degradation and major demographic changes, including urbanisation, are likely to present new threats.” It therefore commits DFID to increasing humanitarian aid spending in line with projected UK aid budgets as long as there is proven need.

A further volume commitment is found in DFID’s Disaster risk reduction policy, *Reducing the Risk of Disasters – Helping to Achieve Sustainable Poverty Reduction in a Vulnerable World*, which confirms DFID’s obligation to provide 10% of funds spent on each natural disaster response for follow-on DRR activities. Beyond this threshold, bilateral assistance for DRR is allocated on the basis of “government capacity, country risk exposure, effectiveness of existing national and regional efforts; and what other bilateral donors are doing”.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of United Kingdom, 2010.

Lesson 6: Decide how to decide

WHAT: Funding predictably, and in proportion to “needs”, are core GHD principles. Amongst the most quoted of the principles are those to “ensure predictability and flexibility” (GHD principle 12, see Annex), to make sure that “funding humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises” (GHD principle 11, see Annex) and to allocate funding in proportion to needs (GHD principle 6, see Annex). Nevertheless, translating these principles into practice is fraught with methodological and political

challenges – not least the lack of a comprehensive definition or measure of humanitarian “need”, and thus the difficulty for donors to objectively compare scale and severity.⁵

Despite these challenges, humanitarian donors must continue to make important choices about whom, what and where to fund. Decisions on *where* to fund (geographic funding envelopes) should – if the donor is to ensure an independent, impartial and predictable allocation of the humanitarian budget – be based on an objective determination of the severity of each crisis, and/or focused on crises where the donor can clearly add value. Decisions on *what* to fund should be based on a clear prioritisation of “need”: addressing the highest risk to life and livelihoods first, thereby mitigating the most likely and potentially most catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Decisions on *whom* to fund should be based on the capacity of that organisation, or funding channel, to deliver results. Donors must also take care to avoid being risk-averse in their decision-making, which could lead to an over-reliance on particular agencies and standardised responses, and reduce space for innovation.

And yet, donors often report that they “fund according to needs”, but are unable to articulate how those funding decisions are actually made in practice. This leads to the perception that decisions are based more on historical trends (“what we did last year”) or on other factors such as “national interest” rather than on any determination of “need” or partner response capacity.

Focusing on real needs is further complicated by the limited number of timely and objective joint needs assessments – and donors should continue to advocate for co-ordinated needs assessments that reduce inefficiencies and support more objective and rigorous decision-making.

LESSON 6

WHY: Objective and rigorous decision-making criteria are required for donors to make impartial, equitable and proportionate resource allocations, to avoid the politicisation of aid, and to protect against “forgotten emergencies”. Subjective decision-making should also be avoided if donors are to maximise the impact of their humanitarian budget by focusing on crises and themes where they or their partners can clearly add value. Finally, funding only partners who have the capacity to achieve results should support better value for money, and give poorly performing partners the required incentive to improve.

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: ECHO analyses a range of key indicators annually to develop vulnerability and crises indices, which inform its early-warning system and help determine the final resource allocation for ongoing crises. Spain, Sweden and other European Union member states are using ECHO’s indices to support their decision-making. Canada, ECHO and Germany hold regular consultations with partners to support better application of the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence and transparency in donor decision-making. Other donors, including Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, support funding through pooled funding mechanisms, thereby devolving responsibility for prioritising needs to the humanitarian community – recognising, however, that donors retain a governance responsibility to ensure that these channels also make effective and objective decisions.

Box 5. The European Community Humanitarian Office's Global Needs Assessment and Forgotten Crises Assessment tools

The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) has developed two tools to provide comparative analysis of funding requirements for humanitarian crises:

- The GNA or Global Needs Assessment (GNA), which is done in two stages: the first stage identifies the most vulnerable countries – where humanitarian needs are likely to be greater in the event of a disaster – using a vulnerability index; the second stage identifies countries that are effectively in a humanitarian crisis situation, corresponding to the ECHO intervention criteria by means of a crisis index. Taken together, they define the priorities for intervention.
- The Forgotten Crises Assessment (FCA), which attempts to identify severe protracted humanitarian crisis situations where affected populations are receiving no or insufficient international aid, and where there is no political commitment to solve the crisis due in part to a lack of media interest.

The purpose of these tools is to establish consistency in the allocation of resources to different countries according to their respective needs and regardless of pressure of any kind, and to guarantee the credibility and transparency of the European Union's humanitarian aid.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of the European Union, 2007, and http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/strategy_en.htm.

Most donors now recognise and support the interdependence of the humanitarian community.

Lesson 7: Build strong partnerships

WHAT: Donors agree that effective humanitarian action must be based on strong, equal and principled partnerships with NGOs and multilateral agencies, and most donors now recognise and support the interdependence of the humanitarian community. The GHD principles call on donors to *support and promote* the roles of the various members of the humanitarian community (GHD principle 10), to “strive to achieve predictability and flexibility in funding”

(GHD principle 12), to work towards reducing earmarking and “introducing longer-term funding arrangements” (GHD principle 13) and to contribute to the various appeals and support the common humanitarian action plans developed by the humanitarian community (GHD principle 14).

Donors now need to streamline procedures, align funding streams and reduce the administration burden on partners, especially NGO partners. In addition, the benefits of multi-annual funding partnerships are uncontested, particularly their capacity to deliver flexible and holistic responses in protracted crises (Lesson 2: Promote recovery and resilience), and yet few donors are taking up this option. Most donors are also wary of entering into direct partnerships with NGOs and other local organisations in affected countries, although many do encourage their international partners to work in close co-operation with these organisations.

Donors also need to work towards stronger strategic and operational partnerships with each other – which includes reaching out to countries who are not members of the GHD Initiative and to donors from private entities.

WHY: The current reality of donor staff cut-backs, coupled with a shift away from technical specialists and declining budget resources, reinforces the need for donors to move towards a more strategic approach to humanitarian partnerships. Most donors are increasingly choosing to rely on their partners to design, deliver, monitor and inform their humanitarian programming – a move that supports humanitarian principles such as neutrality and independence (GHD principle 1, see Annex) and affirms the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action (GHD principle 19, see Annex). Partners need the flexibility and space to do this properly.

LESSON 7

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Many donors, including Australia, ECHO, Germany, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Norway, hold substantive dialogues with their major multilateral and NGO partners on at least an annual basis to provide input to planning processes and determine funding envelopes. Australia, Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain and Sweden are increasingly using multi-annual partnership agreements, allowing all parties to reduce their administrative burden and shifting the focus from individual projects towards shared strategic goals. Canada and other donors have developed institutional strategies to guide their engagement with key multilateral humanitarian partners.

To support stronger donor co-ordination, the France Australia New Zealand agreement between France, Australia and New Zealand known as FRANZ, commits these donors to exchange information and ensure the best joint use of their assets and other resources for disaster relief operations in the Pacific region.

Support for building partner capacity can be useful to strengthen the quality of the response. ECHO has funds available for strengthening the capacity of its NGO partners, and Portugal funds the training of NGO staff on humanitarian issues and evolving humanitarian issues through the Portuguese NGO platform. Canada has established the Policy Action Group for Emergency Response (PAGER), which provides a space for NGOs, the Canadian Red Cross and the Canadian government to enhance humanitarian policy and operational dialogue. Australia and Japan support the UNHCR eCentre to improve the capacity of government, non-governmental and UN partners in the Asia-Pacific region to prepare for and respond to humanitarian emergencies.

Box 6. Luxembourg's approach to partnership

Although modest in absolute terms, Luxembourg's humanitarian expenditure is held in particularly high regard by implementing partners. Key features include:

- overall earmarking is minimal
- much of Luxembourg's assistance is delivered through multi-year Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as through annual partnership agreements with four prominent NGOs
- multilateral funding within the framework of MoUs is subject to negotiation with partners to ensure consistency with both Luxembourg's global commitments and implementing agency priorities
- NGOs also benefit from substantive bilateral dialogue with Luxembourg early in the calendar year, which provides the surety of a funding envelope within agreed parameters
- Luxembourg has made significant contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) since its inception, which provides coverage for funding shortfalls within UN Consolidated and Emergency Flash Appeals
- under the terms of the MoUs, Luxembourg accepts generic reporting from multilateral partners and, more recently, has moved to establish standardised proposal and reporting formats with NGOs
- strong communication and information flows with partners ensure that Luxembourg is able to monitor developments in real time and provide prompt advice on programming adjustments.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of Luxembourg, 2008.

Significant delays in providing desperately needed funds ... risk translating into missed opportunities to kick-start the emergency response.

Lesson 8: Develop rapid response mechanisms

WHAT: A sudden-onset crisis requires a rapid, appropriate, sometimes same-day response – something that typical humanitarian funding systems are ill-adapted to provide. Significant delays in providing desperately needed funds then risk translating into missed opportunities to kick-start the emergency response. Disasters also often lead to a major spike in donor staff workload.

Donors have made significant progress in this area. A range of new funding mechanisms have been developed to support “timely funding” (GHD principle 5, see Annex), “maintain readiness to support the implementation of humanitarian action” (GHD principle 17, see Annex) and “allocate funding to strengthen capacities for response” (GHD principle 18, see Annex). These include global pooled mechanisms for rapid response, especially the CERF mechanism, which provides rapid disbursements to UN actors for crisis response. However, there are also missed opportunities: communities, families and women, local government, civil society and the local private sector almost always provide the initial response to humanitarian disasters, and yet the international response community rarely links up with or supports their vital work. Outreach to diaspora in donor countries – who often provide significant financial support to crisis-affected family members back home – could also support a stronger rapid response.

WHY: First and most important, an effective rapid response mechanism will ensure that the response reaches disaster survivors and supports local initiatives as quickly as possible. Second, rapid response tools reduce the excess workload for donor personnel, giving staff and partners more time to properly analyse the evolving situation on the ground, and significantly reducing the risk of inappropriate or inadequate donor funding decisions. Third, the deployment of a rapid response helps ministers deal with the media hype that surrounds a disaster event, ensuring that the country has provided an effective response without needing to resort to sometimes inappropriate high-visibility solutions such as “in-kind” aid.

LESSON 8

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Spain and Switzerland pre-position emergency response funds with Red Cross societies. Spain, Sweden and Switzerland extend this pre-positioning tool to include NGO partners. Australia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Italy have draw-down agreements with pre-accredited partners that allow almost immediate funding decisions under simplified fast-track procedures – often approval is given verbally or by email. Several donors focus on rapid response mechanisms established by the international community – especially the CERF global pooled fund, but also field-level emergency response pooled funds in countries at risk of recurring crises. Australia, Canada, Japan, Spain and Switzerland hold stockpiles of relief items, often in warehouses co-managed with partners. Ireland, Australia and Norway (NORCAP) have stand-by rosters of skilled individuals available for emergency deployment at short notice. Australia, ECHO and the United States have specialised teams of donor technical experts able to deploy immediately to new emergency situations. Ireland and the United Kingdom have allocated funding to fill gaps in emergency response materials, finance, essential skills and training for both UN agencies and NGOs.

Box 7. Sweden's rapid response mechanism

Sweden, through its development co-operation agency Sida, has developed the rapid response mechanism (RRM), a pre-arranged draw-down funding mechanism to enable pre-selected NGOs to respond quickly to sudden-onset disasters.

RRM partners are selected based on specific criteria, which include: their technical capacity, skills and experience to deliver quality emergency response; field presence and participation in co-ordination; adherence to international quality standards including the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership standards; and capacity for monitoring and evaluation of the response. Partners are then allocated funds on an annual basis, which they can draw down for almost immediate use should a major crisis occur.

The RRM mechanism has allowed Sida to respond rapidly and flexibly to new crises, and to develop a more strategic relationship with its emergency response partners. It has also reduced the administrative burden on Sida staff at the outset of a crisis response. Knowing that an initial emergency response is already underway, Sida staff have more breathing space to analyse the evolving situation on the ground, and thus to make better decisions about the orientation of their follow-on humanitarian interventions.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of Sweden, 2009.

Donor humanitarian aid management models ... can deliver useful results if there is an effective cross-government co-ordination mechanism in place.

ORGANISATION FIT FOR PURPOSE

Lesson 9: Co-ordinate across government

WHAT: Donors are often criticised for having fragmented humanitarian management structures, but this is not in itself a barrier to coherent humanitarian programming across government. Each of the current donor humanitarian aid management models has merits and disadvantages, and all these business models can deliver useful results if there is an effective cross-government co-ordination mechanism in place.

Ring-fencing:	Split responsibility:	Split objectives:	Multiple actors:
One entity (agency or ministry) makes all policy and funding decisions	A Ministry of Foreign Affairs sets policy and sometimes provides core funding to multilaterals, with a separate agency for earmarked funding and partnerships with NGOs	Two ministries or agencies with mandates for different areas of humanitarian response set policy and provide funding individually	Delivery through multiple branches of government, and often also through municipal structures

Ring-fencing has the advantage of facilitating coherent humanitarian policy and funding decisions, but it can also create the risk of humanitarian programming becoming isolated from inter-ministerial mechanisms and diplomatic channels.

Split responsibility ensures that diplomatic channels can be used for humanitarian advocacy, and that humanitarian concerns retain a strong voice in government. Strong co-ordination mechanisms are needed to ensure that funding decisions are coherent, and that results from cross-government humanitarian funding can be measured.

Split objectives allows donors to exploit the comparative advantages of various ministries, but may also lead to inconsistencies between responses to different types of crises, a lack of clarity in the division of labour, and the failure to exploit programmatic links – for example, links with development programming.

LESSON 9

Multiple actors exploits the comparative advantages of many different arms of government, but also exposes the donor to the risk of inconsistent decision-making, a lack of clarity regarding the division of labour, excessive earmarking and difficulties in measuring overall humanitarian impact. These risks need to be carefully managed.

All business models need an effective cross-government co-ordination system. A national policy on humanitarian action (Lesson 1: Provide clear strategic vision), and a mechanism to ensure coherence between humanitarian policies and other related policy areas, *e.g.* climate change and migration, provide a useful framework for this work. Other important elements are a transparent division of labour between the humanitarian instruments, establishing a clear lead agency, and extending participation in co-ordination structures to other national response actors, including NGOs and the donor country's civil protection mechanisms. Emergency response and civil-military simulation exercises can be useful tools to promote deeper understanding and partnerships.

WHY: Donors with strong cross-government co-ordination mechanisms have the greatest potential to deliver coherent, consistent and holistic humanitarian programming. Effective co-ordination will also support better impact measurement and provide the platform for demonstrating value for money. Co-ordination also ensures that the donor speaks with one voice to the outside world, critical in areas where advocacy – for example, on humanitarian space or protection issues – is required.

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Canada and Sweden have a clear division of labour between actors; in Sweden's case, is it formalised through the annual Letter of Appropriation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its specialised agency, Sida. Germany and Spain have established a formal cross-ministry co-ordination committee, which can be assembled rapidly to plan responses to sudden-onset crises. Sweden has a similar cross-ministry committee to discuss humanitarian funding, advocacy and policy. New Zealand has a humanitarian action group that works across its aid agency, supplemented by a wider “community of practice” forum that undertakes broader analysis of humanitarian issues.

Box 8. Effective cross-government co-ordination in Canada

Canada has an interesting and well-functioning model to support effective and co-ordinated cross-government humanitarian response. This model is based on strong co-ordination and a clear division of labour.

Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) leads on policy for humanitarian action, while the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is responsible for programming, operational policy and institutional relationships with key humanitarian organisations. CIDA also has strong relationships with the other relevant parts of government. Humanitarian action is mostly funded through CIDA's budget, using the International Assistance Envelope.

DFAIT is responsible for policy and inter-departmental co-ordination, while CIDA focuses on programming issues, making the vast majority of funding decisions in consultation with DFAIT. Within government, CIDA either has the institutional lead for engaging with humanitarian agencies or shares it with another government agency, predominantly DFAIT, which has a value-added role or appropriate mandate. Co-ordination appears to work well, ensuring that Canada speaks with one voice. For example, Canada has taken a whole-of-government approach to the way it manages its engagement with UNHCR. DFAIT, CIDA, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) each make unique and complementary contributions to Canada's ongoing engagement with UNHCR.

The shared responsibility between DFAIT and CIDA results in a very strong working relationship and appears to strike an appropriate balance in protecting humanitarian objectives while ensuring humanitarian action involves more than just funding operational humanitarian agencies – for example, through UN Security Council lobbying, and whole-of-government action.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of Canada, 2007.

... implementing coherent and meaningful partnerships between civilian and military actors, guided by humanitarian principles, best practices and value for money, continues to pose a significant challenge for most donors.

Lesson 10: Work to clarify the role of the military

WHAT: Military actors can also play a role in a humanitarian crisis response. Nevertheless, implementing coherent and meaningful partnerships between civilian and military actors, guided by humanitarian principles, best practices and value for money, continues to pose a significant challenge for most donors.

The new security environment is posing a number of challenges for donors seeking to affirm the “primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action” (GHD principle 19, see Annex) and to respect the 1994 Oslo

Guidelines and the related 2003 Military and Civil Defence Assets Guidelines (OCHA, 2006 and 2003), which stipulate that military actors should be used as a “last resort”, where the military bring unique capabilities that are lacking amongst civilian actors (GHD principle 20, see Annex).

Donors are encouraged to engage in outreach with the humanitarian community on these sensitive issues to find workable solutions and compromises that are consistent with the shared humanitarian imperative.

WHY: The humanitarian imperative calls for the delivery of life-saving aid in the most effective manner – and this may at times justify the use of military assets. In the initial stages of a major disaster, for example, the military’s comparative advantage in heavy-lift capacity or specialist engineering may be the fastest, most effective way of supporting the civilian delivery of life-saving aid. In other circumstances, however, the delivery of humanitarian assistance by the military is probably less effective, especially in terms of value for money.

The situation becomes more complicated when military actors are party to the conflict, which includes as peacekeeping troops. Any humanitarian assistance that is delivered by – or whose delivery is protected by – these troops could be misinterpreted as a tool to support the war effort, rather than as a neutral good designed to save lives and livelihoods. The resulting perception – that humanitarian assistance is not neutral – may already be adversely impacting safe humanitarian access (GHD principle 17, see Annex) in some hostile environments.⁶ The humanitarian community continues to assert that upholding the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality maximises humanitarian space, allowing access to the maximum number of beneficiaries.

LESSON 10

HOW: Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have formal agreements on civil-military co-ordination in disaster settings. However, these agreements often do not extend to environments where troops are active combatants or are on peacekeeping duty. Norway has, in Afghanistan, taken the approach that its military personnel will not implement aid projects, instead giving this responsibility to its embassy in Kabul and delivering all its aid exclusively through civilian partners.

To facilitate working relationships, Australia and the Netherlands have exchanged liaison officers between their aid programmes and defence ministries. Canada embeds officers from DFAIT and CIDA within units of Canadian forces in crisis situations to serve as liaisons and provide assistance on supporting humanitarian principles and approaches. To raise awareness of humanitarian principles and issues, Australia, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United States provide training for military officers prior to deployment, sometimes supplemented by regular simulation exercises. Canada has a particularly useful training programme covering a wider range of issues, including the gender perspective, cultural awareness and trafficking in persons. Australia, Portugal, Spain and the United States enlist the support of NGO partners in the training process.

Box 9. Australia's approach to civil-military relations

Australia has developed emergency response standard operating procedures (SOPs) that articulate the relationships between the various government actors involved in humanitarian response. These SOPs have ensured that crisis responses across government – including through its military branches – respect humanitarian principles.

Australia's development agency AusAID is designated as the leader on humanitarian action in a robust whole-of-government approach that includes the Australian defence forces, the Departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs, and others. AusAID's Humanitarian and Emergency Section takes the lead on major emergency responses in developing countries, while supporting country programmes with both funding and technical advice when dealing with smaller crises.

The emergency response standard operating procedures have resulted in a practical and effective working relationship with the Australian defence forces, ensuring good co-ordination of logistical and other inputs to major crises through, for example, the exchange of liaison officers.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of Australia, 2008.

Low staffing levels and high staff turnover create risks for institutional memory, restrict donor's capacity to engage at a global level and limit the scope for staff to add value beyond a basic grant administration role.

Lesson 11: Invest in your staff

WHAT: The success or failure of a donor's humanitarian programme is highly dependent on the people who design and implement its strategic orientations, advocacy actions and funding decisions. These staff need the necessary skills to feel confident operating in highly pressured and intense environments. It is therefore unfortunate that so few donors are choosing to make investments in the skill levels and career development of their humanitarian personnel.

Workload is also an issue. Humanitarian teams are often tasked with managing much larger portfolios than their development counterparts in terms of monetary value, number of contracts managed and geographical/sectoral spread – leaving limited capacity for in-depth analysis and for quality issues such as monitoring and evaluation, innovation and ensuring that lessons are learnt (GHD principles 21 and 22, see Annex). Staff who do not usually work on humanitarian issues but who may be co-opted to support major humanitarian responses – especially those posted to countries at risk of disaster or crisis, including local staff and development desk officers – are equally affected by these capacity issues.

Donors have been asked to consider boosting their humanitarian teams, either by increasing absolute numbers or by investing in humanitarian skills training for a wider group of staff – especially desk officers and field staff deployed in at-risk countries. Other useful actions include: supporting mandatory humanitarian skills training for all actors involved in humanitarian and fragile states work, including civil protection specialists; consistently deploying humanitarian specialists to the field in major emergency contexts; and supporting an established career path for humanitarian programme experts.

WHY: Low staffing levels and high staff turnover create risks for institutional memory, restrict the donor's capacity to engage at a global level and limit the scope for staff to add value beyond a basic grant administration role.

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Some donors, including ECHO, Switzerland, the United States and now Denmark, hire humanitarian specialists for humanitarian posts in the field. Canada conducts regular training exercises on a number of key humanitarian issues, including the protection of civilians and international humanitarian law. The Netherlands and the United States are also investing in strengthening their in-house humanitarian expertise through training.

Box 10. The United States' strong staff base

The quality of the United States' humanitarian response depends on its strong staff. The administration is investing in building a group of staff skilled in humanitarian, diplomatic, military and developmental aspects of working in unstable environments. As a result, US field staff in protracted crisis situations are highly skilled humanitarian experts who remain in post for long periods, thus ensuring that they have a strong understanding of the context and its underlying humanitarian issues.

The US system also includes skilled rapid-onset disaster specialists, which it deploys to the field in the form of Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs), backed by Response Management Teams in Washington, D.C. These teams provide a very prompt response to disasters and are able to give skilled advice and make sound decisions on humanitarian funding orientations almost immediately.

The Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance in the Agency for International Development (USAID/OFDA) backs up its field staff with a Technical Assistance Group (TAG), which works with NGO technical staff to improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance by developing best practices and providing support to evolving policy issues. TAG also supports NGO-designed pilot programmes and its staff takes part in field assessments, and monitoring and evaluation exercises.

Nevertheless, relatively few USAID/OFDA humanitarian staff members are on permanent contract. The lack of an established career ladder may constrain the retention of these experienced staff for humanitarian work and thus result in a loss of investments and skill.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of United States, 2011.

LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Lesson 12: Demonstrate value for money and promote learning

WHAT: Learning and accountability in humanitarian action is generally accepted as a system-wide weakness. Most DAC donors do little to ensure that humanitarian organisations are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness (GHD principle 15, see Annex), promote the use of guidelines and principles (GHD principle 16, see Annex), support learning and accountability initiatives (GHD principle 21, see Annex) or encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance (GHD principle 22, see Annex).

Instead, humanitarian monitoring systems are often dependent on partner self-reporting. Information provided is seldom independently verified, mostly due to a lack of donor institutional capacity to interrogate and analyse the data in partner reports. Monitoring often focuses on inputs rather than on overall programme impact; there is a strong need for guidelines to support improved and more consistent reporting on humanitarian results. Limits on donor travel budgets, coupled with increased staff workloads and declining resources, are providing major disincentives to effective and systematic programme monitoring. Donors are encouraged to make better use of existing initiatives in this area – such as ALNAP,⁷ of which many are members – and to adopt more resource-effective approaches to programme monitoring, which include joint evaluations and joint donor field visits. Increasing the number of independent evaluations of humanitarian assistance may also be useful. Finally, donors should also hold themselves to account, determining verifiable indicators to monitor and report progress on their own – and not just on their partners’ – humanitarian objectives and strategies.

Documenting good practice – especially from field experience – is rarely a priority for donors and the incentives to use evidence and lessons to guide future humanitarian decision-making and policy are limited. Most donors also have a low tolerance for risk-taking and indeed may not yet have actively defined their risk tolerance levels. As a result, failure to deliver is more often punished by restricting future funding to that partner, rather than being used more proactively as a learning opportunity.

LESSON 12

WHY: Taxpayers and donors have the right to know how – and how well – their money has been spent. Relationships between taxpayers, lawmakers, donors, partners and beneficiaries will be strengthened once all parties are treated as equal stakeholders, equally entitled to receive and provide feedback on programme performance. Proper monitoring can also help reduce the potential for waste, fraud and corruption.

Understanding what works best, and why, will help donors and partners improve programme design and delivery. Focusing on good practices and how they can be replicated will improve future value for money and impact. Providing more flexible and longer-term funding will allow partners to pick up on these opportunities as their programmes – and the wider humanitarian context – evolve.

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM PEER REVIEWS: Some donors, including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom, have recently undertaken (or are beginning to undertake) evaluations of their own performance in order to inform future programming. Canada conducts a comprehensive review after each major disaster to identify how to respond more quickly and effectively in the future. Japan has set out benchmarks against which to monitor its performance in disaster response. ECHO and France have a standard evaluation framework for partner programming. And the United Kingdom requires NGO partners to include monitoring and accountability activities in their budgets, and to identify mechanisms for disseminating lessons.

Box 11. France's humanitarian evaluation framework

The Sous-direction des interventions humanitaires et de l'évaluation within the Délégation à l'action humanitaire (DAH) is tasked with conducting evaluations of interventions financed through the Fonds d'urgence humanitaire (FUH), and these evaluations can also be performed by the Direction générale de la coopération internationale et du développement (DGCID) when they concern France's aid effort as a whole. Evaluations are conducted at three levels – by individual activity, by programme and by theme:

- Review of individual activities: conducted through mid-term and end-of-project monitoring primarily at the local level by the Service de coopération et d'action culturelle (SCAC). In the future, however, it will become mandatory for grant recipients to commission independent evaluations of all activities in excess of EUR 300 000.
- Programme evaluations: system-wide evaluations have been conducted of recent crisis responses. For example, the evaluation of the French response to the Indian Ocean tsunami was conducted by the DGCID and covered France's overall aid effort. The response to the 2005 food crisis in Niger was the subject of two studies financed by the DGCID and the Agence française de développement (AFD).
- Thematic evaluations: issues-based evaluations include evaluations of France's humanitarian co-operation in three fragile states (Afghanistan, Guinea and Haiti), as well as a global evaluation of food aid.

Source: OECD DAC Peer Review of France, 2008.

NOTES

1. Data for members of the OECD DAC includes core official development assistance (ODA) contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to 2009. Source: Development Initiatives, Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2011, www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/gha-report-2011.pdf.
2. For example, see Overseas Development Institute's work-stream on cash and voucher programming: www.odi.org.uk/resources/search.asp?database=resources&theme=419.
3. Based on pledges made at the March 2010 international donor pledging conference for Haiti.
4. Data taken from the UN Financial Tracking Service Global Overview tables.
5. For further information, refer to Global Humanitarian Assistance's work-stream on scale of needs: www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/workstream/workstreams/scale-of-needs.
6. See, for example, Stoddard, A. and Adele Harmer (2010), Supporting Security for Humanitarian Action: A review of critical issues for the humanitarian community, Humanitarian Outcomes, Dublin. The Humanitarian Outcomes 2010 report for USAID shows that humanitarian access is declining worldwide due to scale-backs/withdrawals in response to violent incidents.
7. See: Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action at www.alnap.org. Fifteen DAC donors are full members of this network in January 2012.

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ANNEX: PRINCIPLES AND GOOD PRACTICE OF HUMANITARIAN DONORSHIP

OBJECTIVES AND DEFINITION OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

1. The objectives of humanitarian action are 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.
2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; impartiality, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; neutrality, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and independence, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.
3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

4. Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.
5. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs.
6. Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.
7. Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.
8. Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.
9. Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.
10. Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organisations in implementing humanitarian action.

GOOD PRACTICES IN DONOR FINANCING, MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Funding

11. Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.
12. Recognising the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organisations.
13. While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.
14. Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and co-ordination in complex emergencies.

Promoting standards and enhancing implementation

15. Request that implementing humanitarian organisations fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.
16. Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.
17. Maintain readiness to offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.
18. Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organisations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.
19. Affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations.
20. Support the implementation of the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

Learning and accountability

21. Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action.
22. Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.
23. Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardised formats for such reporting.

Understanding what works best, and why, will help donors and partners improve programme design and delivery. Focusing on good practices and how they can be replicated will improve future value for money and impact.

