Humanitarian
Outcomes

Review of the Netherlands' Humanitarian Assistance 2009-2014

An independent team of professionals providing evidence-based analysis and policy consultations to governments and international organisations on their humanitarian response efforts.

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of Netherlands' humanitarian action from 2009 to 2013. It was commissioned and supported by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of the report is to evaluate the 2011 policy by providing insight into the development of Netherlands' humanitarian policy, its implementation, and whether or not the envisaged results have been achieved. The report also examines the broader effectiveness of the UN-led humanitarian system, and considers the Netherlands' humanitarian policy within the context of the challenges faced by this system. The central evaluation question is: *To what extent has the central objective of the Netherlands' humanitarian assistance policy been realised?*

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)-led system is facing an unprecedented caseload and, while funding is at a record level, so is the 'gap' between funding and appeals. Humanitarian assistance has arguably reached a point where need has surpassed the system's absolute capacity to deliver effectively and comprehensively in accordance with its collective ideals; at the very least it is possible to state that the limits of the IASC-led core humanitarian system are increasingly clear. In conflict contexts with high levels of global political interest, faith in and respect for the universality of humanitarian principles have diminished, and maintaining access for humanitarian actors is a significant challenge. In natural disasters, principally those in middle-income countries, there is an emerging consensus on the importance of nationally led response, and calls for the transfers of response capacity at a transformative scale to governments, national civil society, communities and the private sector. A range of alternative practices and models have been put forward, but these require consistent relationships with national actors and between the humanitarian and development components of actors across the system. The core humanitarian system is currently not configured, funded, nor linked to development and transitional programming in such a way that the necessary partnerships are being built.

The response to super-Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 was, by and large, a success story. Although the IASC-led system provided only a proportion of the assistance, it is clear that this was timely, at scale, in keeping with assessed priorities and with reasonably consistent coverage. In keeping with Level 3 (L3) protocols, cluster coordination was scaled up very quickly through a timely surge response. In the context of this largely positive evaluation, questions and criticisms nevertheless arise, most notably around the failure of the international system to work in full partnership with national actors. The relative weight of the international surge set up a typically asymmetrical relationship with the Government of the Philippines, a willing and

capable partner. Recognising the extent to which effectiveness is increasingly seen as contingent on the centrality of the host government – as well as connectedness with national response systems and risk reduction, preparedness and recovery programming – the case for critical reflection is clear.

In considering the strength of responses to large-scale, chronic crises, the International Rescue Committee and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) both note the extent to which humanitarian action should be evaluated against reasonable expectations of performance and not "condemned to permanent failure" as a result of unrealistic expectations where the real failure is that of political process. There is also concern that low levels of field presence beyond capitals and easily accessible areas are the result of risk-averse behaviour and a lack of drive to reach those most affected. This combination of inherent systemic weakness and external pressure has clearly undermined effectiveness in Syria, the Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan where serious gaps in coverage and capacity are noted. Funding shortfalls are seen as having restricted coverage and/or diluted assistance levels. While there is some evidence that the Emergency Relief Coordinator's (ERC's) declarations of an L3 emergency in CAR and South Sudan went some way towards addressing shortcomings, challenges in leadership and coordination in Syria and Turkey speak to inter-agency politics and the challenging debate around cross-border operations. There is, however, no basis on which to judge the longevity of the effects of the L3 declaration or their impact.

Perceptions of the ERC's transformative agenda are largely positive to date. It can be argued, however, that in the prevailing political climate, the system is reaching the limit of what can be achieved by iterative, incremental improvements of existing practice. The new HPC and Strategic Response Plan do appear to go beyond this critique, in that they are seen as initiatives which offer at least a partial solution to the problem of addressing the power differential between the UN-led system and governments of affected states. While pooled funds have positive and mutually reinforcing effects of coordination and leadership, they have to be seen in light of their ongoing challenges and limitations. Although there is evident positive progress, pooled funds do not provide a silver bullet for the challenge of passing money to national NGOs, and they are ill-suited as funding conduits for resilience and capacity building.

Across the humanitarian system accountability, most notably collective accountability and accountability to affected populations, remain universally perceived as weaknesses. The lack of independent, public, system-wide evaluations of action in Syria, CAR and South Sudan are troubling, as is the absence of other system-wide evaluations in other

large, chronic contexts. Neither pooled funds nor the Transformative Agenda have made a significant impact in this respect, largely as a result of the UN agencies' ability to sustain the argument that their direct, vertical accountability to donors should continue to be the principle accountability chain. Donors' collective acceptance of this standard maintains the status quo.

The Netherlands' policy asserts that the rationale for its support to multilateral institutions relates to the UN's leadership and coordination in terms of driving efficiency through fewer gaps and duplications in delivery. While there is little hard, cost-based evidence to support this claim, process evaluations, notably those of pooled funding arrangements, have consistently drawn links between coordination and gains *in some aspects* of efficiency. When taking a broader view of efficiency from the review of pooled funding arrangements, however, the picture is complex and mixed. It is clear that a wide range of seemingly inefficient practices, some of them long acknowledged and potentially severe, persist. These include the cascading of overhead costs in top-down funding arrangements, and the cumulative effects of multiple sub-contracting arrangements and short funding cycles. These are created by 'normal' business practices in the humanitarian system and are often written off or excused as the cost of doing business.

Despite these challenges, the Netherlands' humanitarian policy represents a clear step forward in addressing the call for a consolidated set of strategies. It is limited, however, in that the commitments it contains could be more specific, and it lacks a clear roll-out plan, implementation plan and monitoring framework. Dutch humanitarian funding is valued by the main partners that it funds. The fact that it is unearmarked, reliable and flexible is very important in enabling organisations to respond effectively and impartially and to invest in improved performance. The counterpoint to this "hands-off" approach is a belief, shared by some staff in the Ministry, that the performance of the UN agencies is uneven and that support could be more critical.

Notwithstanding positive views of the constructively critical and supportive role of Dutch humanitarian staff overall, there has been a shortfall in staff capacity in both sheer numbers and experience in humanitarian affairs. The burden of a challenging humanitarian portfolio, the need to invest in relationships with multiple partners, as well as the added burden of ensuring better alignment in policy and practical terms between humanitarian and other types of action requires greater capacity. Country case studies for this review confirm the view from The Hague that there is inadequate capacity in embassies to play a significant role in supplementing or critiquing self-reporting through monitoring or follow-up on humanitarian projects. This is problematic

for the Netherlands in light of the noted collective accountability deficit, and especially given its reliance on the multilateral system. This issue also holds for like-minded and similar-sized donors and, realistically, would be best addressed through a concerted effort by a group of donors.

While the multilateral system remains an appropriate funding channel for the Netherlands, it is clear, however, that funding through the UN has become overly dominant. In implementing its policy the Netherlands needs to recognise the challenges faced by the multilateral system and to acknowledge the need for alternative delivery models and additional complementary delivery channels. The new Relief Fund, among other funding channels, is seen as a way of redressing this balance. There is little or no evidence on which to judge the comparative effectiveness or efficiency of the range of funding channels available, leaving room for criticism of bias; in this light, the tying of funding almost exclusively to Dutch NGOs could be viewed as problematic.

As well as working on alternative delivery mechanisms, there is also value in the Netherlands pursuing context-specific response models, and those based on stronger risk analysis, particularly for countries at high risk of natural disasters. Investing in a system where power dynamics are balanced in favour of local actors, in which they are prioritised for funding where the context allows, and in which more investment is made in disaster risk reduction and relationships with national and regional response systems is a significant challenge for all donors. There is a direct link to the question of efficiency in this respect. For any system which passes funds to national NGOs more systematically in a fashion consistent with sustained partnerships and capacity building, top-down funding through UN agencies is unlikely to provide a solution. It is critical that donors' collective efforts turn to solving the problem of balancing the need for this capacity transfer with the need for accountability.

Recommendation 1: Update or refresh the current humanitarian policy and include a clearer strategy and set of activities for implementing and monitoring it.

Recommendation 2: As part of an updated policy, include clear and transparent criteria for making choices between funding channels. Creating a stronger evidence base, in conjunction with other donors, would enable these choices to be elaborated more clearly.

Recommendation 3: Invest in more staffing capacity in the humanitarian department, both in absolute numbers and in skills, training and expertise, to ensure that policy ambitions are ultimately matched by implementation capacity.

Recommendation 4: As part of an investment in capacity, ensure an adequate level of engagement in and feedback from the field. If greater standing capacity in embassies is impractical, options to achieve this might include: dedicated humanitarian expertise with a specific geographical remit; stronger communication links between DSH and embassies; collaboration, joint action and/or partnerships with donors facing similar staffing constraints.

Recommendation 5: In addition to current work with development colleagues and funding streams on risk reduction, place a specific emphasis on sustaining partnerships and building capacity for disaster response and resilience (for governments of at-risk countries and also NNGOs.) Emphasis would need to be evident in policy and practice (including a specific funding niche, for example as a window within Strategic Partnerships for Chronic Crises).

In conjunction with other donors:

Recommendation 6: Collaborate to improve the strength of critical, independent, system-wide monitoring.

Recommendation 7: Continue to investigate the potential of alternative, context-specific response models (including those which work with risk analysis and insurance when appropriate).

Recommendation 8: Invest specifically in investigating the efficiency of funding channels (through UN and INGOs), taking an approach that looks at all aspects of funding cycles and fund management.

1 Introduction

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of Netherlands' humanitarian action from 2009 to 2013. It was commissioned and supported by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. IOB evaluations are an instrument for policy development and internal learning as well as a source of accountability to parliament. In 2006 IOB published an evaluation of Dutch humanitarian assistance which covered the period 2000 to 2004. A Dutch humanitarian policy, "Aid for People in Need" was finalised in 2011. The Rijksregeling Periodek Evaluatieonderzoek (RPE: 2012) requires each policy area to be evaluated periodically, hence this evaluation.

The purpose of the report is to evaluate the 2011 policy by providing insight into the development of Netherlands' humanitarian policy, its implementation, and whether or not the envisaged results have been achieved. The report also examines lessons learned from the implementation of policy and takes into account the broader effectiveness of the UN-led humanitarian system.

The central evaluation question is: To what extent has the central objective of the Netherlands' humanitarian assistance policy been realised?

Ultimately, this means examining whether or not Netherlands' humanitarian assistance has been provided in an effective manner.

The 2011 *Aid for People in Need* document outlines four main priorities in the provision of humanitarian assistance:

- More self-reliance and resilience;
- More effectiveness through less duplication and more coordination;
- Humanitarian access and neutrality;
- Greater accountability.

The Netherlands does not directly implement aid but, as a donor, enables other organisations to do so. It has prioritised funding channels through the UN-led humanitarian system. This is largely based on the importance placed on strong leadership and central coordination in humanitarian emergencies and the assumed efficiency of operating through the UN-led system. The Netherlands also aims to provide flexible and unearmarked funding in order to enable timely response by implementing partners.

The following evaluation questions were formulated in the terms of reference:

1. Policy relevance – what assessment can be made of the Netherlands' humanitarian policy?
2. Efficiency – to what extent did the Netherlands' funding policy contribute to increased delivery capacity for humanitarian action?
3. Effectiveness – what can be learned from available evaluation reports and international literature on specific themes and cases about the effectiveness of humanitarian action and what explanations can be given for the main findings?

The report consists of two sub-studies. The first is an analysis of the Netherlands' humanitarian policy and considers the following questions:

1.1. How does Dutch policy respond to new developments in humanitarian assistance (HA) (innovation, new/emerging donors, politicisation of HA etc.)?
1.2. Have the principles for Good Humanitarian Donorship and other international HA standards (Sphere/EU consensus on HA) been complied with?
1.3. What assessment can be made of the

contributions made (together with other like-minded donors) to promote coordination and the UN's central role in HA?

1.4. What assessment can be made of the contributions (together with other like-minded donors) made to promote more self-reliance and resilience in HA (strengthening local capacity, transition, exit strategies, disaster risk reduction and reconstruction after conflicts)?

The second sub-study examines the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance provided through the UN system. The main evaluation questions for this sub-study are:

1. To what extent did the Netherlands' non-earmarked funding of UN HA organisations allow for reliable funding and flexible planning of their interventions?
2. Does channelling most of Dutch HA through UN organisations meet the underlying expectations as regards to: efficiency gains as a consequence of less fragmentation? Leadership and coordination of HA? Demand-driven HA?
3. What can be learned from available evaluation reports and international literature on specific themes and cases about the effectiveness of HA and what explanations can be given for the main findings?
   3.1. What assessment can be made of the support to HA interventions in acute crises in terms of timeliness, coverage and responding to immediate needs?
   3.2. What assessment can be made of the effectiveness of supported HA interventions in chronic crises especially in terms of protection, shelter and income?
   3.3. What assessment can be made of HA contributions to self-reliance and durable solutions for the victims of natural and political crises?

Section 2 of this report establishes the current context through which the Netherlands is providing humanitarian assistance. Section 3 provides an assessment of the Netherlands' humanitarian policy, including a donor benchmarking exercise to examine the Netherlands' commitments in relation to other like-minded donors. Section 4 provides an assessment of the broader UN-led system, its effectiveness and efficiency, and examines the extent to which Netherlands' policy priorities and expected achievements are being met through the multilateral system. Section 5 provides conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations.

1.1 Methodology

The approach to the central objective included three main activities: a sub-study/assessment of the relevance of Dutch humanitarian policy; a sub-study on the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian assistance provided by the UN system; and three country case studies (Sudan, Ethiopia, and Syria and its sub-region) for an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance delivery at the country-level. The review was undertaken with three research strands: an extensive literature review; an evaluation synthesis; and semi-structured interviews. The scope of the review focused on the time period of 2009-2013, with updates through 2014 where relevant and available. The country case studies were sub-contracted, managed and authored independently of the main study. As part of the overarching study, however, Humanitarian Outcomes worked with each respective team or consultant to ensure that key questions from the global study would feature in the country level analyses. An overview of the country studies is provided in Section 4, and the results and analysis from each are a critical component of the global analysis.

Question 1 and the first sub-study on the relevance of the Netherlands' humanitarian assistance policy was addressed by undertaking a policy reconstruction and assessment. This involved a review of external and internal documentation, and interviews with representatives from the Dutch government, staff

from other donor governments, and representatives from various UN agencies/organisations and the Red Cross Movement. Part of the methodology for this portion of the review consisted of a limited process of donor benchmarking in order to formulate a comparison of the Netherlands policy with selected other bilateral donors. This involved interviews with representatives from various donor governments and a review of relevant literature including evaluations and peer reviews of other donor governments' humanitarian action. There was a particular focus on how different governments staffed and managed their humanitarian units and how they made decisions relating to the balance of funding provided to different channels (UN, Red Cross, direct to NGOs and others).

Questions 2 and 3 were addressed through the sub-study on the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian assistance provided by the UN system. This included a comprehensive review of the available literature, an evaluation synthesis, and the three country case studies. The literature review and evaluation synthesis focused on the extent to which the expected improvements in humanitarian effectiveness have been realised by reform initiatives over the period of the evaluation.

The evaluation synthesis generated the assessment of systemic performance addressed in Section 4. The synthesis is composed of evaluation reports published between 2012 and the end of 2014, and spans country-level programme evaluations to multilateral/multi-agency (strategy) reviews. In total, the synthesis took in 147 evaluations covering 38 country contexts, of which:

- 8 were global in nature;
- 37 at country level;
- 8 were sector specific;
- 59 were at programme level;
- 35 at project level.

Ninety-three evaluations were initiated by implementing agencies, 31 by multiple-agencies; 18 by donors; one by the host government; and four were initiated independently. Each report was read by a research assistant, categorised and rated against a set of standard research questions. These questions were derived from the overall research framework for the review. Questions were answered using a 4-point rating scale (poor; fair; good; excellent).

The evaluation synthesis matrix followed the DAC criteria for evaluating humanitarian action.[1] Additional research and evaluation questions were adapted from the TOR questions and noted policy points. These addressed measurements specific to Dutch policy, such as accountability to affected populations, and presence of capacity- and resilience-building initiatives, and the targeting of critical gaps or efficiency gains through coordination. Criteria were also expanded to focus on leadership and coordination at the system level, and to differentiate between acute and chronic crises. Criteria were rated according to measurement and supporting evidence within the evaluation on a scale of 1 to 4: 1 being poor, 4 being excellent.

Evaluations were categorised by disaster and programme type. This included support to chronic crises, sudden onset disaster response, and coordination-based and sector-specific responses. Programmes with a preparedness and resilience focus were categorised as support to chronic crises.

In total, 54 interviews were carried out in support of both sub-studies/all portions of the evaluation (Annex 5). Interviewees included staff from the humanitarian unit in The Hague, Dutch staff in permanent missions, staff from other donor governments in Brussels, Geneva and New York. These were complemented with further telephone interviews with staff from UNHCR, WFP, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNICEF and the Red Cross movement. Interviews with staff from the main organisations supported by Dutch humanitarian funding focused on their views about Dutch funding, their views on the effectiveness of Dutch engagement in furthering their policy objectives within

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[1] Coverage and sufficiency, relevance and appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, connectedness, and impact.

organisation governance frameworks and the humanitarian system more widely, and their views on progress on the UN reform, the transformative agenda and the extent which these efforts were leading to more effective humanitarian action. Interviews with staff from other donor governments focused on their views about the voice and influence of the Dutch in key humanitarian forums and debates, how they as donors made choices about funding channels and managed their humanitarian assistance and humanitarian policy priorities to provide a point of comparison. Interviews with staff in the humanitarian unit in The Hague and permanent missions focused on how the Dutch rolled out their humanitarian policy priorities and attempted to support, influence and engage the key humanitarian organisations supported by the Dutch.

1.1.1 Limitations

Challenges within the evaluation synthesis included the general positive bias of evaluations, poor linking and justification of some evaluative criteria, poor quality of some evaluations, and cases of assessment of criteria without actual measurement.

The vast majority of evaluations rate overall performance as relatively good.[2] In cases where performance was somewhat negative, positive aspects are highlighted in order to present a more positive finding. A rating of 'good' was also often used to indicate 'adequate' performance. The challenge of poorly linked criteria was mostly evident within assessments of impact. Impact was measured less often than most other criteria, but also received disproportionately high or 'excellent' ratings in comparison with the other criteria. A third challenge was that some evaluations would assign scores to criteria that were either not assessed and measured, or that did not match the evidence

provided. Most of these were well written, but a final breakdown of findings by criteria would not match the evidence given. For example, final conclusions might rate efficiency as 'excellent', when in fact efficiency had not been measured, but rated based on assumptions with no presented evidence.

Many evaluations were conducted at either a very micro project level, or were overarching at the agency level. There were very few evaluations that examined the response of the humanitarian system as a whole, making a universal assessment difficult. Exceptions to this were the Operational Peer Reviews. These fill a key gap in country-level evaluations that look at the multi-lateral response. This breakdown finds an important balance that allows for answering evaluative questions at the country level, within the context of the UN system (including Transformative Agenda advancements).

The review team recognises that not all evaluations will have applied criteria in the same way or in a consistent manner, resulting in an inconsistency of rating systems within evaluations. To address this the review team applied a consistent set of its own research questions as an expansion of the DAC criteria (see above), taking into consideration the evidence given by the evaluations according to this criteria. All assessments are based on how the evaluations have scored themselves, according to the criteria that the review team applied.

While ratings were consistently applied through constant dialogue between research associates/assistants, it is recognised that the rating system may present a limited or overly exact finding. While this limits the flexibility of an overall rating, it is necessary for generating usable quantitative data, and to develop comparable categories for a large amount of material and data. Weaker evaluations were used for quantitative analysis on the basis that only a very small portion received a low overall quality score; however, they were limited in their inclusion within qualitative assessment or in use as examples.

A final limitation was presented in the ToR. It was made clear through the preliminary study undertaken by IOB that collecting evidence that demonstrated

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[2] Of 147 evaluations, only 24 were given a summation score of 'negative' or 'very negative'. The rest were 'positive' or 'very positive'.

progress on the expected results within Dutch policy, and specific attribution of system-level achievements to Dutch funding, would be difficult. As a result, examples presented as attributed to Dutch funding are limited, and the report takes a broader view of system-level achievements, justifying Dutch funding based on the success of the UN-led system as a whole.

2 The international context for humanitarian action: a changing landscape?

This section provides an overarching context for the review which follows. It is the product of an extensive review of literature over the period 2012 to 2014,[3] and covers a range of issues and challenges for humanitarian action. In keeping with the nature of the exercise, it highlights implications for donors of humanitarian action, and specifically for the Netherlands.

The review comes at a time when the global humanitarian system is facing a set of challenges commonly described as unprecedented. During the research period the global humanitarian system was responding to simultaneous, large scale emergencies of varying types. It also continued to undertake its 'normal' business of smaller-scale rapid responses, programming for caseloads of chronically vulnerable populations, disaster preparedness and advocacy.

During this period, the humanitarian system has been perceived by many to be perilously overstretched in terms of financial and human resources. There is also a strong sense that the system has been pushed beyond its internal capacity to respond simultaneously and effectively for multiple, affected populations, and to advocate for adequate funding and political attention. The system is delivering as perhaps never before in terms of quantity and quality, yet at the same time it faces ongoing, long-recognised and deep-rooted structural challenges. Over and above these 'internal' issues, there is a growing recognition of how the world around humanitarian action is changing, and that

economic, political and physical/ecological dynamics affect the effectiveness of humanitarian action. In certain operational contexts, these factors bring the universality of humanitarian principles and its normal operational modalities into question.

This has led to a range of commentators, in increasing numbers and with increasing clarity, to advocate a transfer of capacity at a truly transformative scale to nationally managed systems of disaster management, over and above ongoing improvements to the way that disaster relief is undertaken. These arguments are expanded below under Section 2.2.3 after other contextual issues. None of the component parts can be taken in full isolation, but trends in levels of humanitarian funding are taken first to provide a backdrop to the funding context.

2.1 Trends in funding of humanitarian action

Total funding

Total humanitarian funding has been steadily increasing. Humanitarian funding reported to OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS) in 2013 totalled $14.3 billion, and in 2014 increased to $20.7 billion.[4] These rising funding levels reflect the increasing number of disasters (OCHA 2013a), the prevalence of protracted crises, and the rise in the number and frequency of mega-disasters, such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

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[3] A full bibliography is provided at Annex 6.

[4] OCHA FTS as of January 23rd, 2015

Both governments and private donors increased their levels of funding in 2013 and 2014, largely in response to the Syria crisis.[5] Given the rise in total funding levels from 2009,[6] it is likely that funding beyond 2014 will continue to rise as well, especially with the increased need associated with the four Level 3 (L3) emergencies of 2014. The current projected funding requirement for 2015 is a record $16.4 billion according to the Strategic Response Plan (SRP) launch. Given previous trends, this number is likely to rise significantly by the end of the year, possibly up to $25 billion.[7] This trend in rising funding is identified by multiple datasets, both reported through OCHA (FTS), and independently analysed by Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA).[8]

Largest donors

Traditional Western donors and members of the OECD DAC continue to be the largest contributors to humanitarian assistance. According to OCHA FTS, the top five donors between 2009 and 2013 (all DAC members) have contributed 50% of humanitarian assistance or more each year. Some noticeable trends in top five donor spending are that the US and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) are continuously the top two donors, and the UK is consistently among the top five. The top five are, overall, quite consistent, and most frequently include a combination of the US, ECHO, UK, Germany, Japan, and Sweden. The Netherlands consistently ranks within the top 15 largest government donors.[9]

Traditional donors tend to be increasing their spending; however, this spending is a smaller overall proportion of total humanitarian assistance (Global Humanitarian Assistance 2013, 2014). This is due to the rise in private donations as a larger proportion of humanitarian assistance, and the rise in the number and size of non-DAC government donors, such as Turkey.[10] Overall, there is an increased presence of non-DAC and non-traditional donors among top 25 humanitarian donors globally. This is evident through both the number of non-DAC donors, and the size of their contributions each year between 2009 and 2013. Countries repeatedly among the top 25 during this time period include Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Non-DAC donors tend to organise their humanitarian funding differently from OECD-DAC donors. Turkey, for example, provides a significant amount of

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[5] In 2013 and 2014 OCHA FTS recorded a combined total of $4.6 billion per year in funding for response within Syria, as well as in neighbouring refugee-hosting countries.

[6] From $12.4 billion (2009) to $14.3 billion (2013), to $20.7 billion (2014)

[7] The amount requested at the 2014 launch was $12.9 billion, which increased by 48% to $19.2 billion. In 2013, requirements had risen by 51% by the end of the year. http://devinit.org/record-us16-billion-needed-address-humanitarian-needs-2015/

[8] While the trend of increased/increasing funding holds between datasets, there are important differences between the FTS and GHA numbers. Most notably, the GHA reports account for much higher levels of humanitarian funding than is reported through OCHA FTS. The largest discrepancy in reported totals is in 2013; OCHA reported total humanitarian funding at $14.3 billion, while GHA reported total funding to be $22 billion. The difference in recorded numbers is likely due to GHA's methodology for calculating total humanitarian funding, as opposed to the numbers reported directly to FTS. GHA uses a separate method for counting private donations to humanitarian crises, and also counts funds committed by non-DAC donors through Official Development Assistance (ODA). This often includes funds spent within a country's own borders on refugee crises in response to a neighbouring emergency. The most significant example of this is Turkey. The GHA considers Turkey to have been the third largest donor in 2013, due to their significant contributions to the Syrian refugee crisis within their own borders. However, Turkey does not register as a significant donor through FTS, as their domestic funding and ODA is not reported.

[9] OCHA FTS (10th in 2009, 13th in 2010 and 2011, 12th in 2012, 15th in 2013, and 11th in 2014).

[10] When comparing FTS and GHA datasets, the biggest discrepancy in the top five donors is that, in 2012 and 2013, the GHA reports Turkey as a top five donor. As reported through FTS, Turkey is not present as even a top 25 donor. GHA calculations include Turkey's humanitarian spending under the OECD DAC definition, visibly inflating its size as a donor.

humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees within its own borders. Non-DAC donors also tend to contribute significant amounts of funding directly to recipient governments, rather than funding the UN humanitarian system. The amount of funding provided to the UN system by non-DAC donors has also been proportionally decreasing. In 2012, OECD DAC members provided 97% of government funding channelled through the UN system, while non-DAC donors accounted for just 3%. This was a decrease from 2008, when non-DAC contributions were 8% of government funding to the UN system (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2013).

Private funding, while increasing overall, has seen sharper increases and decreases than government funding, and does not remain at sustained levels post-disaster. One example of this is the massive spike in private funding for the Haiti earthquake in 2010 and 2011, and the subsequent rapid drop-off in private funding in 2012 according to FTS.[11] GHA has calculated a 35% increase in private donations between 2012 and 2013, reaching a high of $5.6 billion, significantly higher than any private donations reported through FTS.[12]

Largest recipients

Between 2009 and 2013, the ten largest recipients of humanitarian assistance were:

Sudan ($5.3 billion), Pakistan ($5.2 billion), Haiti ($4.3 billion), Somalia ($4 billion), Ethiopia ($3.3 billion), Afghanistan ($3.3 billion), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) ($3.2 billion), Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) ($2.7 billion), Kenya ($2.6 billion), and the Philippines ($2.5 billion). Notably, South Sudan fell just short of inclusion in

the top ten, with only two and a half years of funding totalling $2.2 billion.

The five largest recipients in 2013 represent a shift in funding to address the Syria crisis. Funding to Syria more than doubled from $639 million in 2012 to $1.4 billion in 2013. Lebanon and Jordan were among the top five recipients of assistance, with funding levels of just over $1 billion and $925 million respectively.

In addition to the large ongoing crises that make up the majority of the top ten funding recipients (Haiti and the Philippines can attribute increased response to sudden mega-disasters) there is the continuing challenge of chronic underfunded crises. Between 2009 and 2012, the top 20 recipients accounted for 69% of total humanitarian funding in the same period. In 2013, 54% went to the top ten recipient countries, with 35% going to the top five. These top five countries also represent 49.5% of all UN-coordinated appeal requirements for 2013. UN appeals were, overall 65% funded in 2013, but there was an average percentage point difference of 52% between the best-funded appeals and the worst-funded appeals between 2009 and 2013. These trends, specifically the discrepancies between the best- and worst-funded appeals, point to a broader challenge of underfunding for forgotten crises.

Pooled funding

Pooled funds continue to grow as a humanitarian funding mechanism. Combined totals of all Emergency Response Funds (ERFs), Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs), and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) have grown overall between 2009 and 2013 and are continuing to see an upwards trajectory.[13] Most significantly, annual contributions to the CERF have grown by nearly $100million, while ERFs and CHFs have fluctuated around levels more suited to their smaller and more

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[11] Private contributions fell from $1.1 billion in 2011 to $191 million in 2012.

[12] The highest levels of private donations reported through FTS were in 2010 and 2011, when private contributions totaled $1.7billion and $1.1billion respectively.

[13] Totals grew from $827,766,232 in 2009 to $993,985,972 in 2013. There was an unusual spike in funding in 2011, but funding continues to follow an upwards trajectory.

targeted mandates. The UK has been by far the largest contributor to pooled funds, providing $1.2 billion between 2009 and 2013. The largest recipients during the same time period have been Sudan ($594 million) and the DRC ($584 million).

The vast majority of pooled funding in this time period was channelled through UN agencies. This is largely due to the fact that the CERF specifically funds UN agencies and the International Organization for Migration. By contrast, the majority of ERF funding (a significantly smaller total) was channelled directly through NGOs, and CHFs balanced funding between UN agencies and NGOs along a more even divide.

2.2 'Mega-challenges' for humanitarian action

2.2.1 An increase in the scale of disaster risk and in the adverse effects of natural disasters and conflict

The system is responding to fewer emergencies, but with larger numbers of affected people. According to the OCHA FTS, the number of individual emergencies the system responded to has gone down appreciably, particularly interventions for natural disasters (see Figure 1, below). This is not to say that there were fewer natural disasters generally – in fact, in 2013 there were as many as 359 natural disasters in 109 countries – but rather that there were fewer declared emergencies where the host government asked for international assistance and/or for which the international system put out formal appeals. It is anticipated that overall need will only continue to increase as the number of vulnerable people exposed and the number of disasters rises and as traditional security threats and development needs within fragile states remain

unaddressed (Cairns, 2012).[14]

Figure 1. International humanitarian emergency responses 2007-2014
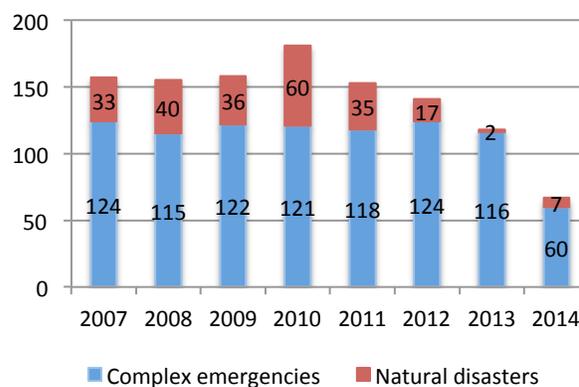
Table 1. Targeted recipients of inter-agency appeals

Year	People targeted (at mid-year, millions)
2007	26
2008	28
2009	43
2010	53
2011	65
2012	62
2013	73
2014	76

Natural disasters have affected and average of 238 million people each year between 2002 and 2011 (OCHA 2013a, Guha-Sapir & Hoyois 2012). The overall number of recorded natural disasters has also increased dramatically over recent decades, with three times as many natural disasters occurring between 2000 and 2009 as between 1980 and 1989 (Leaning &

[14] Global Humanitarian Policy Forum: Analytical summary, transforming for the future "The forum recognized that mega challenges – such as global food-price hikes, climate change, demographic shifts and rapid urbanization – are causing an unprecedented rise in humanitarian needs."

Guha-Sapir 2013, Cairns 2012).[15] The largest recorded increase has been in small- and medium-scale disasters[16] (Guha-Sapir & Hoyois 2012). The increase in the number of people affected by natural disasters has been linked not only to the rising frequency of disasters themselves, but also to an increase in risk faced by vulnerable populations.[17] The number of people affected by conflict has also been rising, with an 18-year high of 45.2 million people affected in 2012 (OCHA 2013a). In 2013, the global number of conflict-affected IDPs increased to 33.2 million people, and 16.7 million people fled violence across borders, with a global average of 23,000 people leaving their homes each day (OCHA, 2014a).

In considering the context for humanitarian action however, it is essential to look beyond the number and scale of disasters in absolute terms and a simple disaster typology. OCHA's Global Policy Forum of 2013 acknowledged at its outset a set of 'mega challenges' for the humanitarian system; areas of growing risk which ultimately lead to demand on the global humanitarian system. Among them are climate change, demographic shifts (including rapid urbanisation), and rapidly rising food prices (OCHA 2012). OCHA, among others, has noted the potential for these situations to trigger humanitarian emergencies in the future, outside the 'normal' geographical zones associated with emergencies, and to exacerbate the effects of other events. The forum

recognised that these "mega-challenges" are causing an unprecedented rise in humanitarian needs.

2.2.2 Challenges to the multilateral response system: the politicisation of humanitarian assistance

The politicisation of humanitarian assistance is of course the subject of important and continuous debate. A relatively narrow set of topics within this debate have perhaps dominated in the past. These could be characterised as those "internal" to the humanitarian aid system, including the extent to which:

- Donor governments reconcile their state-building and development aspirations with their role as humanitarian donors in contexts where they are parties to the conflict or in those where they have priority security or state building agendas.

- The UN system is able to reconcile its political and humanitarian roles, especially in the context of integrated missions.

- Humanitarian actors (implementers) work in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Are donors reconciling their political and humanitarian roles and funding in an impartial fashion?

Approaching the beginning of the research period for this review, the situation in Afghanistan was at the centre of much of the literature on coherent approaches (or conversely, the politicisation of humanitarian assistance). Afghanistan presented an almost perfect challenge for traditional humanitarian donors, being at the time "the only complex emergency in which all major OECD/DAC donors (with the exception of Switzerland and Ireland) are also belligerents" and one in which aid support was premised on the position that Afghanistan was a post-conflict country. As such, donors were "for the most part, unwilling or politically unable to recognise the humanitarian scope of the crisis" (DARA HPI, 2010 cited in Featherstone, 2012). Afghanistan was also a case study for donors in the application of "whole of government" approach by donors. The fundamental and very well documented issue in this context was the

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[15] "Since 1980, reported weather-related disasters have increased by 233% where records are available. This is the result of growing populations, more extreme weather, and improved reporting."

[16] Although an element of caution is required as some of the increase may be attributed to better reporting and or data collection.

[17] Increased risk to natural disasters has been linked to a combination of events including climate change, population growth, rapid urbanisation, and food and water insecurity (OCHA 2013a, Cairns 2012). Even without climate change, it is anticipated that the risk posed by disasters will rise as the number of people exposed to extreme weather conditions grows (Cairns, 2012).

most explicit attempt to date to bring tight coherence (or conversely to conflate) humanitarian and stabilisation objectives. This scenario involved the delivery of aid by military and private contractors (non-humanitarians) and the explicit linkage of humanitarian agencies to provincial reconstruction (and latterly basic service delivery contracts through government). Agencies with a stated commitment to humanitarian principles were unable to distinguish themselves from contractors and military units (DARA HPI, 2010 cited in Featherstone, 2012).[18] Retrospective analysis suggested that these actions began to undermine the "currency of humanitarianism in Afghanistan". Later research on the perceptions of armed actors in Afghanistan and Somalia confirmed that "Neither the Taliban nor Al-Shabaab made much distinction between different agencies (or, in Afghanistan, between humanitarian agencies and non-humanitarian actors delivering aid)" (Jackson, 2014b).

Whether or not Afghanistan, and shortly afterwards Iraq, created fundamentally new types of instrumentalisation of humanitarian assistance, the concept is not a new one. A number of commentators within this research period, however, have stressed the extent to which humanitarianism, and particularly its expression through the UN-led system, is increasingly perceived as a Western construct and, as such, a "vector of…values and interests that are not universally shared in the places where it intervenes" (Collinson & Elhawary, 2012). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) acknowledges that "many international

humanitarian organisations are perceived by national governments as foreign actors acting as substitutes or catalysts for increased security interventions by Western-led intergovernmental organisations" (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2014b). This growing association of humanitarian action with the projection of Western goals and values into conflict settings poses a very obvious threat. Diminishing of the acceptance of the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian assistance is clearly undermining its effectiveness (Egeland, Harmer & Stoddard 2011).

More broadly, in terms of donors' commitment to the impartial allocation of funding, a key study in 2003 noted that donor behaviour in funding humanitarian work reflected a "sub set of donors' foreign and domestic policies" (Smillie & Minear 2003). The study acknowledged that this was a very long-standing issue, and there is ample evidence to demonstrate that it remains standing. The Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative was founded in 2003 and launched with some degree of hope that aspects of donor behaviour could improve, not least the allocation of "humanitarian funding in proportion to needs".[19] There was initially a significant drive behind the initiative, and behind independent analysis of it.[20] By 2012 both had declined[21] leaving a sense that the operational impact of the initiative was limited, especially at field level. The GHD forum itself, however, is seen as useful[22] "for interaction with new humanitarian donors and for the discussion of…. policy initiatives" (Taylor et al. 2012). It also appeared

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[18] The majority of the NGOs are Afghan, but the largest programmes are implemented by international NGOs. Most NGOs are involved in provision of emergency relief and in running of health, education and agricultural programmes although there are a growing number that have involved themselves in peace building, human rights and advocacy work, including a large number of multi-mandate organisations who balance some or all of these components with their development and relief activities.

[19] The 3rd "general principle" of the GHD initiative.

[20] DARA's Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) was initiated shortly after GHD began, with the aim of independently measuring donor performance against GHD.

[21] The HRI ceased publication in 2011, leaving the OECD DAC peer reviews as the principle measure of donor performance.

[22] In 2014, GHD membership has grown from 17 to 41 members and the initiative has declared itself as 'fit for purpose' in recent press release: Interviews revealed little perception by external actors, as well as a many donors, of greater energy around the initiative.

in 2012 that the representatives of smaller donors in the field were under greater pressure than ever, with increasing operational budgets and portfolios and diminishing budgets for support work and monitoring visits (ibid.). In 2012, OECD acknowledged that "low staffing levels and high staff turnover" created risks for the quality of donor engagement, and significantly limited the scope for donor staff "to add value beyond a basic grant administration role" (OECD 2012). The OECD also recognises the need for stronger donor coordination going forward, including the need to consider divisions of labour according to comparative advantages and interests, as well as the inclusion of regional organisations (Scott 2014).

2.2.2.2 Is the UN system is able to reconcile its political and humanitarian roles, especially in the context of integrated missions?

Within this broader context (the perception of largely Western donors' instrumentalisation of aid and the aid system) is the question of whether the UN as a collective body of member states and a set of operational entities manages to deliver on its interlinked sets of mandates. Again in this case there are multiple examples of the challenges of appropriate separation of political and humanitarian roles, the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) being a particular issue at the start of this research period. INGOs called at the time (Featherstone, 2012) for a separate OCHA office, rather than the humanitarian unit subsumed with the mission structure. This move has subsequently allowed for a more balanced understanding of humanitarian issues within the broader context of Afghanistan.

Eastern DRC has provided a similar, long-standing challenge in respect of MONUSCO (formerly MONUC). Over and above the normal challenges associated with integrating mission objectives (bringing humanitarian action under the umbrella of

a succession of stabilisation plans), MONUSCO's role in supporting the armed forces, and most recently its Force Intervention Brigade,[23] have caused consistent problems for the perception of humanitarian actors in the field (Ponthieu, Vogel & Derderian 2014). This trajectory of active engagement in stabilisation is evident in the integrated missions in Somalia, South Sudan and Mali, each with implications for the delivery of independent, impartial aid. In Mali, MINUSMA is mandated to support a secure environment for humanitarian assistance and simultaneously cites a number of parties to the conflict as terrorist organisations, with the potential of undermining negotiations for humanitarian access. Across the Sahel more broadly, there is currently a complex mix of actors and political, aid and military initiatives involving the UN, EU, France, the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Malian state and non-state actors, in which the UN aims to bring "impartial, neutral, full and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid" into a strategy coherent with its other mandated objectives (Pontiroli, Ponthieu, & Derderian, 2013). Similarly, statements made by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in 2012 in South Sudan pointed to a cessation of engagement with armed opposition groups (Ponthieu, Vogel & Derderian 2014). Interviews with staff of UN humanitarian agencies confirmed again that this is an area where the humanitarian voices are struggling to be heard "either in policy or in practice" (interview with senior UN staff). ICRC anticipates "that this confusion (and perceived politicization) will increase as UN-led response to conflict situations will likely be a priority issue in the post-2015 MDGs" (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2014b), with a corresponding increase of integration of humanitarian principles within political resolutions in the Security

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[23] Unique amongst UN Peacekeeping units in that it is tasked with undertaking targeted offensive operations to neutralise armed groups that threaten State authority and civilian security, with or without the armed forces – authorised under UNSC Resolution 2098 in 2013.

Council and the greater provision of 'protection of civilian' mandates to UN peacekeeping forces. ICRC also notes that "national governments affected by armed conflict and other violent situations are taking a more active role in designing response strategies and coordinating relief strategies", thereby calling into question the relevance of independent humanitarian action.

2.2.2.3 Are humanitarian actors (implementers) working in accordance with humanitarian principles?

A familiar set of debates has been extended into a new set of operational contexts during this research period. Humanitarian principles continue to be recognised by those within the humanitarian system as fundamentally important and universally applicable. At the same time, humanitarian actors acknowledge that these principles are continually subject to "operational compromise" (Kent, Armstrong & Obrecht 2013) and interpretation (Simonow 2013). Aid agencies have long been characterised as interpreting principles across a spectrum, at one end of which are those with a 'Dunantist' stance and a relatively strict interpretation of impartiality (Stoddard 2003). At the same time, a large proportion of aid actors (those with Wilsonian tendencies) assert that humanitarian assistance should go beyond the humanitarian imperative and tackle, or at a minimum act in a manner coherent with, efforts to resolve the root causes of disasters and/or systemic failures (Stoddard 2003). As such, these 'multi-mandate' agencies believe that it is acceptable, or indeed necessary, to align their own goals with the stabilisation and state-building agendas of donors and often "sacrifice neutrality to include in their portfolios nation-building, liberal peace, human rights and economic development" (Ferreiro 2012). In a series of recent articles, MSF has re-asserted its own position in relation to the UN-led aid system. MSF acknowledges that since the end of the Cold War, humanitarian assistance has increasingly been integrated into the "global crisis management toolbox" (Brauman & Neuman, 2014). MSF, however, equates the use of humanitarian assistance

to address root causes of conflict, and/or its alignment with stabilisation and state-building agendas, as "political alignment with belligerent parties" (Brauman & Neuman, 2014). As a result, and re-affirming its own interpretation of neutrality and impartiality, MSF continues to limit its engagement at country level with the UN-led coordination on a case-by-case basis (Brauman & Neuman, 2014).[24] ICRC also notes that it is "increasingly difficult to demonstrate the independent nature of the ICRC within the larger UN-led response" and that this issue is likely to persist and to grow in a context of increasing politicisation of the IASC-led system.

The issue at stake in this instance is not the integrity of the humanitarian aid divisions or departments within traditional donor governments, but their relative strength, proximity to and independence from their respective government's security, state-building and/or military goals. While finding positives in a number of DAC donors 'whole of government' approaches (OECD, 2012), a separate OECD report also notes that "maintaining the core identity of the humanitarian programme, and defending humanitarian principles with colleagues across government, remains a struggle for many donors" (Scott 2014) and that within humanitarian aid structures many donor governments are operating from a position of greater proximity and diminished strength in relation to their counterparts, including those working on stabilisation (Steets & Meier 2012)[25] and state-building agendas (Taylor et al. 2012).[26] In many contexts, donors are simultaneously committed to the OECD-DAC Principles for Good International Engagement in

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[24] MSF also clearly states that this is a problem not just of the politicisation of aid, more of the

[25] OCHA notes the tendency for donors to "increasing links between their humanitarian engagement and security agendas in OCHA" (Steets & Meier 2012).

[26] In the Dutch review (OECD, 2011), the DAC noted the urgent need for a cross-government humanitarian policy, implicitly to ensure the ongoing principled approach to funding (Taylor et al. 2012).

Fragile States and Situations, the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and the GHD initiative. This entails balancing a commitment to respecting the independence of humanitarian action with a commitment to "state building as the central objective" of engagement with fragile states and respecting countries' 'ownership' of development strategies. Donor governments continue to give insufficient attention to how to reconcile these simultaneous commitments (Harvey, 2013).

ICRC and MSF both also stress that the use of humanitarian assistance as a conflict management tool has created heightened expectations and has led to "humanitarian action attracting disproportionate attention in the absence of credible political solutions" (McGoldrick 2011).[27] In looking at record funding requests for 2015, ODI re-states that aid remains "concentrated in a small number of conflict zones which require fundamentally political – not humanitarian – solutions" (Krebs & Zyck 2014). Over and above this truism, interviews with donors revealed a sense that with "nowhere else to go" than humanitarian action in Syria, it was a focus of attention in senior levels of Government like never before, with the obvious consequence that statistics (notably numbers in need, and delivery gaps) were being used for political purposes. UN officials understand the threat of this form of instrumentalisation and again, the challenges it will inevitably bring. Arguably part of this perceived devaluation of humanitarian assistance is a lack of political pressure on the parties to a conflict (as in Syria) to allow humanitarian access (DARA, 2013). It also creates the risk of "condemn(ing) aid to permanent failure" (Brauman & Neuman, 2014)

Gaining and/or maintaining access remains a severe challenge in a number of current conflict contexts, not least because of rising levels of violence against

aid workers (Stoddard, Harmer, & Ryou 2014). Across a range of contexts aid workers are increasingly targeted for deliberate attack by parties to conflicts. ICRC notes that aid workers are targeted as "carefully plotted political and military strategy" and based on "shrewd calculation(s) of the symbolic importance of humanitarian organizations and the political and economic benefit likely to be derived from attacking them" (International Committee of the Red Cross 2014c), over and above for simply 'faulty' perceptions of their roles. Although some of its conclusions were contested, MSF's study and critique of humanitarian assistance on three challenging contexts (Healy & Tiller 2014) provoked a debate on the issue of access. MSF noted that risk-averse behaviour is "pervasive within the NGO community" (Brauman & Neuman, 2014) (for programming decisions as well as for behaviour related to security), leading to the prioritisation of the easiest-to-reach communities rather than the most vulnerable. This effect is most notable for populations affected by conflict, where these principles hold essential value (Petrie 2014), but can also be linked to a potential broader devaluing of the concept of humanitarianism.

Where donors manage to maintain distance between humanitarian funding streams and political and security concerns, and where access remains possible, a relatively new set of issues offer challenges to operational agencies in conflict contexts. Many of these were identified in the context of Afghanistan (Featherstone 2012), and revolve around compliance with donor policies on counter-terrorism legislation. Some of these were very clearly visible in the Syria country case study (Section 4.2.2) undertaken for this review, and include (ICVA 2014a, Burniske, Modirzadeh & Lewis 2014, Jackson 2014a):

- "Admin/compliance burden" – Where anti-terror legislation trumps humanitarian concerns and states are obliged to implement measures to combat terrorism which may impose additional legal and administrative burdens without demonstrably achieving their objectives.
- "Chilling effect" – Dampening of initiative due to fear of prosecution immediately or at some

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[27] It is worth noting that a central finding of Rwanda joint evaluation 1994 related to humanitarian action being unable to substitute for political action.

point in the futures based on implicit intimidation and confusion about which measures apply and where.

- "Viral effect" – Anti-terror clauses in UN and donor template partnership affecting large numbers of implementing partners. Included here is the effect of agencies with multiple donors choosing to adopt the conditions imposed by the strictest donors, and the potential for pooled funds to pass on the conditions of the strictest donor, irrespective of whether other contributing donors agree.
- "Flow-down effect" – Where the same obligations imposed on the primary grantee are passed on to small local partners, thereby passing on risk, not dealing with the problem.
- An additional challenge is that of negotiating exceptions to donors' visibility requirements.

2.2.3 Natural disasters in the changing landscape: The role of emerging actors

As the limitations of action through the core humanitarian system in conflict situations become more clear, another set of challenges is apparent in natural disaster response. Here, a number of commentators assert the need to place the humanitarian system in the context of shifts in the global economic power balance; specifically the increase in the number of middle-income countries (MICs). With this comes a correspondent shift in international power dynamics (Kent, Armstrong & Obrecht 2013), with specific reference to humanitarian assistance. This shift is often described as a resurgence of sovereignty on the part of a significant number of non-Western states, creating an adjustment in the equation "who defines disasters and on which terms" (Kent, Armstrong & Obrecht 2013) (as noted in conflict contexts by ICRC above).

The State of the Humanitarian System 2012 report also noted that in the ASEAN region and Latin America, Governments had not requested assistance via the formal Flash Appeal mechanism, leading one senior UN official to question the ongoing application of this element of UN resolution 46/182

(Taylor et al. 2012). OCHA sets out this changing context for humanitarian action, noting that by 2030 developing economies are predicted to make up 57% of the global total (compared 49% in 2012), creating a more equitable distribution of wealth amongst countries and allowing for greater investment in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and national risk management and response systems (OCHA 2012). The UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) also reports a significant growth in the number of states that have set up national disaster management authorities, civil protection systems and legislation to regulate incoming aid. As such, the need for international humanitarian assistance to link with and work in support of such structures is clear. More generally, Humanitarian Futures notes a specific "paradox of globalisation" (Kent, Armstrong & Obrecht 2013): essentially a rising recognition of and emphasis on the importance of the 'local' in the face of globalisation, a phenomenon that is evident in many other spheres. Taken as a whole, there is an overwhelming swell of voices for large-scale transformation in the humanitarian system (Simonow, 2013).[28]

Conceptually, the changes required are reasonably straightforward and have been outlined by a number of actors: long-term commitments to enhance the capacity of regional and national organisations; a shift away from the prevailing centralised, top-down response system; and a redress of the power dynamics between international and local actors (Simonow 2013). This would require a re-adjustment to attitudes and practices around partnership and, again, sustained commitment to engagement with local actors and response systems (Gingerich 2015). Part of the work with national actors would necessarily include a

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[28] As noted above, the term 'humanitarian system' appears increasingly unpopular, not only in that it suggests a uniform, predictable transfer of inputs to impact (which is clearly over simplistic), but that it places too much emphasis on the central actors (UN agencies, INGOs and the institution and services of the host states.)

discussion on humanitarian principles, including a discussion of the pragmatic operational interpretation of principles in different contexts (Simonow 2013).

As noted above, a significant part of this drive comes from the specific acknowledgment that change is happening beyond IASC OECD/DAC arrangements. It is clear that emerging actors are reluctant to join existing multilateral networks and systems for a number of reasons, including:

- A perception that they do not deliver assistance in an efficient and cost effective manner (Simonow 2013).
- A view that the "OCED/DAC mechanism is viewed as too rigid and exclusive"
- Specifically as a result of the perceptions of politicisation described above, emerging powers prefer to act bilaterally (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2014b).

While there is a lack of available detail available on the range of connections, relationships, transactions and approaches that constitute 'south-south' cooperation on humanitarian assistance (over and above the challenge of summarising this from the global level), it is clear that these changes are happening. The response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (Section 4.2.1.1) (as well as the response to the Syrian conflict) alludes to wide-ranging parallel responses which were not captured by the case studies or system-wide evaluations. At one end of the spectrum of re-modelled systems is the idea of a fully decentralised, mutual support network of communities and individuals which existing humanitarian actors could support and into which humanitarian principles might be embedded (Currion, 2014). This model has resonance in a number of ongoing initiatives: the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities initiative; the Humanitarian Innovation Fund; the Digital Humanitarian Network; and the Start Network.

At the heart of this debate is a false dilemma in the sense that there is no real 'choice' between fully centralised or decentralised models of operation. OCHA and a number of other actors recognise the need to strengthen the core system and to simultaneously engage with alternative delivery systems under the banner of greater 'inter-operability'. It is already recognised that each operational environment provides a new manifestation of the core humanitarian system as it interacts with national and regional systems in a unique way. In recent months, attention has been given to 'context-based' response models: those which shape a range of response models around the capacity of the respective host government and the strength of the social contract. Central to this concept is that of a risk-based approach to humanitarian operations. OCHA's Policy Forum identified some analyses, delivery and funding elements that should be part of a new humanitarian system – one that is better equipped to perform effective risk management. A number of risk management tools have been developed; others are under construction (Poole, forthcoming). These include: the Index For Risk Management (INFORM) tool, a multi-stakeholder, multi-index system for assessing disaster risk[29] and aimed at allowing a variety of aid actors prioritise their interventions; and innovative insurance constructions (known as 'risk transfer' and 'parametric insurance' – which releases funding on the occurrence of a pre-agreed set of triggers).

A system in which, even in a specific and limited range of contexts, the locus of influence and response capacity is centred on national actors is currently a long way from being realised. Funding flows to national actors are low: "in 2012 less than 0.1% of total humanitarian assistance went directly to local- and national-level NGOs in crisis-affected countries, and just 0.3% went directly to crisis-affected governments. The figures are increasing, but too slowly" (Gingerich 2015). A system which prioritises sustained investments in capacity building through

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[29] The index uses around 50 indicators to measure 3 dimensions of risk: Hazard and exposure; Vulnerability and Lack of capacity to respond. At http://www.inform-index.org/portals/0/inform/user%20guide.pdf

development and preparedness channels, and then selects and passes through funding to national actors in a very timely fashion, presents a real challenge. Even those donors with decentralised capacity, ECHO, DFID and USAID have a range of problems in doing so. Some might be described as technical (legal/administrative), others cultural and linguistic, and among the most challenging are those related to risk management.

2.3 Innovation or transformation?

The concept of innovation is omnipresent in forward-looking discussions of humanitarian assistance. There are numerous ongoing and ad hoc events, projects and forums dedicated to the topic.[30] Much of the work promoted through the Innovation Fund and the subjects of discussion are very useful, but are often very localised efforts to solve specific problems, sometimes within the humanitarian system, and more often within a specific context or technical field.[31]

'Localisation' of humanitarian response is a common theme in humanitarian innovation, not least through a range of initiatives looking at the expansion of the information management function of the humanitarian system, via increasingly open and available information networks and mobile technology, to enable affected communities to report and respond to a crisis immediately. Recently recognised innovations, or spaces for potential

innovation and transformation of the system, include: the use of social media for mapping and data collection; the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for mapping, data collection, and in-kind deliveries; and the use of cash assistance in emergencies. While the use of social media and UAVs as innovative or transformative tools is still somewhat new and unregulated, the use of cash assistance is increasingly becoming a common alternative to in-kind assistance where appropriate.

The increased use of social media in emergencies has been linked to the expanded use and availability of mobile phones, often equipped with GPS and data capabilities (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative 2011). Common uses generating huge amounts of data include social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as SMS messaging (IFRC 2013). In the most crucial moments of a crisis these have been and can continue to be integral to life-saving humanitarian assistance efforts.

One major challenge to the use of mobile and social-media-generated open data is that its ease-of-use extends beyond assisting in a crisis. In complex emergencies, security concerns around the use of sensitive information remain (IFRC 2013). This mixed usage has generated concern over the need for regulation of the collection and use of mobile and social media-generated data. Developing a supportive legal and regulatory framework that includes standard procedures, guidelines, and certifications can assist in increasing the legitimacy of use of these information platforms for humanitarian purposes (IFRC 2013). Regulation could address who or what body or level of response should be responsible for the collection and validation of data, as well as security of mapping and information sharing (Moore & Verity 2014). An important step would also be to explore the application of humanitarian principles to data collection in emergencies.

The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones, is another technological innovation with humanitarian applications. The use of drones is also widely contested depending on the context, and similar security concerns exist around mapping and

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[30] These include the Humanitarian Innovation Fund, Humanitarian Innovation Project, Humanitarian Innovation conference, among others

[31] The Humanitarian Innovation Fund has given grants to a wide range of projects in areas as diverse as accountability and participation (including piloting accountability systems and feedback mechanisms), to specific solutions for WASH and solid waste management.

data sharing. Positive applications of UAV technology have included data collection, search and rescue, mapping, and the provision of real-time information and situation monitoring (Gilman 2014). The continued use of UAVs in this capacity has the potential to offer improvements to the speed and accuracy of data collection, and at a lower cost than satellite imaging (Gilman 2014).

Challenges for privacy and security are related to the widespread and unregulated use of UAVs. UAVs can easily capture detailed images of private property, and pose challenges for those not expressing consent for personal information or images to be captured and shared. Detailed information of the whereabouts and movements of certain individuals and populations may be extremely sensitive in conflict scenarios and complex emergencies. Similar to data collection and mapping through social media and mobile technologies, legal and regulatory issues are the biggest challenges facing the expanded use of UAVs. In addition to establishing legal and regulatory frameworks, the continued use of UAVs in humanitarian response will require the establishment of good/best practices,[32] and the prioritisation of transparency and community engagement in data collection (Gilman 2014).

Cash transfers have for some time been highlighted as an innovation, although arguably they are moving more towards a mainstream part of the humanitarian toolbox. The appropriateness of cash is increasingly accepted; agencies are investing in capacities to deliver cash at a large scale, and attempts are being made to provide cash across sectors and through single payment platforms. These fast-moving developments pose potentially transformative challenges for how humanitarian

action is coordinated, for the mandates and responsibilities of aid agencies, and for the roles of disaster-affected governments and civil society.

Signs of acceptance are numerous – cash transfers are in the 2011 Sphere revised standards, donors such as ECHO have created guidance on cash transfers, UN agencies such as WFP and UNHCR have invested markedly in their capacities to provide cash transfers, and the Food Aid Convention evolved into the Food Assistance Convention in 2013 – meaning that countries can achieve their commitments through cash transfers. The smaller-scale interventions and pilots that dominated cash transfer programming from 2004-2010 are now giving way to larger responses. For example, the provision of cash transfers in response to the 2011 Somalia famine broke the 'scale barrier' – it was the first time that international aid agencies used cash transfers at a large scale in a humanitarian response and there has been further use of large-scale transfers in the Syria response and the Philippines.

Key issues around the use of cash revolve around how greater use, in particular of multi-sectoral cash (cash provided to meet a range of basic needs) might have the potential to disrupt the current architecture of international humanitarian action. Particular issues include effects on aid architecture and delivery methods. Aid agencies currently provide cash transfers independently of one another, often for narrow objectives in line with their mandate. In some cases multiple agencies reach the same households with cash (or vouchers), when there is potential to provide a single cash transfer to address their needs. This simple proposition has radical implications for the organisation and delivery of humanitarian aid. Efforts have been made in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt by WFP and UNHCR to establish a 'one card' platform to enable aid agencies and donors to deliver cash transfers via the same card. These efforts have yet to be successful.

The increased use of cash assistance also opens space for the increased involvement of private sector and national governments. Scaled-up cash transfers may lead to a dramatic increase in delivering aid through mobile networks, banks and other financial service

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[32] It has been suggested that near exclusive use in natural disaster and recovery response might be the best environment for establishment as there are (arguably) fewer security and protection issues surrounding sensitive data.

providers. Major businesses such as Visa, MasterCard, Banque Libano-Francaise and Carrefour and numerous mobile network providers are engaged in delivery of humanitarian cash transfers, including developing tailored platforms. Key initiatives include the Better than Cash Alliance, work by the Groupe Speciale Mobile Association on disaster response, and Sergovia – the for-profit company created by the founders of Give Directly to help governments to better deliver cash. Governments in countries that are major recipients of international humanitarian aid such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Pakistan are providing or have provided cash transfers through safety nets and in domestic disaster responses – both of which offer potential platforms for scaled-up cash transfers for humanitarian responses.

2.4 Summary, conclusions and implications for humanitarian donors

The humanitarian system is currently facing an unprecedented caseload and, while funding is at record levels, the funding 'gap' is large and growing. Additional funding is required, as are more radical solutions. HA has arguably reached a point where the range and breadth of responses it aspires to undertake, and into which it is drawn or stuck, has exceeded its capacity in absolute terms. At the very least it is possible to state that the current configuration of the IASC-led, core humanitarian system is unable to deliver consistently and effectively across the range of context in which it is currently engaged. Moreover, the limitations of action through the multilateral system are increasingly clear, and the maintenance of access for humanitarian actors is a very significant challenge, notably in contexts where faith in and respect for the universality of humanitarian principles and the broader multilateral structures has diminished.

In natural disasters, principally in middle-income countries, there is an emerging consensus on the importance of nationally led responses and calls for the transfers of response capacity at a transformative scale to governments, national civil society, communities and the private sector. In certain contexts, this would include a shift to anticipatory responses based on an analysis of risk, and putting less emphasis on response. The core humanitarian system is not currently configured (or linked to development and transitional support systems) in such a way that that the necessary partnerships are being built.

The next sections will go on to provide an analysis of the Netherlands' humanitarian policy (which has been, in essence, a reasonably pure and unquestioning expression of multilateralism), and the performance of the IASC-led humanitarian system through which its funding has primarily been channelled. Even prior to laying out this analysis, the literature review identifies some key implications for donors.

The IASC-led system will continue to be of central importance; support to it and through it will continue to be important. Arguably, however, its limitations will be increasingly apparent. In conflict-related contexts, it is essential that humanitarians across the board continue to advocate humanitarian principles and their application within their own organisations as well as beyond. For donors, however, there needs to be recognition of the challenges faced by the multilateral system and to acknowledge the need for alternative delivery models and additional, complementary delivery channels. Stronger relationships with emerging donors around the topic of humanitarian assistance do not appear easy in the current climate, but also appear essential as part of re-invigorated donor coordination.

There is some weight behind the calls for context-based response models, and this would necessitate additional resources for context and risk analysis (Scott 2014). There is also the clear need to consider, from a donor perspective, how to build national capacity for disaster response (in the form of national NGOs as well as national government entities). Finally there is a clear need to redouble efforts to engage with development colleagues, not least around capacity building.

3: Dutch humanitarian assistance: policy and funding

3.1 Overview of the Netherlands' policy: funding levels and funding modalities

The overall objective of Dutch humanitarian assistance is to contribute to the relief of life-threatening human needs among the most vulnerable people caused by crisis situations and natural disasters. The Netherlands provides humanitarian assistance throughout the world with a focus on chronic crisis areas in developing countries. The 2011 humanitarian policy document sets out four priority goals (reviewed below in Section 3.3):

1. More self-reliance and resilience – this includes commitments to using and strengthening local capacity and structures, devoting more attention to disaster risk reduction, preventing disasters, mitigating the impact of disasters and disasters preparedness.

2. More effectiveness through less duplication and more coordination – this calls for more uniform emergency appeals so that they are mutually comparable and better coordinated and more cooperation in needs assessments which will lead to reductions in duplication and fewer gaps in aid provision.

3. Humanitarian access and neutrality – this commits the Netherlands to upholding and respecting core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence and calls for the Netherlands to be an active advocate on humanitarian principles.

4. Greater accountability – this calls for a focus on accountability for results and adequate communication with the Dutch public on the results of Dutch humanitarian action.

The Netherlands' policy emphasises the importance of a strong coordinating role for the UN in humanitarian crisis situations and asserts that, for reasons of assumed efficiency, the UN is the preferred channel for humanitarian assistance. The Netherlands sees itself as a partner in the global humanitarian system with a global portfolio – and thus it focuses its attention on improving that global system. The Netherlands provides flexible funding, with the vast majority of its contributions to UN agencies and the ICRC being either wholly or partially unearmarked. It is a timely donor, aiming to commit 75% of the annual humanitarian budget before the end of April each year. In return for these good humanitarian donorship practices, the Netherlands asks the humanitarian system to implement the full range of its planned reforms, including all elements of the ERC's Transformative Agenda (discussed below under Section 4.1.1). International agreements and principles, especially the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, largely determine Dutch policy choices. As such, UN agencies that receive unearmarked funding from the Netherlands are presumed to define their response activities in any given context in accordance with each respective UN Appeal or strategic response plan (SRP – see Section 4.1.1).

The 2011 policy was developed following a 2006 IOB evaluation which noted that current humanitarian aid strategies were documented in a variety of policy documents, notes and memoranda that needed consolidating, and a 2011 DAC peer review which called for the development of a comprehensive Dutch humanitarian policy. The policy document includes four to six commitments for the realisation of each of the four goals. For the purposes of the evaluation IOB drew up the logical framework in Figure 2 based on the policy document.

Figure 2. Logical framework of the Netherlands' Humanitarian Policy: more effectiveness through less duplication and more coordination

Impact	Affected people are increasingly able to address the needs/risks brought about by the emergency and are more resilient to future crises				
Expected outcomes of HA	HA is demand driven and responds to needs of target population		Lifesaving supplies and services provided: protection, shelter, food and health	-Access to assistance and availability of basic services improved -Creation of conditions conducive to durable solutions, increased self-reliance and peaceful co-existence for IDPs and other crisis-affected populations.	Protection of, promotion of and respect for human rights for people in vulnerable situations
		Evaluation level B			
Expected improvements of HA delivery	-Collective prioritisation of needs -Coordinated need assessment provides the evidence base for coherent planning of the response -Gender-specific approach included	- Leaves opportunity for the UN system to lead coordination -Leadership of Humanitarian Coordinators and cluster leaders -Partnerships with NGOs strengthened and efficient UN operational and logistical support to NGOs	Capacity to timely respond to acute crises: -Initial and bridge funding delivered -Timely allocation and distribution -Flexibility: interventions able to adjust and respond to changing needs or barriers for reaching target populations	Increased capacity to respond to chronic crises: -Coordinated planning: the formulation of strategic objectives, activities and mobilisation of resources -Flexibility and predictability of aid -Less fragmentation and more coherence of HA -Efficient allocation of means and staff	- Hum. UN organisations deploy means and staff according to their own priorities -Strengthening of ICRC principles and their capacity to respond to humanitarian crises -Access through IFRC and ICRC to vulnerable population where UN cannot intervene	NGOs fulfil complementary role/added value in access and coverage of vulnerable population groups
		Evaluation level A			
NL commitments/inputs	The Netherlands will raise with the UN bodies concerned: - a more visible role of OCHA in needs assessments - improve the use of common needs assessments - special attention to needs of vulnerable groups -involvement of local actors	Support OCHA's efforts to improve the implementation of humanitarian reforms: -strengthening the role of the ERC -improving efficiency of the cluster approach -involving NGOs more effectively -improving coordination between OCHA and UN bodies	For timely and coordinated responses in acute crises contribute to UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)	For better coordination of HA in chronic crises contribute through pooled funds at country level	-Non-earmarked funding to UN humanitarian organisations - Non-earmarked funding to ICRC and IFRC: neutrality facilitates access, especially in conflict areas	-Funding Dutch NGOs when they are able to gain ready access through local partners - Preference for NGO funding within coordinated structures
NL HA policy ambitions	Support for demand-driven/needs-based HA and common needs assessments	Support for a strong central coordinating role of the UN and HA reform agenda	Funding policy subject to international agreements and principles (European Consensus and Good Humanitarian Donor Principles)			

Policy roll-out

The 2011 humanitarian policy was a clear step forward in that it brought together strategies that were spread across a variety of documents and consolidated them and addressed the call for a clear policy in the 2006 and 2011 DAC peer reviews.

There are, however, some clear limitations to the existing policy. The commitments it contains lack specificity and there is not clear process for rolling it out, implementing it or monitoring it beyond an annual letter to parliament. There isn't any formal monitoring of the policy, logframe or overview of measurable results. There are internal annual reports and the annual report to parliament does link to commitments made in the policy. Given these limitations, and recent developments in the humanitarian field, there is perhaps an argument for reviewing and updating it.

3.1.1 Funding levels and modalities

This section considers the key channels for Netherlands' humanitarian funding and the respective weight that these channels are given. It also considers how choices are made between the different funding channels; whether the balance between these channels is appropriate, and whether other channels should be considered. The analysis looks at the period between 2012 and 2014 and also considers recent changes. The most recent changes to policy and funding modalities took place during the research for this study and cannot be fully evaluated. Initial views on the changes are given, where it is possible to draw preliminary conclusions from interviews and the country case studies.

Figures 3 and 4 show total humanitarian expenditure by the Netherlands between 2004 and 2014 (Figure 3) and 2009 to 2014 (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Annual expenditure humanitarian assistance 2004-2014
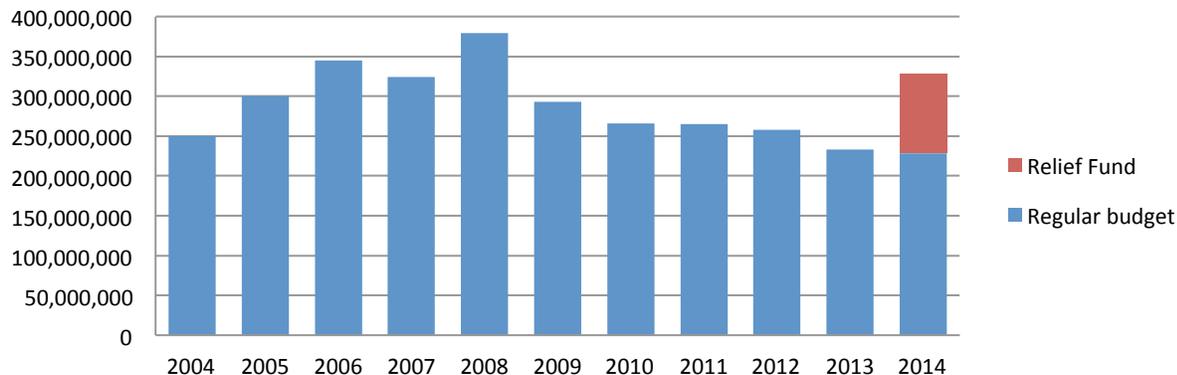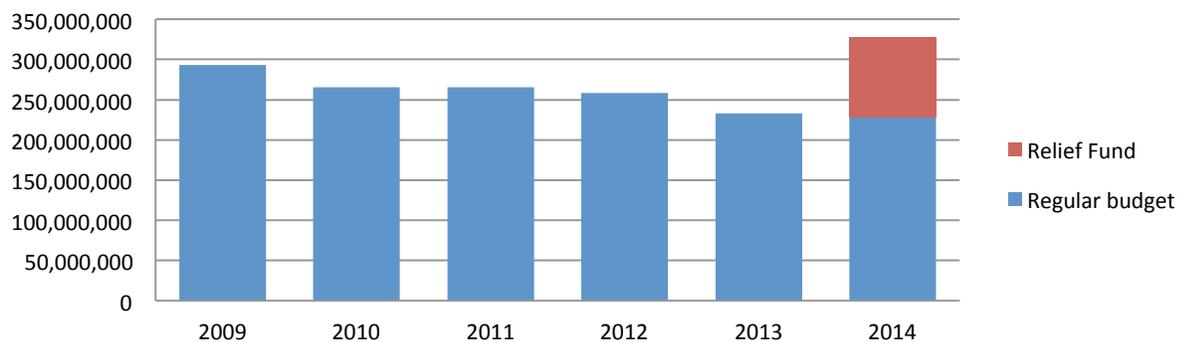

Figure 4. Annual expenditure humanitarian assistance 2009-2014

Between 2009 and 2014 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spent a total of €1.6 billion on humanitarian assistance. The annual expenditure slowly decreased from €293 million in 2009 to €233 million in 2013. In 2014, due to the extra funds that came available under the Relief Fund, the expenditure was increased to €328 million. Furthermore the Netherlands funded EU humanitarian assistance through its ODA contribution to EU institutions. The GHA report estimates this contribution to have been €71 million in 2012 (Global Humanitarian Assistance 2013).

The regular humanitarian assistance budget consists of five categories:

1. Core funding of UN organisations, the CERF and the Red Cross movement. These contributions average 66% of the total humanitarian budget (of which part is managed by the Department for Multilateral Institutions and part is managed by the Humanitarian Assistance Division)

2. Contributions to humanitarian assistance in chronic and protracted crises

3. Contributions to humanitarian assistance in acute crises

4. Disaster risk reduction

5. Other organisations: improving the humanitarian system

A major part of the contributions for chronic and acute crises is channelled through pooled funding mechanisms. The rest is spent through NGO or Red Cross project funding.

The majority of humanitarian assistance between 2009 and 2014 from the regular budget was provided through the UN, accounting for 80% of total expenditure. The Red Cross movement received 14% of expenditure and NGOs 4.5%. This means that humanitarian funding via NGOs is low compared to other donors; by contrast the UK level is 10%, Sweden 12%, Germany 26%, Ireland 30%, Denmark 28% and the DAC average 19%. With the recent announcement of additional humanitarian funding this is likely to change in future years with an anticipated shift from 4% or so direct funding to NGOs to 15 to 20% (see below).

Table 2. Financing channels 2009-2014, regular budget

Channel	Expenditure 2009-2014 (€ m)	Percentage	Of which core funding	Percentage
UN (+ other multilateral, ie IBRD and IOM)	1.234	80	815	53
Red Cross (ICRC and Netherlands Red Cross)	221	14	200	13
NGOs	70	4.5		
Other (public and research)*	18	1.2		
Total	**1.544**	**100**		

* Other ministries, ODI, Development Initiatives, universities etc. Also, €11 m cost of shipping goods to West Africa during Ebola crisis.

Table 3. Core and earmarked funding from regular budget, UN agencies and Red Cross movement 2009-2014

Organisation / Financing Mechanism	Total Funding 2009-2014 (€ millions)	Of which core unearmarked funding
CERF	240	240
OCHA	74	28
UNHCR	319	235
WFP	289	228
UNRWA	111	84*
UNICEF	34	
UNDP	125	
ICRC	164	159
Netherlands Red Cross (IFRC)	56	41

*Although geographically earmarked, this contribution is considered institutional funding

In September 2014 the Dutch government announced that, in addition to the existing budget for humanitarian aid, it was setting up a Relief Fund of €570 million for 2014-2017 to provide more acute emergency aid to the victims of conflict and natural disasters, improve the reception of refugees in the region of origin and prevent natural disasters. This new fund will substantially increase the proportion of funding available for Dutch NGOs.

Most of the contributions from the Fund will start in 2015. In 2014 the government used the Relief Fund to make €100 million extra contributions to emergency aid in the five most severe current emergencies (Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Iraq and the Ebola outbreak).

The Relief Fund will substantially increase Dutch humanitarian aid. Total expenditure on emergency aid increased by 44% in 2014 and is expected to increase by an average of 76% annually in 2015-2017. The resources to be allocated to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the ICRC and the NGO facility, and the block allocations to the Dutch Red Cross and MSF, will not be fixed at the beginning of each year. This will enable a large part of the Relief Fund to be allocated strategically throughout the year to those partners that can provide emergency aid where it is most needed. The planning also includes €120 million which has not yet been allocated. This is over and above the margin reserved annually in the regular budget for humanitarian aid in acute crises (€36 million in 2014). The following funding changes are planned:

- General non-earmarked contributions to OCHA, UNHCR, WFP and UNRWA will be maintained at current levels.
- The Dutch contribution to the CERF will rise by €15 million a year from €40 to €55 million.
- An unearmarked contribution to UNICEF of €15 million a year from 2015.
- €30 million in the period 2015 to 2017 for activities aimed at improving the regional reception of refugees, with a focus on self-reliance and supporting host communities. Examples include the UNHCR and UNDP Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) and the joint project of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities and the municipality of Amsterdam in Jordan.
- An increase of €15 million a year from €25 to €40 million of the unearmarked contribution to ICRC.
- An increase from €5 to €15 million year of the block allocation to the Dutch Red Cross which can rapidly make funds available to local branches of the Red Cross in disaster areas.
- A total of €30 million will be allocated for **disaster-preparedness** in the 2015-2017 period.
- An allocation of €15 million in the 2015 to 2017 period to MSF. The modality will be discussed but is anticipated to be similar to the block allocation to the Dutch Red Cross.
- €5 million will be allocated for the 2015-2017 period to increase the **security of emergency**

aid workers in the field.

- €120 million to Dutch NGOs for the 2015 to 2017 period. How this support is to be provided will be discussed with the organisations involved in the coming months.

The new Relief Fund has also involved additions to the policy priorities of Dutch humanitarian assistance. Innovation has been added as a policy priority with a focus on:

- Testing and scaling-up innovative products and ideas in the field
- Encouraging innovation within UN organisations and stimulating mutual coordination

The Netherlands wants to achieve this through focusing on innovation in its interactions with the organisations it funds and in international forums. Also, €10 million has been reserved from the Relief Fund for the period 2015-2017 for innovation.

3.1.1.1 NGO funding modalities

Currently, there are six funding modalities for NGOs as regards humanitarian assistance and early recovery. Additional funding will also become available through the new Relief Fund announced in September 2014 (see above). Plans for NGO funding from 2015 onwards are still being worked on.

1. Contribution to public appeals of SHO (Dutch Cooperating Aid Agencies).
2. Standard procedure: assessment of incoming project proposals
3. Syria crisis tender (financed from the humanitarian assistance budget)
4. Reconstruction tender (2012-2015, financed from the reconstruction budget)
5. Strategic Partnerships for Chronic Crises (financed from the reconstruction budget until recently – 10% is allowed to be used for HA)
6. Joint Responses to various L3 crises involving Dutch NGOs (financed from the Relief Fund) – the Joint Response to South

Sudan was approved at the end of 2014

Table 4. NGO funding from regular budget 2009-2014 (€ millions)

NGO	Funding from regular budget 2009-2014 (€ millions)
Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation	2
PSO	2
Save the Children	3
World Vision	3
Oxfam Novib	4
Tearfund	4
Stichting Vluchteling	6
ZOA Vluchtelingenzorg	8
Care International	12
SHO (Dutch Cooperating Aid Agencies)	14
Total all NGOs	**70**

1) Contribution to public appeals of SHO (Dutch Cooperating Aid Agencies)

Most notably the Netherlands contributed €41.7 million (of which €12 million from the HA budget) to the public appeal of the Dutch Cooperating Aid Agencies following the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. This was an exceptional contribution: earlier contributions had usually not exceeded €2-3 million.

2) Standard procedure

All proposals that are received by the ministry have to be assessed based on their merit and how they fit into Dutch policy.

3) Syria crisis tender

In 2014 a subsidy framework of €7 million was launched for cross-border aid by Dutch NGOs in the Syrian crisis. The tender was awarded to three NGOs to deliver cross-border aid to Syria. One NGO was awarded funding for aid to non-registered refugees in Lebanon. For a discussion on this see Box 1 below.

4) Reconstruction tender

The reconstruction tender of €120 million was set up in 2012 to support international NGOs working on human security in fragile and conflict-ridden states.

One-third of the funding was earmarked for South Sudan. In the end, 29 programmes were selected to receive between €3 and €8 million for the period 2012-2015. In some cases the programmes included food security and sustaining livelihoods.

5) Strategic Partnerships for Chronic Crises

This is a funding window focused on transition that runs from 2014 to 2016 with a ceiling of €30 million funded from the Central Reconstruction Fund. Funds are allocated to organisations working in two regions: the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes. Organisations contribute to at least one of the following themes; safety and security, food security and integration of IDPs or refugees. So far, ZOA and WarChild have received funding in the Great Lakes and Pax, TEAR, Dorcas, the Netherlands Red Cross and CARE in the Horn of Africa. The process led to somewhat surprising results as some of the larger and better established NGOs were not selected in favour of smaller Dutch NGOs. The explanation given was that the smaller organisations were much better at making explicit their added value, as they had already often been working in niche areas beforehand.

This new instrument arose due to concerns that there was no clear policy framework for assessing NGO proposals that kept coming in. The lack of policy was time consuming and unclear for both the Humanitarian Assistance Division as well as the NGOs. The activities that were being financed tended to be in reconstruction and early recovery, but were being financed from the humanitarian assistance budget. The conclusion was that there was a need for a new financing mechanism, which would focus on LRRD/transition. It was also a practical choice dependent on the relatively low budget that was available for NGO financing.

The process is less rigid than other types of NGO financing. Organisations do not have to report if they change their design or intended outcomes due to changing context during the year. At the end of the year the organisation explains in its report why it made the decisions it made and what these resulted in. In principle, the organisations are certain of

receiving financing for three years. The role of embassies has increased with these Strategic Partnerships. The embassies were involved in the design of the Partnerships and during the selection process. They now also have a role to play in communication with the organisations. The NGOs are required to report once a year to the embassy on progress and provide a financial overview of the project. Furthermore there is an annual meeting at the embassy.

6) Joint Response by Dutch NGOs

Following the creation of the Relief Fund a new funding modality was created for Dutch NGOs to access financing for selected crises. The funding runs through one or more NGOs acting as lead grant recipient for a consortium of Dutch NGOs. At the time of the research, one Joint Response had already been set up, including 11 Dutch NGOs, for assistance to the crisis in South Sudan. This response is analysed in Box 1.

3.2. Analysis of Netherlands' funding modalities and practices

The timeliness and flexibility of Dutch funding is hugely appreciated by its recipients. Un-earmarked funding is seen as crucial in allowing effective and impartial assistance. There is a strong planning system with budgets known in November, planning finished in January and an extensive letter to parliament early in the year. OCHA interviewees noted that the Dutch have played an important role in un-earmarking more generally (setting an example / making the case for it). The Dutch also played an important role in establishing and sustaining the CERF and pooled funds. In their un-earmarked funding to OCHA, UNHCR, WFP and the Red Cross movement, Dutch humanitarian aid clearly fulfils good humanitarian donorship principles relating to "ensuring predictability and flexibility in funding" (principle 12) and "reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of earmarking" (principle 13).

In being a good and trusting multilateral donor, in not earmarking or demanding additional reporting requirements, Dutch funding helps to provide the reliability and flexibility that enables UN agencies to invest in improving their performance through initiatives such as the Transformative Agenda. However, other like-minded donors see the need to strike a clear balance between trust and critical support.[33]

Netherlands MFA humanitarian unit staff interviewed for the evaluation argued that the approach of mostly funding the UN does make sense and that it is partly based on trust – they trust organisations to spend the money wisely. As one staff member said "if you can't trust the UN who can you trust?" The approach is consistent with GHD commitments – to predictability and to be as unearmarked as possible. So the policy is logical but, asked staff in The Hague, "is it wise as well as logical?" They felt that it was fine in theory but in practice the UN's execution of responsibility has not always been what it should be. As we find in the section synthesising findings from evaluations (Section 4.2) the UN is endeavouring to improve its collective accountability through the move to Strategic Response Plans and through commitments to improved system-wide monitoring and evaluation in the Transformative Agenda and the Netherlands has been supporting these processes. However, we also find that the collective measurement and analysis of performance remains very weak.

The Dutch humanitarian unit continues to see a need for a strong OCHA and a strong coordination role. However, the MFA humanitarian unit is starting to question whether that means that all funding should be put into one basket, and whether

there may be other (non-funding related) ways to achieve coordination goals. There is also a recognition that the UN's on-the-ground implementing capacity is sometimes limited, and that if the UN is not actually implementing then funds do not always need to be channelled through the UN system. Interviewees in the MFA talked about a sense that the UN are becoming 'more coordinators than implementers' that they can be 'over-bureaucratised' and that in places like CAR there are too many people in Bangui and not enough outside the capital.

Whether the balance of funding channels between the UN, Red Cross movement and NGOs is right or wrong and whether these arguments are correct or not are difficult judgements: the evidence just doesn't exist. This is an issue that has been highlighted in previous reviews. The OECD peer review of the Netherlands in 2011 found that the criteria used for funding allocations could be more transparent and that "it remains unclear what criteria drive decisions to allocate funds between eligible partners or towards individual crises" (OECD 2011).

The lack of evidence on which to make decisions between funding channels is a problem shared across a number of donors. An evaluation of SIDA found a "lack of clear and transparent criteria for allocating funding across and within crises" (Mowjee & Randel 2010). The OECD peer review of Switzerland found: "it is not clear how the selection criteria were applied, how the budget will be carved up among them, or how country or regional operations should be targeted for earmarking. 7 Partners confirm that they are unclear on SDC's allocation criteria, noting only that funding allocations have remained reasonably stable over time" (OECD 2013). As the Swiss Peer Review argues, "If Switzerland is to avoid misperceptions about the principled nature of its humanitarian assistance and pro-actively safeguard its enviable humanitarian space, it should consider developing and publishing criteria for its funding decisions, as well as demonstrating how those criteria have been applied in practice. Clear criteria will also help ensure that Swiss interventions consistently add value" (OECD 2013). The same argument clearly applies to Dutch funding.

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[33] DFID's HERR argued:
UN agencies are the backbone of many responses, and the UK i s consistently one of the larges contributors. The
default position of multilateralism means these agencies need supporting, as does the overall institution. But support cannot, and should not, be uncritical (HERR 2011).

A DANIDA evaluation finds that; "it places less emphasis on independent verification of programme delivery results so, for example, only recent NGO capacity assessments have included field visits and project reviews. This makes it more challenging to base funding levels on performance criteria and to assess whether it is working with the most effective partners" (ITAD 2015).

The recently announced additional funding through the Relief Fund implies a re-balancing of the current funding channels to provide a greater percentage of Dutch funding directly to NGOs in future years. Implicit in this is a perception that the balance may have swung too far towards funding primarily through UN agencies. However, in the absence of clear criteria or a good evidence base on which to judge comparative effectiveness and performance, these sorts of decisions risk becoming arbitrary, politicised or based on the perceptions of individual staff members. Other donors are also considering a move towards a greater proportion of funding being provided directly to NGOs but with tensions between multilateral and humanitarian departments around this issue.

Netherlands funding to INGOs remains tied to Dutch NGOs. This could be seen as a form of tied aid in the absence of a clear justification for this restriction. Part of the justification is the need to generate support among the Dutch public for humanitarian action, and funding Dutch NGOs with strong ties to public is seen as one way of achieving this. This, however, could be more clearly expressed in written policy. In practice, funding to Dutch NGOs also often flows to large international NGO confederations and the criteria for the new Relief Fund clearly demands an existing field presence of NGOs in the contexts for which funding is made available. Restricting funding to Dutch NGOs also risks further excluding southern NGOs (discussed more below in Section 3.5.1).

There are also issues of efficiency and effectiveness in the way in which some of the new NGO funding modalities are being structured. The South Sudan and Syria case studies carried out for this evaluation highlighted a number of concerns (see Box 1).

Box 1. South Sudan and Syria case studies

South Sudan Case Study – the Joint Response Fund

During the course of the research for this study, the Dutch government was in the process of establishing a new funding mechanism to channel funds to Dutch NGOs for humanitarian crisis response. This mechanism has grown out of a request from Dutch NGOs in South Sudan for access to bilateral funding, which was addressed directly to the Humanitarian Division in the Hague.[34] This request coincided with an unexpected increase in the humanitarian budget overall in 2014,[35] as well as increased funding allocations for humanitarian response in South Sudan in response to the worsening crisis. In addition, a strong domestic lobby from Dutch NGOs in the Dutch parliament to increase bilateral funds to Dutch NGOs had placed a significant amount of pressure on the Dutch government to increase its funding to NGOs.

Dutch NGOs working in South Sudan proposed a consortium approach with one NGO acting as lead grant

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[34] The Embassy in Juba was not aware of discussions between NGOs and the Dutch government in the early stages, highlighting disconnections in communication.

[35] The ODA budget overall increased by close to €1 billion in order to meet the Dutch comment to spend the equivalent of 0.7% of its GNI on ODA, following a revision of the EU approach to assessing the GNI of member states, which saw the GNI of the Netherlands increase and therefore the ODA budget had to increase accordingly.

recipient, thereby reducing transaction costs for the government. While the new NGO fund meets the demand from NGOs for increased bilateral funding to NGOs, it does not necessarily provide the same level of funding quality as the Care project or Strategic Partnerships in that funding is likely to be relatively short term and agencies still do not have a direct relationship with the Ministry, which would facilitate a flexible partnership relationship. Moreover, this approach may not in fact support the Dutch commitments to support a coordinated response to the crisis.

In practice, many of the Dutch NGOs involved are not themselves operational and are in effect fundraising offices for larger INGO networks or federations who determine needs and priorities independent of their Dutch fundraising offices. It is these country-based entities (who are not in reality 'Dutch NGOs' – they typically report functionally to offices in other European countries and the US) that are then required to coordinate under this funding model. The geographical locations of projects supported in South Sudan through this mechanism are disparate and activities are spread across a variety of clusters, so lesson-learning and technical synergies are limited; organisations and activities have been included on a democratic basis rather than an assessment of needs, capacity and quality of proposed response; and the package overall does not represent a coherent approach. In fact the only unifying factors seem to be that they are activities proposed by 'Dutch NGOs'. While some efforts have been made to ensure that the HC has approved activities as being consistent with the coordinated response strategy, the rigour of this assessment and the extent to which the clusters or OCHA were consulted or agree with the approach is unclear.[36] There is a risk that the NGO fund approach adds another layer of coordination, unified only by funding source and with uncertain benefits and coordination and administrative costs which are significantly higher than funds channelled via the CHF or through conventional bilateral routes.

The Dutch government's decision-making processes and capacity to actively monitor and manage a wider set of partnerships are limited and may not be in their current form well-equipped to support these new ambitions to increase bilateral contributions to NGOs. In addition to capacity constraints, a lack of clarity around reporting lines and responsibilities between the Humanitarian Division and country-level embassy staff also represent a challenge to ambitions to develop bilateral instruments and partnerships.

The Syria case study: The Netherlands' 'policy exception' for cross-border response

The policy exception covers the Netherlands' policy exception for cross-border operations into Syria, and for support to unregistered refugees. The policy exception was, and the Relief Fund remains, open only to INGOs registered in the Netherlands. The policy exception required the fulfilment of some basic criteria and allowed each NGO to submit a separate proposal. In contrast, the Relief Fund requests a single proposal from an ad hoc consortium of Dutch registered NGOs in any given country, which demonstrates the benefit of collective action.

In Syria as in South Sudan, it was noted that only in a small minority of cases was the Netherlands-based entity implementing directly. In most cases, implementation was undertaken by a different national member of a federation or network with one Dutch registered partner. In these cases, the influence of the Netherlands policy was diluted, sometimes to zero. In the case of cross-border response from Syria, one of the partners noted explicitly that, as a US-based organisation with a very careful eye on US anti-terror legislation, the only relevant policy was that of the US.

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[36] Certainly the CHF Technical Secretariat were not aware of the mechanism, nor that the HC had approved the approach.

Some donors, (ECHO, DFID, USAID, SDC) have a stronger field presence on which to make judgements between funding channels at field level. In the absence of clear criteria or evidence on which to make decisions, much of the funding allocation seems to be determined by historical patterns – donors continue to fund what they funded in previous years with minor adjustments at the margins. For example, an evaluation of DANIDA found that, "currently, partners have a high degree of predictability because funding levels do not change much from year to year (unless they increase, as has been the case for the CERF, OCHA and ICRC). While this is positive, it also limits incentives to strengthen performance" (ITAD 2015).

DFID's procedures for deciding on the right balance of funding channels (core and pooled funding, UN agencies, NGOs, Red Cross etc.) rely on their network of humanitarian advisers and mechanisms such as the MAR (Multilateral Aid Review) and monitoring and evaluation structures for NGO PPA agreements. DFID is cautious about making direct comparisons between NGOs and UN agencies – they argue that you should not be asking Oxfam and WFP to do the same thing and so it is not necessarily appropriate to directly compare them. Exploring comparative options is part of the DFID business case model for funding decisions. NGOs do continue to ask questions about cascading overhead transactions costs (e.g. why fund the UN to fund us?) The DFID answer to this is that partly they are transferring transaction costs from themselves to the UN to manage funds, and that partly this is a strategic choice about the need for a central role for the UN in leading and coordinating humanitarian action.

Again, what remains missing from this debate is stronger evidence comparing the efficiency and effectiveness of different funding channels and modalities. In situations where both UN agencies and NGOs are sub-contracting local NGOs it is legitimate to scrutinise the added value of different funding channels and to look carefully at the length of sub-contracting chains. Given that most OECD donors seem to be grappling with similar challenges

in developing stronger evidence and clearer criteria on which to make decisions about funding channels, there is clear scope for more coordinated and joint donor action to tackle this problem.

3.2.1 Development vs. humanitarian spending

Another issue in relation to financing is whether or not the Dutch have got the right balance and policy linkages between development and humanitarian spending and are committing enough to disaster risk reduction. The 2011 policy commits to "strive to meet the target of reserving at least 10% of the development budget for humanitarian aid and at least 1% of Dutch ODA for DRR" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands 2011). The percentage spent on DRR has not been monitored and is not available. The percentage of ODA spent on humanitarian aid was 6% in 2012, and 5.69% in 2013.

There is large variation across different donors in relation to the split between development and humanitarian funding. Sweden and Ireland both allocate 15%, the UK 7% and France 0.9% of ODA to humanitarian aid (figures from DAC peer reviews). It is not clear that there is a right percentage but some donors are starting to have internal discussions about increasing the allocation of humanitarian aid given the seeming increase in disaster burdens, the growth in middle-income countries with less need for development aid, and so a development portfolio increasingly focused on fragile and conflict-affected contexts with large humanitarian as well as development needs. The policy linkages between relief and development are covered below in Section 3.5.1.

3.3 The Netherlands' management structures for humanitarian assistance and benchmarking with other donors

3.3.1. Management structures and arrangements

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Humanitarian Assistance Division of the Department

for Stability and Humanitarian Assistance (DSH/HH) is responsible for the policy-related, coordinating and implementing aspects of humanitarian aid. The Division is responsible for administering Dutch humanitarian funding. This responsibility is shared with the Department Multilateral Institutions and Human Rights (DMM), which handles the part of the humanitarian budget used to cover voluntary contributions to the core budgets of the UN Refugee programmes UNHCR and UNRWA and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The Humanitarian Assistance Division became part of the newly formed Department for Stability and Humanitarian Assistance in 2012, which emerged from the fusion of the Fragile States Unit (EFV) and the Department for Human Rights and Humanitarian Assistance (DMH). The motivation for this fusion was on the one hand improving effective policymaking and policy implementation as regards security, human rights, stability and fragility, humanitarian assistance and good governance. On the other hand the fusion was implemented to reduce costs.

The Department for Stability and Humanitarian Assistance aims at a major integration of Dutch policy in the fields of reconstruction, stability and fragile states as well as humanitarian assistance. The newly created department is budget holder for the activities in the field of Security and Rule of Law, Good Governance and administrates the Stability as well as the Reconstruction Fund. Furthermore, the department is responsible for all ODA as well as non-ODA funding of humanitarian assistance.

The embassies have an advisory role with regard to distribution of humanitarian financing and are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the support provided. The Permanent Representations of the Netherlands with the United Nations (New York, Geneva and Rome) and the European Union (Brussels) play an important role in the coordination of policies: the former does so with the various UN agencies and ICRC, while the latter does so with the European Commission's

Humanitarian Office.

3.3.1.1 Internal management

A key finding of the 2006 IOB evaluation of Dutch humanitarian aid was a lack of capacity in the Humanitarian Aid Division. It concluded that, "the ambitions of Dutch humanitarian aid policy are not sufficiently matched in the setting of priorities in staff deployment. Even though staffing levels have increased and administrative procedures have been simplified, the Humanitarian Aid Division is still experiencing a lack of capacity" (IOB 2006). With, until very recently, only seven staff in the Humanitarian Unit this continues to be a problem. The increase to 11 as part of newly allocated funding will alleviate some of these constraints but even then capacity will remain strained.

These constraints are in part a given because of cross-government decisions about the civil service. The division has done a good job of simplifying administrative procedures to enable a small team to manage the workload, but there are still key capacity constraints. Given ministerial ambitions to play a leading role in humanitarian innovation, the unit recognises the need to bring in people with different skills. They are also considering moving to a system with a small number of core staff complemented by a second circle of more flexible specialists and experts who can be contracted for up to seven years. The humanitarian unit have also asked for three to four staff with humanitarian expertise to be deployed in key regional centres to allow greater field insight and links with embassies. The extent to which capacities had been over-stretched in the evaluation period were noted during interviews with managers describing people as badly over-burdened.

Some other donors and humanitarian organisations perceived a lack of Dutch engagement on humanitarian debates and in global humanitarian forums and noted that greater collaboration and engagement would be very welcome given similar policy priorities. However, the main organisations funded by the Dutch all commended the quality of Dutch engagement in their governance mechanisms (executive boards and donor support groups). OCHA

noted that historically the Dutch were critical and notable supporters of the multilateral system. OCHA found that the Geneva mission staff are constructive, vocal, knowledgeable and active with good continuity. They "ask the right questions and don't make unreasonable demands". ICRC described, "an extraordinary and positive Dutch role'" as chairs of the donor support group in 2013 and in the development of a new ICRC strategic plan. The Netherlands recognised that ICRC needed to lead its development but played a helpful supportive role, bringing in external views, created a conducive environment for discussion and held an excellent meeting in Amsterdam. UNHCR similarly noted that in the ExComm and Standing Committee meetings there has been great support from the Dutch. They pose relevant questions, are critical and concerned about the right issues. What seems to be happening is where the Netherlands humanitarian team have chosen to focus their limited capacity they are perceived as strong and helpful, but capacity constraints make this difficult across the full range of humanitarian forums and debates.

The evaluation examined issues around the expertise and skills of staff in the humanitarian unit and permanent missions. The Dutch, in common with most other donors, do not recruit humanitarian specialists. The units are staffed by career diplomats who mostly pick-up humanitarian knowledge on the job. This lack of specialist humanitarian knowledge and experience combined with sometimes high levels of staff turnover is somewhere where there is scope for improved humanitarian expertise through greater investment in training, recruitment of people with humanitarian experience in key positions[37] and other methods for gaining knowledge and experience of humanitarian action at field level (immersions or secondments for example). Permanent mission staff themselves acknowledged

that their humanitarian expertise on starting in a role was often limited and there might be scope for building on it. As one person noted: "I did an intensive course in French when I started a new role – why not one in humanitarian action?"

Staff for the humanitarian unit are hired internally within the MFA, with the humanitarian unit able to advise but not pick and choose new colleagues. They do try to get people with some background in humanitarian action and would like to have more. There have been some recent successes, for example one of the people hired as part of the expanded team resulting from the new Relief Fund is an ex-head of a humanitarian unit of a prominent NGO. The system for recruitment, induction, training and ongoing learning could also be strengthened. At the moment this remains primarily a case of acquiring skills on the job with ad hoc attendance on humanitarian trainings and a basic (and short) induction course. The ability to develop a more structured approach has been limited by the extreme capacity constraints within the unit. They have been "hanging on by their fingernails" in coping with the existing workload and so opportunities to invest more staff time in training and learning have just not been available.

As the international humanitarian system has grown in size and complexity over the last 20 years, humanitarian organisations have invested considerable amounts in becoming more professional. However, this has not yet been matched in many donor governments, so you have the odd situation where the implementation of humanitarian aid is increasingly professionally managed but decisions about where the funding goes are not always made by people with humanitarian expertise.

There is also no substitute for field-based experience in understanding the real challenges of humanitarian action. It is very easy for all aid professionals to get stuck in debates in Geneva, New York and regional capitals and to rarely experience how debates about coordination or field presence play out in remote refugee camps in Ethiopia or field offices in the Central African Republic. Very few of the Dutch MFA Staff interviewed for the evaluation had this sort of

[37] A senior humanitarian expert was hired at the beginning of 2015.

experience which would greatly enrich their understanding of humanitarian action. Often field experience was limited to multi-donor field trips such as those organised by the OCHA donor support group. Ways of getting some sort of field experience and understanding through short-term secondments to field-based agencies or immersions should be explored. Consideration should also be given to making this a regular part of the job and not just a one-off through, for example, insisting (by making it a core part of job descriptions and workplans) that at least two weeks a year are spent in the 'deep' field (an agency sub-office, refugee camp etc.) in a current humanitarian crisis.

Some of the staff interviewed in the permanent missions felt that there was more scope for learning, discussion and exchange of views between The Hague, permanent missions and embassies. A lack of capacity, inconsistent instructions and a lack of clear policy direction from The Hague to support the humanitarian work of permanent missions were noted. [38] An annual meeting that used to take place between embassy and permanent mission staff working on humanitarian issues and the humanitarian unit in the Hague no longer takes place (due to ministry wide cost cutbacks) diminishing the space for an exchange of ideas. There was a perceived lack of consultation between The Hague and permanent missions and a perception that the permanent missions could be better utilised and more involved.

The South Sudan case study concluded that, "staffing levels in the Humanitarian Division are not adequate to permit rigorous evidence-based decision-making processes, regular systematic monitoring of partners or consistent engagement in humanitarian policy discussions and advocacy to

support principled humanitarian action at the country-level." The Ethiopia case study found that, "The communication between the Embassy and The Hague to increase complementarity of direct and indirect funding was said to be poor. Former embassy staff blame the constant turn-over of people in The Hague for poor communication and for creating frustration."

There are also issues with the capacity, skills and level of engagement of embassy staff. The previous IOB evaluation noted that the embassies adequately monitor humanitarian situations through contacts with other donors, agencies and the government but that field monitoring of the results of aid implementation has been weak and that attention to humanitarian aid was competing with other priorities. Findings from the case studies carried out for this evaluation suggest that these weaknesses have not been addressed. The South Sudan case study noted that, "Embassy staff charged with monitoring the Dutch humanitarian portfolio have limited time and expertise and the Dutch government is noted as less present and engaged than other leading CHF donors. The exact responsibilities of Embassy staff with respect to monitoring Dutch humanitarian investments overall and indeed demand for or interest in this information is unclear. The Dutch Embassy's willingness to engage the government and advocate on difficult issues however, was respected and appreciated by donors and implementing agencies."

Staff in The Hague noted that the expertise of embassy staff is not always sufficient to provide an informed view but that where people do focus on humanitarian issues they do notice the difference and it does lead to improved performance. Countries with large and recurring humanitarian portfolios are starting to have Heads of Aid with humanitarian experience. For example, the ex-head of aid in Kabul is now in Juba. So there are people with in-depth experience in conflict and humanitarian contexts. Where this does not exist (e.g. Libya) people with humanitarian expertise have sometimes been seconded to the embassy.

Given the serious over-stretch noted by the managers of the Humanitarian Unit and the missed

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[38] At the beginning of 2015 new framework instructions for humanitarian assistance was circulated following the creation of the Relief Fund, partly to help guide Permanent Missions and embassies in their work in the field of humanitarian assistance.

opportunities for more structured induction, training and learning for staff working on humanitarian action, there is a clear argument for greater investments in both staff numbers and staff learning.

3.4. Comparison with other donors (benchmarking)

The table below summarises some of the findings relating to staff numbers and percentage distributed to different funding channels. Perhaps most striking is the substantial variations in the numbers of staff working primarily on humanitarian issues. It is possible to distinguish two main approaches. The first consists of ECHO, DFID, USAID and the Swiss who hire people with humanitarian expertise and have relatively large numbers of people both in HQ and field offices to manage their humanitarian spending. The second is that followed by the Dutch and donors such as Denmark who have a small core team in HQ supported by staff in permanent missions and embassies that have responsibility for humanitarian issues alongside a range of other commitments. Within these broad categories there is still considerable variation. Sweden for example has 25 staff at HQ compared to the Dutch 7.

There is also substantial variation in the percentages of funding allocated to UN agencies, the Red Cross movement and NGOs. The Dutch stand out as having a relatively high percentage allocated to UN agencies and a smaller percentage to NGOs.

Table 5. Donor benchmarking

Donor	Annual spend US$	% to UN, NGOs and RC	HQ staff in humanitarian unit	Field staff
US	4.7 billion			
ECHO	1.9 billion	48% NGOs 42% by UN agencies 9% by international organisations (3 partners) 1% as a direct contract of ECHO flight		140 international, 320 national in 39 countries (in 2013 - http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/who/about-echo/field-network
UK	1.8 billion	63% UN, 19% NGO, 15% Red Cross (2009/10 figures)	23 plus Crown agents	14 plus Crown Agents (70 in total split between field and HQ) Plus staff in permanent missions with responsibility for humanitarian affairs
Germany	949 million	57% UN, 23% NGO, 11% Red Cross	30 in HQ	Staff in permanent mission and embassies (depending on size of embassy and humanitarian portfolio staff may be dedicated to humanitarian issues).
Sweden	785 million	16% to Red Cross 12% to NGOs 72% to UN agencies	25 at HQ plus 6 or 7 in multilateral division focused on humanitarian UN agencies	Staff in SIDA country offices have responsibility for humanitarian issues. 14 field staff have various levels of specific humanitarian responsibility.
Canada	691 million			
Norway	613 million	50% UN, 30% NGOs, 17% Red Cross	15	Staff in permanent missions and multi-hatted people in embassies

Donor	Annual spend US$	% to UN, NGOs and RC	HQ staff in humanitarian unit	Field staff
Dutch	410 million	81% UN, 12% Red Cross, 7% NGO	7	Diplomatic staff in embassies have responsibility for covering humanitarian issues
Denmark	409 million	65% UN, 25% NGOs, 10% Red Cross	6.5	Staff in permanent missions and multi-hatted embassy staff
Switzerland	399 million	33% ICRC, 33% UN, 15% NGO and Swiss Red Cross, 18% direct action	100+	100+ (20% expat) plus the SHA pool of 700 experts seconded into organisations and working on SDC direct implementation
Australia	357 million	70% UN, 10.5 % NGO 5.5% Red Cross movement	30 approx	20 (approx.) in permanent missions, regional centres, Indonesia and Myanmar

Limited staff capacity and a lack of people with humanitarian expertise is not an issue faced only by the Netherlands. For example, a recent review of French humanitarian action found, "very few individuals have any direct experience and specific professional expertise in the field of humanitarian assistance" (Garavoglia 2013). A 2011 review of Norway's humanitarian policy found limited staff resources "which appear disproportionate to the amount of funding and number of funded initiatives" (Nordic Consulting Group 2011).

Some other donors, notably ECHO, DFID and SDC, recruit humanitarian professionals. DFID has made an effort to bring into its humanitarian unit (CHASE) people who combine humanitarian expertise with being career civil servants. They augment this core civil service capacity with a contract with Crown Agents (a private sector company) to provide additional humanitarian experts. SDC runs the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit comprising 700 experts ready to be deployed for direct implementation and secondment to humanitarian organisations. Other donors have also invested more in training and learning for staff: DFID have a structured series of trainings with

RedR and SIDA have invested in training through the Advanced Training Program on Humanitarian Action (ATHA).[39]

DFID sees a mixture of HQ and field capacity as critical to ensure quality of both delivery and policy. The field-based staff are not just there to focus on implementation but are important for broader policy and reform processes. DFID relies on the field to follow through on the effectiveness of reform processes at field level. For instance, DFID feels that the CHF pilots in DRC and Sudan relied on heavily engaged DFID staff at the field level. DFID has also integrated humanitarian advisers in high-risk countries (Nepal and Bangladesh) and restructured the teams as Risk Management (incorporating Disaster Preparedness, DRR, and climate change) forcing (literally) the two sides of the house to work together. This was positively evaluated in Nepal (ICAI 2013a).

DFID have made investments in the technical expertise of humanitarian advisers. This is now seen as a 'profession' and one of the core technical disciplines of DFID staff. The humanitarian head of profession is responsible for quality assuring the group of

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[39] www.atha.se/program-description

humanitarian advisers. They set the bar high in terms of recruitment and have a quality assurance process through ongoing professional monitoring and support. In addition to line management, each humanitarian adviser has a technical quality assurer. This person provides a soft management line to mentor and support the humanitarian adviser in developing and maintaining their technical skills. Importantly the core group of humanitarian advisers (not CHASE OT) are full-time civil servants not on contract. This means that they have to satisfy both technical humanitarian competences and civil service ones (being able to work politically and across government). The recent OECD peer review of DFID found that, "Having humanitarian specialists improves the quality of policy debates and programme decisions" (OECD 2014).

SIDA has also been working to beef-up and formalise their HQ and field-based humanitarian staff and have started recruiting civil servants with humanitarian expertise and experience, which is seen as a major shift in the last year. SIDA also see an annual two-day meeting with all humanitarian staff as important for exchanging views and learning.

3.5 Key policy areas

This section focuses on the key areas of the Netherlands' humanitarian policy using information from policy documents and interviews in The Hague with other donors, UN agencies and NGOs. The extent to which the humanitarian system as a whole has supported national capacity is examined below in Section 4. Section 4 also considers the extent to which OCHA's Transformative Agenda and pooled funding instruments, supported by the Netherlands, have influenced each of these policy areas. Overarching conclusions are drawn in Section 5.

3.5.1 Policy area 1: More self-reliance and resilience

This includes commitments to using and

strengthening local capacity and structures, devoting more attention to disaster risk reduction, preventing disasters, mitigating the impact of disasters and disaster preparedness.

Supporting national and local capacity

There is very little direct funding provided by the Dutch for national or local actors. The only way these actors are supported is where international NGOs, UN agencies or the Red Cross work with local partners and where pooled funds directly support national NGOs. The 2011 policy notes that "the most effective way of providing aid is to strengthen the response capacity in the country affected' and commits the Netherlands to 'wherever possible, make more use of local structures and capacities" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands 2011). How this will happen, however, is not clearly articulated.

A lack of funding to national and southern international NGOs is a problem shared with other donors – no-one else is doing much either. In 2012 less than 0.1% of total humanitarian assistance went directly to local- and national-level NGOs in crisis-affected countries, and just 0.3% went directly to crisis-affected governments (Gingerich 2015, Global Humanitarian Assistance 2013).

As noted in the section above on funding channels, the Netherlands' funding to NGOs remains tied to Dutch NGOs and this risks excluding southern NGOs and perpetuating arrangements where southern NGOs serve as sub-contractors to international NGOs. This limits NGOs' ability to access longer-term funding and risks a catch-22 where lack of quality financing limits their ability to develop the capacity needed to demonstrate to donors that they can meet strict accountability requirements. A positive development is that the Netherlands is considering support for the START network which plans to include southern NGOs as members and is aiming to channel funding directly to southern NGOs.

The Dutch, in common with other donors, cited humanitarian principles and concerns about accountability as reasons for not directly funding disaster-affected governments or southern NGOs directly. However, these reasons were often poorly

articulated with a lack of clarity around why commitments to humanitarian principles should prevent bilateral funding to governments in natural disasters. There was also little sign of donor governments, including the Dutch, taking seriously their own commitments to respecting the primary responsibility of the state to assist and protect its own citizens and how this relates to humanitarian principles. GHD principle 5 reaffirms the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders and principle 8 commits donors to, "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 coordinate effectively with humanitarian partners" (GHD 2003).

The DFID Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (HERR) suggested four broad categories of disaster-affected governments:

- Strong and capable governments who take the lead (e.g. India).
- Capable but under-resourced governments who need help to lead (e.g. Mozambique).
- Governments that are unable to lead, and need the international community to do this on their behalf for a time (e.g. Haiti).
- Governments who are unwilling or unable to lead and are obstructive (e.g. Niger in 2009).

It argued that, "in these four broad categories the international community has to respond differently but the approach has not always reflected this reality" and that DFID has tended to respond as if all disasters and all governments were the same (HERR 2011). Based on the evaluation synthesis, financing trends, and interviews conducted for this evaluation, it is clear that this weakness is shared by the Netherlands and that significant challenges remain in developing responses that are better tailored to context.

Until donors individually and collectively take more seriously how to operationalise commitments to respecting and supporting national and local capacity then there is a risk that commitments towards this will be seen as lip service. This is problematic both because it makes it more difficult for strong national and local capacities to develop and strengthen and because it risks perpetuating the perception of international humanitarian action as a Western dominated and politicised endeavour. Consideration should be given to whether existing funding mechanisms could be made more open to southern NGOs and/or whether new funding mechanisms are needed. The Dutch, in cooperation with other donors, should also explore direct bilateral funding mechanisms for supporting the capacity of southern governments to respond as well as prepare for disasters themselves – and whether this should come most appropriately from the development of humanitarian funding windows.

3.5.2. Policy area 2: Coordination

The Netherlands has been a strong funder of OCHA, a strong supporter or reform and the Transformative Agenda, and has justified its focus on funding the UN on the basis of more coordinated action leading to greater effectiveness. However, all of this is perhaps more asserted than evidence-based, and the new funding decision and interviews in The Hague suggest growing concerns with this line of argument.

Those interviewed in The Hague noted that the Netherlands has been consistent in its advocacy and policy positions towards the UN over the last 10 years. They have strongly advocated OCHA's central role, greater coordination and strengthening the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) system, and have played leading roles in inventing and establishing the cluster system and GHD.

Humanitarian Unit staff did not see an enormous difference in the Transformative Agenda to existing reform processes but inasmuch as it is focused on things that they were already arguing for are broadly supportive of it. There is, however, a feeling that it is perhaps too internal and UN focused. There is also a desire to see the agreements that have been put in place effectively implemented at field level. Humanitarian unit staff see the Netherlands' role as

pressuring UN agencies to be serious – they need to implement the agenda as well as make good agreements. The Dutch see a role in holding UN agencies to account in living up to promises and intend to develop this role in coming years. The 2016 chairmanship of the EC represents an opportunity to sharpen advocacy around key issues.

Although a strong general supporter of UN humanitarian reform and coordinated multilateral approaches, it was beyond the scope of this evaluation to generate a more detailed analysis of how the Netherlands' staff in permanent missions, embassies and from the humanitarian unit attempted to influence UN organisations on particular issues. Both staff from the UN organisations and permanent mission staff did note that Dutch statements in formal board meetings were sometimes fairly routine and general and the research team was unable to identify clear evidence of Netherlands' policy priorities. Some UN agency interviewees noted that, as a complement to core unearmarked funding, funding earmarked to particular issues or policy priorities did enable other donors to have greater policy influence. The recent evaluation of DANIDA notes their strong partnership with UNHCR and that "by combining catalytic funding with strong engagement, Danida is able to punch above its weight and have an influence over the agency that exceeds the amounts of funding involved" (ITAD 2015). There does appear to be scope for greater levels of creativity and specificity in how the Netherlands engages with its key UN and Red Cross partners, both in terms of policy influence and funding.

There is also an issue with how the commitment to coordination and multilateralism is articulated in the humanitarian policy. The explanation given is thin but centres around the assertion that funding through the UN is more efficient because it is better coordinated and therefore reduces duplication. The problem with this argument is that it is thinly evidenced and sometimes falls down in practice. There are other arguments that could be made for investing in the UN's coordination and leadership role beyond or instead of efficiency that could help

to strengthen the policy and the ability of the humanitarian unit to justify it to parliament and the Dutch public. These would rest on the added value of UN leadership and coordination and the importance of multilateral approaches related to the principle of universality. This could then feed through into asking the UN agencies that the Dutch fund to themselves make clearer in their reporting the ways in which they add value to humanitarian response.

This is noted in the 2011 DAC peer review of Dutch humanitarian assistance, which argues that, "the Netherlands' key role in strengthening the international humanitarian architecture is undoubtedly its comparative advantage" (OECD 2011). Better articulating this idea of comparative advantage and core funding for the main UN humanitarian agencies as a critical part of the international humanitarian system could help to strengthen Dutch policy.

There is also a question around how donors coordinate their actions. There remains a lack of a clear inter-agency donor group. They meet on individual organisation boards and donor support groups and in forums like the IASC and the European Commission Council Working on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), but rarely collectively. There was a perception amongst those interviewed that the GHD initiative used to play this role but that it has become less active in recent years (although with some optimism for a revival under the current co-chairmanship of the USA and Canada). There was also a perception that donors had perhaps lost focus on how they could change and improve as donors and had become more wrapped up in general discussions about the effectiveness of the overall system. One of the perceived features of the early GHD impetus was a stronger focus on how specific donor practices could drive wider change within humanitarian action.

3.5.3 Policy area 3: Humanitarian access and neutrality

Humanitarian access and neutrality commits the Netherlands to upholding and respecting the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence and calls for the Netherlands to be an active advocate on humanitarian principles.

There was a general perception that the merger within the MFA of the humanitarian unit with the Division of Stability had not resulted in problems with principles. Staff in the humanitarian unit still felt able to defend a principled humanitarian position against the demands of other parts of government for co-option into other foreign policy or military objectives and that this hadn't been made more difficult by the merger. On the positive side, the merger made whole of government approaches to conflict and fragility more effective, within the bounds of principled humanitarian action.

The agencies that the Dutch fund see them as a principled donor as evidenced by defending principled approaches in governance bodies (donor support groups, executive boards etc.). The Red Cross appreciated that Dutch unearmarked funding was crucial in enabling them to be impartial in allocating funding according to where it was most needed globally. It was not clear the extent to which the Dutch are being an 'active advocate' as set out in the policy beyond funding ICRC, UNHCR and standing up for principles within the Ministry and in governance mechanisms. This was also a finding across the EU in the recent European Consensus Evaluation which found that, whilst donors saw themselves as upholding and promoting humanitarian principles, there were very few examples of specific initiatives or concrete actions being taken with respect to principles (ADE 2014).

As also highlighted in other donor evaluations there was no evidence of thinking or analysis about how humanitarian principles relate to development and fragile states principles (Mowjee & Randel 2010). The Netherlands, in common with most other donors, need to think about how a commitment to government ownership and alignment (Paris declaration), to statebuilding as the central objective (fragile states principles) and to respecting the independence and neutrality of humanitarian action relate to each other in the many contexts (South Sudan, DRC) where they are simultaneously committed to humanitarian, development and fragile states principles.

In the field, the South Sudan case study found that, "with respect to the Dutch policy commitment to use their influence to advocate for humanitarian access and neutrality the perception of the Dutch capacity to engage on political issues was good, with donors in particular noting that the Dutch have a comparative advantage in having a full Embassy in Juba from which they can engage on political issues." The Dutch were perceived to be willing to take a strong position on difficult issues, with donors and operating agencies citing the example of the Dutch taking a strong position with the government on the NGO bill as well as the Dutch taking a lead in scaling back development financing to send a diplomatic signal to the Government of South Sudan in the context of the current crisis. The ability of the Dutch government to engage at country level to support principled humanitarian action – including access to affected populations, protection of civilians and humanitarian policy – on a consistent basis is somewhat limited however, since embassy staff are time-constrained, balancing their primary development portfolio responsibilities with additional humanitarian duties, and they are often not experienced in humanitarian affairs or regularly apprised of global-level humanitarian policy debates and issues.

3.5.4 Policy area 4: Greater accountability

This policy area calls for a focus on accountability for results and adequate communication towards the Dutch public on the results of Dutch humanitarian action.

Accountability and reporting

Greater accountability is a central plank of the 2011 policy which states that the Netherlands will increase its attention to accountability for the objectives and results of humanitarian aid. It in particular makes a commitment to pushing for improvements in the monitoring, auditing and evaluation of pooled funds. Collective accountability is also a key pillar of the Transformative Agenda. In summary, while there are positives to be drawn from individual country cases, progress on the monitoring and reporting in pooled funds is mixed, and there appears to have been little impact on collective accountability. To a certain

extent, this increases the extent to which the Netherlands is reliant on existing reporting mechanisms – such as UN agency annual reports. On the one hand, this is good donorship – not demanding extra reporting requirements from organisations. But it does lead to a very closed system, with organisations reporting on themselves and not much independent accountability. Monitoring and evaluation of pooled funds, including the extent to which they and the transformative agenda have contributed to collective accountability is covered below in Section 4. The performance of key partners for the Netherlands is also covered in Section 4.

The Netherlands also uses a scorecard approach for monitoring the performance of international organisational partners, drawing on feedback from embassies and permanent missions, agency reporting mechanisms and external assessments including MOPAN and those of other donors such as DFID's MAR and Australia's Multilateral Assessment. Interviewees, however, noted the limitations of MOPAN, and Australia noted that, 'MOPAN's approach has limitations that are driving donors towards undertaking their own assessments' (Australian Government, 2012). The scorecard approach, MOPAN and other donor assessments all tend to focus on organisational performance and accountability issues at the global and headquarters level. Information about field level effectiveness and independent monitoring are often lacking.

As it stands it is a very trust based system and other donors interviewed see a lack of accountability as critical. One of the most consistent findings from three rounds of the State of the Humanitarian System reports and from evaluation synthesis findings is the weakness of monitoring across the international humanitarian system. This also emerges from the case studies (covered below in Section 4).

Similar findings have emerged from an evaluation of DANIDA which found an over-reliance on self-reporting and a risk that partners will report 'good news' rather than being clear about challenges.

MOPAN reviews and reviews of CERF funding have also found that there can be discrepancies between what is reported and field reality as well as other weaknesses with UN agency reporting (Featherstone 2013, Mowjee 2012, 2014). ITAD conclude that "Danida should exercise a degree of independent oversight of implementation at field level, including of UN partners, whether through the greater use of UFT reviews, field level follow up by HCP and Embassies or through the use of independent evaluations" (ITAD 2015).

There is therefore potential for major donors without a substantive field presence (Dutch, SIDA, DANIDA, Norway etc.) to explore the potential for more structured feedback and analysis from agencies that do have that presence (DFID, SDC, ECHO). At the moment this takes place informally and through COHAFA but there is room, again through GHD, for exploring how it could be more systematic. The European Consensus and establishment of COHAFA has led to significant improvements in the sharing of information between EU member states and EU institutions at the capital level (ADE 2014).

In theory, Dutch embassies provide a field-based monitoring role. However, it is clear that embassies are struggling with multiple commitments and responsibilities and so in practice any monitoring role is limited given capacity constraints. Staff interviewed in The Hague noted that embassies are "stripped to the bone in terms of capacity" and so it is very difficult for embassies to conduct any meaningful monitoring. The HQ does try to make sure embassy staff in places with humanitarian crises are well briefed and have knowledge of humanitarian issues in their job profiles. More humanitarian training would be welcome (individual examples of the role and capacity of the Netherlands' Embassy function in the case study countries are covered in Section 4).

The donors that have invested in a field presence (DFID, SDC and ECHO) see this as a crucial part of their accountability systems. They have humanitarian professionals in crisis situations able to be involved in strategic planning processes and conducting monitoring of the organisations funded in ways that

makes them more confident that they are making informed decisions about funding and monitoring at field level whether those funds are being spent effectively.

3.5.5 Other areas of specific policy relevance

3.5.5.1 Linking relief and development / resilience

The terms of reference for this evaluation asked: "What assessment can be made of the contributions (together with other like-minded donors) made to promote more self-reliance and resilience in HA (strengthening local capacity, transition, exit strategies, disaster risk reduction and reconstruction after conflicts)?" The 2011 humanitarian policy included a focus on more self-reliance and resilience as one its four main ambitions and had a commitment to spend at least 1% of Dutch ODA for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

The Humanitarian Unit argued that there has been more effort on DRR through Dutch support to ISDR and the IFRC. 'Resilience' is seen in the unit as too much of an umbrella term; they have retained a focus on DRR. They have done some innovative work on DRR in the water sector where Dutch private sector water experts assist in long-term solutions. Water expertise is also opened up to the UN working within cluster systems. Work on water and climate issues has also linked with development colleagues. There has been a new budget to support IFRC to work on local preparedness with local RC movements. Staff see the mainstreaming of DRR into development policies and activities within the MFA as a real achievement. DRR is now often a stated priority in Dutch development plans. This has also been a focus of other donors with a perception that real progress is being made in getting development-focused colleagues to take disasters and disaster risk more seriously. For example, SIDA are seeing if they can shift support to ISDR and GFDRR from the humanitarian to the development side.

The Netherlands has had a focus on innovative solutions for long-term refugees. It has played a leading role in UNHCR's Transition Solutions

Initiative (now the Solutions Alliance). The humanitarian unit is doing some exciting work with developing partnerships between UNHCR and municipality associations working with HCR on unfamiliar issues such as town planning and public transport. The SPCC (chronic crisis NGO funding window) is encouraging new ways of thinking about LRRD and working in chronic crises. They are encouraging agencies to work with embassies and their development work with governments.

The Netherlands has also invested in innovative approaches to supporting countries to deal with water-related disasters. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment created DRR-Teams drawing on government and private sector skills. This cooperation between government and water sector allows for a quick response to urgent water-related crises. This is not humanitarian assistance, but knowledge and expertise regarding water management, water security and water services to support reconstruction and prevention. For example, a DRR-Team has been stationed in Pakistan at the request of the Pakistani and local Punjabi government to advise regarding flood protection. Most of the other missions are not in developing countries.

However, findings relating to resilience and DRR from the case studies suggest limitations to attempts to focus on resilience and DRR. In Ethiopia, "Apart from the PSNP and Community Based Nutrition programme EKN's development oriented programming and The Hague's HA programming has very limited practical and concrete links." In the words of one of the former Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) staff involved in programming the "linkage in terms of Linking Relief to Rehabilitation to Development as well as Linking Emergency Aid to Food Security has been a non-issue" and "no adequate attention was given to building resilience".

In South Sudan, "There is no evidence to indicate a conscious effort to align humanitarian and development investments to further the Dutch policy commitment to support resilience and durable

solutions. There are clear opportunities however to develop linkages if the Dutch government chooses to increase its bilateral humanitarian funding outside of the CHF as Dutch development funds already support an array of transitional activities, including through Dutch NGOs and particularly in the food security and livelihoods sector."

The Netherlands has had a particular focus on private sector partnerships as part of the Dutch diamond approach (bringing together governments, NGOs, private sector and knowledge actors). This has been a policy priority in working with WFP and they have helped to broker and develop successful partnerships with TNT, DSM (around fortification) – which has been important to giving body to the WFP nutrition strategy. Last year, at an international conference on nutrition, the Dutch pushed actively on a strong role for the private sector. Country-level examples and analysis from the country case studies are below in Section 4.2.

The case study concludes that the relationship between humanitarian and development funding streams and institutions could be considerably improved. There is a perceived lack of clarity in terms of expectations and responsibilities for embassy staff to feed into decision-making and to monitor partners funded through the humanitarian budget. In addition, case study notes a lack of coordination across humanitarian and development prioritisation and decision-making which limits opportunities to advance shared policy objectives, notably around resilience and support to transition and durable solutions.

3.5.5.2 Accountability to disaster-affected populations

Accountability to disaster-affected populations features in the 2011 policy which includes a commitment that, "the Netherlands will make humanitarian organisations more accountable for their communications with aid recipients" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands 2011). However, without earmarking of funding to particular initiatives it is hard to trace whether or not this has been achieved. Agencies that the

Netherlands funds have clearly been investing in efforts to increase accountability towards affected populations and there a number of initiatives in this area. It did not, however, appear as a particular focus of Dutch influence on the UN agencies it funded.

This is another area where there is potential for joint donor action. Agencies themselves are taking forward their own initiatives on accountability to affected populations but there is also scope for population-wide perception surveys to look across aid providers at questions such as effectiveness and timeliness. This could help to provide the sort of system-wide data and comparisons between different organisations that would enable better judgements about the effectiveness of overall responses and choices between funding channels.

3.5.5.3 Protection

The Dutch fund OCHA, HCR and ICRC and the unearmarked funding enables them to work on their protection-related roles. The Humanitarian Unit argues that they have been trying to raise the priority level of protection within the UN at the normative level. The Netherlands also advocated for the UN to do more with respect to the protection of civilians in South Sudan. The security of aid workers is also a priority issue within the new Relief Fund. However, given the capacity constraints within embassies and the humanitarian unit noted above it is also clear that there are limitations in the Netherlands' ability to strongly advocate around protection issues and that doing so more effectively might require different types of skills and expertise. Recent evidence from L3 emergencies in CAR, Syria and South Sudan suggests that there is scope for greater critical engagement with UNHCR on the extent to which it is fulfilling its mandated protection role.

3.5.5.4 Cross-cutting issues

The fact that the majority of Dutch funding is unearmarked means that it is difficult to make specific judgements about the extent to which Dutch funding is addressing cross-cutting issues with regard to gender, age and disability. The evaluation synthesis finds clear weaknesses in the way in which the main agencies that the Netherlands funds are tackling cross-

cutting issues. Given this, there is perhaps a need for this to be more of a focus in engagement with the organisations that the Netherlands funds. For example, in influencing the organisations that the Netherlands funds to collect better gender, age and disability disaggregated data and invest in the analysis of this data to improve the quality and effectiveness of how humanitarian action tackles these cross-cutting issues (Mazurana et al. 2011)

3.6 Conclusions: Netherlands' humanitarian policy

The Netherlands humanitarian policy represents a clear step forward in addressing the call for a consolidated set of strategies. It is limited, however, in that the commitments it contains could be more specific, and it lacks a clear roll-out plan, implementation plan and monitoring framework. Dutch humanitarian funding is valued by the main partners that it funds. The fact that it is unearmarked, reliable and flexible is very important in enabling organisations to respond effectively and impartially and to invest in improved performance. The counterpoint to this "hand-off" approach is a belief, shared by some staff in the Ministry, that the performance of the UN agencies, in general and specifically in respect of monitoring and evaluation, is uneven and that support could be more critical.

There was also recognition that the UN had become overly dominant as a funding channel (and this is borne out by comparison with donors of a similar size). The new Relief Fund, among other funding channels, was seen as a way of redressing this balance to a certain extent. There is no real basis, however, on which to judge the comparative effectiveness or efficiency of the range of funding channels available, leaving room for criticism of bias. In this light, the tying of funding almost exclusively to Dutch NGOs could be viewed as problematic. The desire to maintain the connection between Dutch citizens and humanitarian action,

especially by those NGOs with a genuine constituency in the Netherlands, is valid. In purely operational terms, however, it is harder to make the case that that any value is added by using solely Dutch NGOs as a channel. An initial impression of the working of the Relief Fund in South Sudan, as well as the policy exception for INGOs working cross border into Syria, finds no added value in the coordination arrangements between federated INGOs which received funding through their Netherlands- based offices or partners. Overall, there is a need for greater transparency in the selection of funding channels.

The fact that humanitarian funding was able to be maintained during a period of government cuts is a clear achievement and the announcement of additional funds through the new Relief Fund means that it will start to grow in the coming years. Funding levels in 2012 and 2013 fall well below the 10% of ODA target, however. Given the current burden of humanitarian crises this is clearly welcome.

Notwithstanding positive views of the constructively critical and supportive role of Dutch humanitarian staff overall, there has been a shortfall in staff capacity in both sheer numbers and experience in humanitarian affairs (notably field experience). The burden of a challenging humanitarian portfolio; the need to invest in relationships with multiple partners (including other departments); as well as the added burden of ensuring better alignment in policy and practical terms between humanitarian and other types of action requires greater capacity.

4: Assessment of system performance

Section 4 sets out to further address some of the key questions around the efficacy of Dutch policy during the research period, including its contribution to the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and the use of the UN as the principle delivery channel. The Netherlands' funding has been channelled principally through UN agencies, pooled funds, the Red Cross, and to a lesser extent INGOs: that is, the core, IASC-led humanitarian system. Although the majority of funding has flowed through UN agencies and the Red Cross, implementation is predominantly undertaken by INGOs and by national NGO partners. While it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the core humanitarian system as detailed in the context section above, this has to be balanced with a recognition of the ongoing, central role of this system, particularly in the chronic crises that dominate the funding flows. Other than for earmarked funding to specifically selected projects, and as noted in the 'evaluability' work undertaken by IOB prior to this review, it is impossible to attribute any specific intervention or impact to the Netherlands' unearmarked funding to the UN (agencies and pooled funds) and the Red Cross. As such, this evaluative section looks at the performance of the whole system, acknowledging that the funding of the Netherlands can claim a proportion of the outputs and outcomes.

The section is broken down into 2 parts:

- Section 4.1 gives an overview of OCHA and INGO led initiatives to improve humanitarian effectiveness, principally the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), the ERC's transformative agenda, and OCHA/IASC led humanitarian financing initiatives. Following on from the policy section and the conclusion that the

Netherlands funding relies on the self-reporting of key partners and the collective accountability, ostensibly strengthened through OCHA and the IASC, Section 4.1 also looks at accountability, monitoring and reporting as a stand-alone theme.

- Section 4.2 synthesises the results of humanitarian evaluations published during the research period and provides an analysis of relevance to the research questions.

4.1 Humanitarian effectiveness

4.1.1 High-level initiatives

The Transformative Agenda: truly transformative?

The ERC's Transformative Agenda (TA) constitutes the central thrust of IASC-led initiatives aimed at improving effectiveness during the research period. The TA was launched in late 2011, following the results of reviews from the Pakistan floods and the Haiti Earthquake. IASC principles, under the leadership of the ERC, "agreed on a set of actions to address acknowledged challenges in leadership and coordination, as well as to enhance accountability for the achievement of collective results" (UNHCR 2013). These actions focused on strengthened leadership (through deployment of experienced humanitarian leadership and strengthening of leadership at all levels of the humanitarian system); improved strategic planning (better defining collective priority objectives and inter-agency strategic planning); and how coordination will support those goals.

During 2012 and early 2013, the TA was seen as being slow to produce tangible results, as progress was visible mainly to those working in and on the set of

relevant IASC consultations. During this period, the TA's 'normative framework' was expanded and strengthened, and protocols disseminated initially in early 2013, and a final set in May 2014, following endorsement by the IASC (OCHA 2014b). The following documents make up the full set of TA protocols:

- Concept paper on 'Empowered Leadership'
- Humanitarian System-Wide Activation: definition and procedures
- Responding to Level 3 Emergencies: What 'Empowered Leadership looks like in practice
- Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level
- Humanitarian Programme Cycle Reference Module Version 1.0
- Accountability to Affected Populations Operational Framework
- Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM) Concept Note
- Common Framework for Preparedness (IASC, 2014a).

Commonly understood to be applicable in L3[40] emergencies, some of these protocols are being applied by OCHA as standard practices for all responses and some are being adapted for use in large-scale slow onset emergencies (OCHA 2014b, Inter-Cluster Coordination Group 2014). Individual UN agencies and some NGOs are taking internal steps to reflect these protocols and guidance. Overall, the TA continues to be viewed as a work in progress, and in general, it remains much more clearly understood by those in headquarters than in the field; and by UN and NGO representatives close to the IASC process rather than those at a distance. Given that a number of the initiatives have gained traction only in 2014 and in L3 emergencies, there is

only limited evidence of the TA's concrete effects within the evaluation data set for this study, but the TA is referenced in appropriate areas (Section 4.2.2).

Interviews, however, show a generally positive perspective on the TA and a reasonably high degree of consistency in perceptions of its progress. As noted above, however, the TA does not go un-criticised. There are a limited number of direct critiques of the TA from the NGO perspective. An ACF International paper (2014) looking at its own relationship with the TA, bemoans that fact that the TA is "a purely UN-driven process, which, at the end of the day, only aims to fix defaults of the coordination system created by the UN". Although the process is led by the IASC rather than UN agencies alone, it is indicative that a very significant NGO states that the TA supports strengthening the IASC-led system, which does not equate to improving truly collective action under the current circumstances. The paper calls for a "cultural shift, i.e. step away from seeking high-profile visibility and competing for funds" and a refocus on the needs of affected populations rather than agencies within the system. It has to be noted, however, that one core component of the TA, the HPC and Strategic Response Plan (below), were both viewed positively in interviews undertaken for this study, including the extent to which SRPs tended to be inclusive of the views of INGOs. A survey undertaken by ICVA in 2014, while having a number of caveats, assessed key components of TA in relatively positive terms from the perspective of INGOs (ICVA 2014b).

TA and leadership: Among interviewees for this study, there was a strong and consistent perception that the TA had assisted in the deployment of stronger leaders, including enforcement of the concept of 'step aside'. In the broader sense, the TA is seen to have been a personal success for the ERC and a positive example of her own leadership. The re-invigorated Emergency Directors Groups is seen by many as playing a strong leadership role in large emergencies although perhaps as less than fully representative by those on the outside.

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle and the Strategic Response Plan: The IASC HPC is an overarching

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[40] The designation of an L3 emergency, in consultation with the IASC Principals, will be issued by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), on the basis of an analysis of 5 criteria: scale, complexity, urgency, capacity, and reputational risk.

framework for the organisation of a humanitarian response, which would normally include the production of an SRP.[41] The HPC and SRP are applicable to all OCHA-coordinated disaster responses (i.e. not limited to L3 disasters) but encompass strengthened coordination elements (such as empowered leadership and IARRM) during L3s. The HPC[42] reinforces existing concepts: preparedness for disasters (including the integration of disaster planning in development work); the development of a sound information base (towards evidence-based decision making); early objective setting and a response built around those objectives; strong and accountable leadership and excellent coordination; field based decision-making (as close as possible to affected populations; working with and taking head of national and local authorities, and national NGOs and people affected by the crisis; a sound monitoring framework (IASC, 2013a).

As noted above (Section 2), many innovations within the humanitarian system are seen as having been 'captured' by the agendas of large agencies: innovation, but without a transformative effect on collective action. Results from the TA have been seen as positive, with varying perspectives on the extent to which this represents transformation. This question is possibly moot, but the following points seem especially worthy of note.

The implementation of the HPC and SRP are seen as having success beyond re-invigorating existing concepts. Both UN staff and NGOs interviewed described the initiatives clearly as "more than a re-arrangement of existing processes". Self-evidently,

the HPC and SRP processes tend to be viewed as most successful in countries with strong HCs and strong OCHA offices. They are seen as successfully placing a much greater emphasis on the use of evidence (albeit of variable quality) and consensus around priorities and targeting (including the use of 'heat-mapping').

From the global perspective, the switch from CAPs to SRPs is seen as overcoming acknowledged issues with the CAP system. Directly linked to the heightened emphasis on sovereignty (highlighted in the context section), there has been an apparently increasing reluctance among middle-income countries to appeal for aid (and to be seen to be appealing for aid) according to the established system under the key UN Resolution 46/182. The SRP in its construction and its 'branding' is less visibly a 'UN and partners document' and is more easily adapted to context: i.e. it is seen as being more inclusive of government participation (and less challenging to it) where these conditions allow. Colombia is seen as one example where a very strong and capable Government had previously declined to participate in a CAP process. More recently it has taken part very constructively in a planning process which is much more visibly 'joint'. This process is seen as having led to better division of labour and prioritisation; that the process has not led to an internationally launched appeal is largely irrelevant to those participating. It is important to note that the HPC process, at least in concept, goes some way towards allowing engagement with national government and national response mechanisms: i.e. it makes a genuine step, albeit from the perspective of the core humanitarian system, in the direction of inter-operability.

TA and accountability to affected populations: Accountability to affected populations is generally perceived to be the weak link in the TA. One UN staff member noted that part of the SRP process was the publication of an explicitly joined up analysis and prioritisation, against which programme choices could be viewed. In and of itself, therefore, the SRP was an exercise in joint accountability.

[41] In that it describes the collective response, the SRP has effectively replaced the CAP. Since the 'CAP process' included the needs assessment and resource mobilisation, which are separate elements of the HPC, there is some confusion between HPC and SRP amongst those who are not using them regularly, and the terms are often used synonymously.

[42] Humanitarian Programme Cycle Reference Module Version 1.0 (yet to be endorsed by the IASC principles)

Quality and standardisation initiatives

Three dominant, INGO-led quality and standards initiatives – SPHERE, HAP and People in Aid – came together for approximately two years under the Joint Standards Initiatives, expressing a shared commitment to improving the quality of humanitarian assistance. The original meeting of the initiatives acknowledged that the proliferation of standards, led to an overly complex set of standards, potentially reducing uptake and, by extension, quality (Core Humanitarian Standard, 2015). The aim of JSI was the creation of a verifiable core standard to address these concerns. For the past two years, JSI has been central to the future thinking of the three concerned initiatives and it culminated in the Humanitarian Standards Forum in Geneva in June of 2013 as well as a large-scale stakeholder consultation (and subsequent report) (Austin & O'Neill, 2013).

The Geneva Forum drew on the JSI consultation paper in setting out the current state of play for the Initiatives. In summary:

- "Standards are well known and used by a majority of the traditional international humanitarian actors, but further awareness raising and training needed – especially because awareness of standards is significantly lower amongst national and smaller NGOs compared to larger agencies.
- Language and terminology hinder access to standards compounded by lack of common terminology and structure within the texts of the three standards.
- A lack of systematic presence and uniform support from Q&A initiatives impedes implementation
- No clear consensus on the best approach for verifying compliance – internal and mandatory approaches were favoured – but a desire that verification should be about enabling and learning rather than punishment
- Broad consensus seen for action on greater awareness, dissemination and training."

The consultation paper concludes with ten recommendations, which collectively focus in two areas: the need to harmonise and consolidate standards, including texts and concepts, and avoiding overlaps and duplication; the need to place the views of affected people and humanitarian principles as the foundations of any initiative going forward (Core Humanitarian Standard, 2014a).

On this basis, one key outcome of the Geneva meeting was agreement to work towards a common Core Humanitarian Standard – "An organisational level standard that will ensure the humanitarian sector is more accountable to affected populations and that organisations are more effective". The idea, in essence, was to continue the drive of the JSI without the 'joint' branding, a commitment by the three initiatives to continue to forge consensus on a uniformly applicable and inclusive standard, which would: "replace the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management, the People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel and the Core Standards section of the Sphere Handbook" (Core Humanitarian Standard, 2014a). At the time of writing, the "Core Humanitarian Standard" had recently been launched in three languages, too early to assess take-up or application. The launch report for the Core Standard (Core Humanitarian Standard, 2014b) reveals optimism about the potential of the standard, and a residual tension around the issue of certification.[43]

4.1.2 Humanitarian financing initiatives

The Netherlands has been a key supporter of humanitarian pooled funding initiatives since their inception, and is one of the key donors to such pooled mechanisms in a number of contexts. The generic term 'humanitarian pooled funds' refers to un-earmarked, multi-donor contributions placed at the disposal of the HC (country level) or ERC (global

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[43] The report recognised that standards, especially certified standards, could serve to exclude emerging actors, rather than encourage them, if used incorrectly.

level). These initiatives pre-date the humanitarian reform agenda but were strengthened significantly during this period (2005-2006), which saw the introduction of Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs) and a revitalised and expanded CERF.[44] En-masse, the Funds had the aim of improving financing flows for humanitarian action, and re-enforcing other reform initiatives, not least by attempting to support leadership, strategy and prioritisation at the field level. Pooled Funds have been extensively reviewed and evaluated, although almost exclusively in terms of process. The focus on process comes from an inability of the Funds to measure and/or attribute the impact (individually or collectively) of a set of partial funding 'packets' within larger humanitarian programmes or responses; it also stems from the fact that the UN agencies participating in pooled funds have upheld the argument that collective accountability at the country level cuts across their primary, vertical accountability channels which allow them to report in aggregate at the global level.

4.1.2.1 Have Pooled Funds contributed to humanitarian effectiveness?

Pooled Funds have played a mutually re-enforcing role for strong leaders and adequately resourced coordination structures. The last major evaluation of CHFs concluded that they have "contributed to improvements in the humanitarian community's ability to address critical humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner". This finding is typical of country-based pooled fund evaluations, which show that country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) have a mutually reinforcing effect on coordination and leadership in countries, i.e. they have proven their worth in countries with effective Humanitarian Coordinators and strong OCHA offices and an adequate base of donor support. Typically, smaller CBPFs, especially ERFs, have had a much more

limited influence, but there are examples of positive effects throughout the evaluative material. For example, from Haiti: "The ERRF was strongly considered to have contributed to coordination of the humanitarian response. … Haiti/ERRF alignment within the cluster system enhanced humanitarian coordination: it forced the clusters to take official position on the appropriateness of a proposal and its fit inside the larger strategy of each sector" (Morinière 2011). The CERF has been noted as having a catalytic and positively reinforcing role on leadership (Channel Research 2011). It was also noted as having a positive effect on coordination structures,[45] including increasing interest in coordination where clusters play a role. These effects are noted as being stronger where the CERF has been used in a proactively complementary fashion with a CBPF, such as in DRC.

Findings from the country case studies in South Sudan and Ethiopia support this picture. Ethiopia has long been considered one of the best-performing country based pooled funds, with strong and consistent management on the part of OCHA and the country case study finds that the Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) is well managed, has established highly effective systems for consultation and approval and that "…the HC role appears to have been strengthened by the presence of the HRF" (Universalia 2013). As in other positive evaluations of pooled funds, the Ethiopia case study also finds complementarity between the CERF and the HRF, as well as a contribution to cluster coordination. The South Sudan case study also concludes that "Dutch funds channelled via the CHF can be said to have contributed to a more coordinated and more efficient and effective response to a significant extent" and again, in combination with the CERF and other reform initiatives, to have strengthened cluster coordination[46] and, by extension coordination and the

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[44] The CERF was expanded from a relatively small loan facility to a $500 million maximum.

[45] The CERF was noted as leading to collaborative and inclusive working practices in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, CAR, Guatemala, Kenya, Nepal, OPT, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Somalia.

[46] The South Sudan case study also states that there appears to

joint appeals process. In previous evaluations, these synergies have also been noted in DRC and Pakistan (Featherstone 2011).

There are multiple examples of pooled funds creating operational efficiencies through filling gaps identified via coordinated approaches. In Ethiopia (Universalia 2013), South Sudan and Somalia, pooled funds have been used to fill pipeline gaps[47] and to fund common pipelines for scarce commodities. A recent evaluation of the CERF noted that the Fund tended to be used for joint logistics and humanitarian flight services with cross-agency benefits. NGOs also noted that despite their own critiques of pooled funding, CBPFs have had played "an important balancing function across clusters and addressing underfunding against financing needs", citing the example of how the South Sudan CHF provided 59% of the education cluster's CAP funding requirements in 2012 (Poole, 2014).

Positive influence has also been noted on donor coordination in two ways. Country-level pooled funds, especially when used in conjunction with the CERF, create a block of funding decisions with which other large donors (typically ECHO and USAID) can coordinate, or at the very least de-conflict with their funding portfolios. Advisory boards for country-level funds and CERF have also been noted to serve as coordination platforms for donors.[48] As noted in the Ethiopia case study (see Section 4.2.3), however, the 'turn-key' service provided by the HRF is also seen as reducing the

need for donor engagement. This contradicts an early hope for country-based pooled funds that donor capacity would be retained and diverted to policy concerns and advocacy (Salomons, Van Lith & Vartan 2009).

While the positives of pooled funding instruments are clear, challenges and limitations remain, and these have been laid out with equal consistency.

The challenges inherent in pooled funding: Pooled funds work with and through the collaborative coordination structures of the core IASC-led humanitarian system. HCs and pooled fund managers have to carefully balance directive actions with the need for inclusive, collaborative approaches. There is a clear trade-off between timeliness and inclusivity/transparency. A very typical example of this dilemma is illustrated in the Ethiopia case study for the ERF Global evaluation; "donors and NGOs alike are under the impression that this [allocation] process takes too long," but are simultaneously supportive of the "transparency and rigorous nature of both the cluster and Review Board processes" (Universalia 2013).

Notwithstanding the ways in which pooled funds can be seen as creating efficiencies within humanitarian systems, it has been widely held that 'transaction costs'[49] are increased under pooled funding arrangements (Salomons, Van Lith & Vartan 2009). Rather than concluding concretely that such costs had increased, the initial study on such costs study concluded that the Funds, along with other reform initiatives, altered dynamics within the system, and that the cumulative effects were hard to isolate (Salomons, Van Lith & Vartan 2009). It is clear, however, that a number of issues persist. There is ongoing attention on 'cascading overheads', i.e. the (usually percentage-based) fees which the Funds'

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have been an evolution in terms of cluster participation. While the CHF helped to increase participation, many respondents now state that they are active in the clusters on the basis that they see the benefits of coordination, i.e. they participate whether or not they expect to receive CHF funding.

[47] E.g. "The CHF helped fill critical pipeline gaps, including costs for procurement and transport, and supplied fund to front line work, including field coordination and response capacity, without which the efforts of the cluster would have been severely affected…" (OCHA, 2013b).

[48] South Sudan Country Case Study.

[49] Defined as "the cumulative costs of adapting to, and integrating, the specific characteristics of the humanitarian pooled funds, both in terms of time, energy and money spent, and in terms of opportunities missed" (Salomons, Van Lith & Vartan, 2009).

administrative and management agencies absorb for 'passing through' funding to the ultimate implementers. These agencies undertake a range of functions for the fees charged (some operational, others involve legal and fiduciary functions). Overall, and notably when this involves several layers (i.e. CBPF to UN Agency to INGO, and sometimes onwards to a national NGO (NNGO)), the true costs of multiple transactions (not only in terms of straight overheads but the management of multiple sub-contracting arrangements) remain hidden; there is an ongoing assumption, however, that significant and possibly serious inefficiencies are inbuilt.

Over and above these perceived costs in purely financial terms, the 'quality' of funding which is the product of multiple sub-contracts is open to question. It is reasonable to assume that for every sub-contract, a number of inefficiencies (most notably time-lags) are built in. The most recent CHF evaluation noted a time span of up to six months between initial submission and actual fund disbursement. This was seen to lead to delays and the need for No Cost Extensions (NCEs), especially for NGOs, for whom application procedures are more rigorous (Goyder 2011). It has to be recognised that such delays are more frequent in new Funds and before participating agencies become accustomed to procedures.

It is clear, however, that the shift in costs works clearly in favour of participating donors. As well as the explicit desire to enable decisions to be made by those best placed to understand operation priorities, and to support leadership and coordination, pooled funds offered the implied benefit to donors of devolving the costs of both decision making and contract management. Multiple evaluations have noted the extent to which the CHFs have offered "great savings on transaction costs" for donors (Goyder 2011). The South Sudan Case study notes, however, that non-participating donors who co-finance projects are likely to be "subsidising the real costs of delivering CHF funded projects." NGOs have also frequently raised this same issue from their own perspective. An NGO study of pooled funding

in Somalia and South Sudan described CHFs "as providing 'top-up' funding citing the low level of permissible overhead costs, short implementation period, unpredictability and small grant sizes which mean that co-financing is almost always a pre-requisite for a viable CHF funded programme" (Poole 2014).

The last CHF evaluation also notes a mixed impact on the cluster system; initially bringing more agencies into cluster coordination, but putting additional strain on the cluster lead agencies (Goyder 2011). Non-contributing donors have also questioned the extent to which OCHA and clusters should divert from their core business to act as proxy donors. The Ethiopia Country case study also notes that the HRF is considered to be a relatively expensive way of funding WFP, and that the administrative costs of humanitarian financing are increased unnecessarily in this case. The country case study for the most recent CHF evaluation also noted that in South Sudan, the cost of participation (mainly the cost of permanent representation in Juba) was considered worthwhile for larger agencies that might receive multiple awards, but too much for smaller organisations, which were discouraged from participation.

Overall, it remains clear that there have been savings for participating donors and, as above, positive effects on co-ordinations. It also remains unclear as to whether gains in improved coordination outweigh the additional costs and inefficiencies which could reasonably be attributed to the Funds.

4.1.2.2 Partnerships: Have pooled funds contributed to stronger partnership arrangements with and capacity building for national NGOs?

Pooled funds appear to present an option to strengthen linkages with national NGOs, albeit at a limited scale in global terms, due to the relatively small number of country based funds. (Poole 2013). Ultimately, it remains the case that a relatively small proportion of pooled funding finds its way to national NGOs, either directly or through pass-through arrangements (Poole 2013). Direct funding to NNGOs has been most evident where INGOs have been unable to maintain access, for example in Somalia. The Ethiopia HRF provides a case in point:

the HRF is one of the most highly regarded CBPFs (and in a context where it remains relatively easy for INGOs to implement directly); while positively evaluated overall, has received relatively poor ratings in its ability to pass funds to national actors. The Ethiopia Country Case Study notes that the HRF has poor partnership linkages to NNGOs and that "national NGOs have access to HRF funding only when partnered with accredited INGOs." The country case study notes that changes/exceptions have been recently made, notably for the Tigray region,[50] where access is challenging for internationals national actors. The Somalia CHF has been a stand-out case for the inclusion of NNGOs, again in the absence of access for internationals.

There are clear signs, however, that access for NNGOs is being increasingly considered as a core function for CBPFs. OCHA's latest Global Guidance states a clear "commitment to strengthening partnerships with national actors" and notes the strengths of some NNGOs, specifically in terms of knowledge of local contexts, languages and cultures and proximity to local populations (OCHA 2015). Previous evaluations of pooled funds have noted the value in funding NNGOs: e.g. "Donor agencies considered the ERF's ability to fund smaller and nimble national and local NGOs a particular strength as many of these organisations were beyond the reach of bilateral funding agreements" (Featherstone 2011). The Syria country case study notes that for cross-border operations from Turkey, funding to Syrian NGOs from the nascent Humanitarian Response Fund has become a key concern. This has to placed, however, in the context of an absence of access for internationals. As also noted in South Sudan,[51] OCHA in Turkey

has also undertaken dedicated capacity-building workshops for new and existing partners, with sessions dedicated to Syrian NGOS. Clusters in South Sudan also noted investments in time, supporting national NGOs with the development of proposals. Specifically looking to build capacity in protection, the protection cluster stated an explicit commitment to support the development of the capacity of national civil society actors, including establishing a 'mentorship system' and prioritising access to CHF funding. This included voluntary cost cutting by UN agencies to enable re-allocation to national actors. The South Sudan country case study also notes that the CHF has made positive efforts in this direction, in that the CHF "specifically provides funding opportunities to national NGOs (with some room for improvement in terms of level of inclusion)."

Notwithstanding what is clearly positive intent on the part of OCHA, it is probably fair to say that in respect of access to pooled funds, the processes continue to favour larger organisations (Poole 2013). Whether or not pooled funding is involved, there remain significant barriers to access to cluster coordination for national NGOs. Coordination meetings dominated by English speakers, with a resultant lack of participation by national actors, is a frequent finding of humanitarian evaluations (Poole 2013), and this was evident in Turkey. Over and above the language of coordination, Syrian NGOs, including those with highly educated, English-speaking staff, noted significant challenges in understanding and adopting the norms of business in the humanitarian system. A number of reports have noted the difficulties in engagement in coordination for national actors due to the language barrier. The South Sudan country case study also noted that for smaller actors, the costs of representation in Juba for the purpose of participating in coordination related to pooled funding was prohibitive. As noted for INGOs, the need to have complementary funding for projects was also a

[50] "In 2014 HRF has offered REST direct access to the Fund as part of HRF's strategy to expand its presence into Tigray Region."

[51] Based on the CHF Cluster Consultations and Peer Review Meetings Allocation Report for the Protection Cluster in South Sudan for the second standard CHF allocation in 2013.

significant challenge.[52]

Limitations: Pooled funds have proved themselves to be useful but limited instruments. Pooled funds have been shown to play a limited role in the critical area of disaster risk reduction, most notably in disaster preparedness activities (such as stockpiling – Kellet & Peters 2014). Understandably, there has been a drive to use these funds, especially larger CBPFs, for disaster preparedness, and resilience building has been recommended. Ultimately, however, they are unlikely to provide central pillars in such initiatives for two principal reasons:

- One pre-requisite for a CBPF is the presence of OCHA. The presence of OCHA is similarly predicated on their being an ongoing disaster, not a high level of disaster risk. As such, CBPFs could not logically expanded to many high-risk environments.
- CBPFs fluctuate in size during their annual cycles and in the course of their existence; similarly levels of need in any CBPF country fluctuate. When the level of funding decreases in proportion to the level of need, "there is a clear tendency, acknowledged by donors as appropriate, for them to re-prioritise in such a way that narrows their purpose towards acute needs" (Taylor 2014). A similar effect can be noted for humanitarian funding globally. Simply put, CBPFs are unlikely to provide funding of the consistency required for capacity and/or resilience building. The Ethiopia Country Case study notes that the HRF engages in resilience work only when there is a 'surplus' of funding; this is a common finding of pooled funding evaluations.

4.1.2.3 Monitoring and evaluation

As noted in Section 3, one of the four key goals of Netherlands' policy focuses on ensuring adequate

accountability for humanitarian action funded by the Netherlands. Accountability is both towards affected populations and to the Dutch taxpayers/public in the form of clarity on results and assurances on abuse and corruption – while all recognising the need to avoid stifling levels of bureaucracy. In keeping with its multilateral stance, the Netherlands accepts global reports from UN agencies and the Red Cross for non-earmarked contributions; in addition to audit reports and participation in the respective Governance Boards and Executive Committee meetings. The lack of specific reporting at country, programme or project level is accepted as a trade-off for participation in multilateral funding. NGOs are required to submit annual, narrative and financial reporting at the level of the specific projects or programmes supported. UN reporting is considered to be acceptable, yet it represents a significantly lower level of scrutiny than that applied to NGOs at the project level. As noted in Section 2, the perception remains that the relationship between donors and UN agencies around specific results is based on faith. As noted above, the Transformative Agenda reports positive progress against its accountability goals (largely the implementation of the PMRs, OPRs and IASC evaluations), these are not perceived to have made a substantive difference in terms of collective accountability at the system level, and some argue that transparent, system-wide evaluation is weaker as a result.

Pooled funding (CBPFs and CERF) does not fundamentally affect accountability lines for UN agencies in that they retain their agreed reporting lines to the participating donors in each fund via global, aggregated reports. Some additional reporting[53] (narrative and financial) is required at country level in order that HCs and pooled fund managers can make further funding decisions and report to advisory

[52] South Sudan Case Study

[53] The additional reporting requirements at country level (or to the CERF Secretariat) (over and above the need to apply for funding at the project level – rather than acceptance of most agencies programme based approach.

boards (including the CERF advisory group at the global level). CBPFs alter the routing of accountability for INGOs, but again do not alter the system fundamentally. In each CBPF, the UN body undertaking the Management Agent (MA) function (either OCHA or UNDP), takes on fiduciary responsibility for all the NGO projects under its remit (including an audit function for all partners). Donors have devolved management responsibility to the MA of each respective Fund, project level reporting is now standardised and gathered by the Management Agent as opposed to the donor, and results reported in aggregate. This causes a problem for donors who need to quantify the outputs and results of their funding and now have to take a credit for a portion of total outputs.

Have pooled funds contributed to an increase in collective accountability?

Each CBPF, and the overall policy guidance, has grappled with the question of how to effectively monitor project implementation, and the extent to which they should do so. In the original conceptualisation of CBPFs it was recognised that neither UNDP nor OCHA had the field presence to undertake systematic project monitoring. It has been argued that in terms of project monitoring, standards requested of pooled funds are often higher than they had previously managed in bilateral funding arrangements. UN agencies that manage pass-through contracts are better placed to do so, but only in scenarios where they have consistent access themselves. Arrangements for project monitoring vary from country to country, and there have been a number of innovations. In DRC, dedicated capacity for project monitoring was installed in the Joint Pooled Fund Unit, with UNDP contract staff visiting a fixed percentage of project and undertaking a non-technical progress review. Other Funds have placed responsibility with clusters, with varying degrees of success, given that clusters were not designed with this specific

function in mind, nor capacity to carry it out. South Sudan is one example of a Fund where dedicated capacity has been added to undertake the function.[54] The HRF in Ethiopia has trialled peer-to-peer monitoring as well as an expanded accountability framework.

Overall, however, there remains a perception that monitoring and evaluation systems are weak. A new evaluation of CBPFs was underway during the drafting of this report. The last CHF evaluation is dated but lays out a number of weaknesses in project monitoring[55] and also brings up the long standing issue of value for money in the MA function: "given the number of projects, especially in the DRC and Sudan it is very difficult for OCHA, UNDP, and the Joint PF Unit staff in the DRC, as well as clusters to continue to cope with such an ever increasing workload… UNDP has worked hard to improve its performance as Managing Agent (MA) for NGO recipients, but is still not able to offer a comprehensive monitoring service to justify what it charges for this MA function" (Goyder 2011).

Again it is important to recognise that part of this perceived weakness is due to the inability of pooled funds to overcome pre-existing weaknesses. As noted, the Somalia CHF, in relative terms, has delivered extensively through NNGOs. The Office of Internal Oversight Services' (OIOS) audit of OCHA's role as the Fund manager in Somalia found it lacking in its ability to manage the risks associated with the funding of national actors in Somalia (Office of Internal Oversight Services 2014). In reality, donors funding such action bilaterally face exactly the same challenge,

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54 "The fund piloted innovative M&R arrangements in 2013. The placement of M&R specialists with clusters enhanced oversight of CHF-funded projects and reinforced clusters' capacity to monitor and report on the overall response in their sectors. The M&R mechanism also helped new funding allocations to best meet beneficiaries' needs." From CHF South Sudan – Annual Report 2013 (OCHA, 2013)

55 For example: "Monitoring and evaluation is overall very weak. At the time of the evaluation, current structures were considered inadequate to carry out these functions."

given the lack of access for staff undertaking traditional monitoring. Pooled funds can move the problem of risk management from donors by one degree but are no more capable of solving the underlying problem.

It is also clear that pooled funds have not lived up to any original expectation that they, in combination with other reform initiatives, could add to collective accountability. At least in part, this can be attributed to the fact that after rounds of reform, the humanitarian system remains fundamentally unaltered in the way that accountability flows. The HC function has received increasing attention (and arguably increased levels of responsibility), but in their role as heads of CBPFs and CERF processes, they continue to have no accountability for the money. The following section looks at the treatment of collective accountability under the Transformative Agenda.

Has the Transformative Agenda improved monitoring, evaluation and collective accountability?

Collective accountability (as well as accountability to affected populations) is seen to be an ongoing weakness within the TA. The most striking limitation in attempting to assess the performance of the IASC-led humanitarian system between 2012 and 2014 via evaluations is the paucity of public system-wide evaluations at the 'whole of response' level.

In keeping with the HPC, an ex-post evaluation of the Philippines response, carried out under the auspices of the IASC, was released towards the end of the research period. An 'independent' evaluation of the UNHCR response to the Syria crisis was released during the final drafting. Also in keeping with the HPC, independent, public real-time evaluations have been replaced by internal 'Operational Peer Reviews' (OPRs) and a series of updates Periodic Monitoring Reports (PMRs). Within the Transformative Agenda progress review, accountability is gauged as being on track due to the successful roll-out of these tools. These are undertaken by a team of known evaluators within the UN System, and the results are available to

IASC members but not publically released nor available for citation. OPRs are understood to be effective learning tools and have been well received by UN agencies. They are kept as internal documents to encourage candour in responding agencies and to overcome the sense of resistance and inertia that dogged RTEs (RTEs being perceived as overly 'heavy', often too late to have a real learning impact, and subject to resistance from operational agencies).[56] The fact that they are not publicly available, however, leaves a significant public accountability gap. Although some contexts (e.g. the Philippines) have been relatively heavily evaluated, others, notably the response in Central African Republic, have not. The research team failed to find a single published evaluation of the response in CAR, leaving the OPR as a single and valuable source of evidence on system-wide performance.

As noted above in Section 2, significant strides have been made in reporting and, via a range of information management tools and platforms, there is an unprecedented level of publically available reporting on individual projects, cluster activities, programme outputs and meeting minutes. This holds for OCHA-led responses and notably the UNHCR-led Syria sub-regional response. It is perverse that as the volume of disaggregated information increases, it becomes no easier, and arguably harder, to pull together a consolidated picture. OCHA currently sees its role as aggregating agency monitoring and reporting, not as facilitating independent verification, triangulation or analysis. So any progress made within the TA or any internal IASC initiative is ultimately unlikely to provide the independent, critical and rigorous analysis that is needed to enable more robust accountability at field level.

Accepting that collective accountability remains weak across the system, it is worthy of note that two of the Netherlands' key humanitarian partners, WFP and

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[56] Interview with UN staff.

UNHCR have recently had their own evaluation capacity reviewed. The WFP report is largely positive, noting strong internal support for evaluation, and significant progress linked to the approval of an evaluation policy in 2008 and a monitoring and evaluation strategy in 2012, which formalised a balanced evaluation portfolio and built in safeguards for independence. These findings are backed up by the set of evaluations synthesised for this study, in which WFP featured prominently (number) and the evaluations were of a consistently high quality and self-critical. While noting that the evaluation section in UNHCR had made a positive contribution with a limited mandate and resources, the review of UNHCR's evaluation function was less positive overall. Critical points included, "insufficient evaluation of UNHCR performance and impact in respect of all aspects of its mandate, including both its protection and programme work, with little evaluative evidence available for strategic decision-making" (Office of Internal Oversight Services 2013) The report also notes that the evaluation function of UNHCR "has limited independence", linked to the fact that evaluation is undertaken within a broader section which also undertakes policy development and research, leading to potential conflicts of interest. A lack of proper follow-up process was also noted.

Netherlands' embassies' capacity to participate in monitoring and evaluation

One strand of the Netherlands' monitoring capacity is that of the staff in the respective embassies. As noted above (Section 3.5), staff in The Hague were aware of severe capacity constraints in this respect, and this view is largely borne out in the country case studies.

In Ethiopia, it was found that monitoring and follow-up of direct humanitarian funding to agencies like WFP and OCHA is limited, and to a significant degree based on 'trust'. This was noted as a result of the Ministry's limited technical capacity as well as human resource constraints. A lack of follow up and monitoring of food security and nutrition programmes was noted in general (related to the

Productive Safety Net Programme and Community Based Nutrition). Staff were perceived to be overburdened by a wide project portfolio, primarily targeted towards "surplus producing areas (non-food insecure highland areas)." The study also quotes OCHA as accepting that the success of the HRF had been such that donors had engaged less rather than more in offering "turn-key solutions in addressing humanitarian emergency needs". Perceived consequences on the part of the Netherlands were a lack of:

- "active monitoring of the HRF; no field visits were undertaken and important donor meetings were often attended by interns (students) rather than by key Dutch Embassy staff;
- critical awareness of the local context and the strategic nature of HRF's emergency aid priorities, and;
- institutional memory about the performance and HRF's strategic role in Ethiopia."

The South Sudan Study found relatively strong capacity for advocacy and engagement of issues related to principled humanitarian action, although humanitarian work was not necessarily a technical specialisation or a key part of the professional portfolio of embassy staff. Significant limitations in capacity were noted, however, in respect of policy commitments and monitoring. Consequences included "limited engagement with monitoring the humanitarian portfolio", limited policy engagement and a limited number of partnerships. Although staff were engaged with the CHF, notably in the advisory group, capacity was noted to be less than other participating donors. Part of the remit of the Embassy is to provide analysis and advice to the Dutch Humanitarian Division, Embassy staff are noted as relying on the analysis of other donors since they have little capacity to regularly engage their own analysis of context.

The Syria case study also noted "the absence of dedicated humanitarian monitoring capacities in the Embassies". In Jordan, this was noted as a weakness by donor with in country monitoring capacity, who felt more able to direct earmarked funding and achieve

greater accountability as a result.

Summary: High level initiatives and pooled funds

The TA follows on from and deepens the set of reforms initiated under the humanitarian reform agenda which originated in the mid 2000s. There is little concrete evidence of the effects of the TA, simply by virtue of the timing of the reforms in relation to this study, but perceptions are largely positive to date, especially around leadership and the revised HPC and the SRP. Following on from the context section, it can be argued that given the limitations of the IASC-led system in the current political climate, the system is reaching the limit of what can be achieved by iterative, incremental improvements of existing practice. It remains to be seen whether or not the WHS will take on the more challenging and deep-seated systemic issues. The new HPC and SRP do appear to go beyond this critique, in that they are seen as initiatives which offer at least a partial solution to one key problem – that of addressing the power differential between the UN-led system and governments of affected states built into the appeal system as defined by UN resolution 46 / 1982. As with the World Humanitarian Summit, it is too early to judge the potential effect of the core humanitarian standard. Undoubtedly SPHERE and the other INGO standards initiatives continue to facilitate healthy reflection in the INGO community. Given a lack of emphasis in evaluations on these initiatives, however, the outcomes in terms of behaviour change by implementers is impossible to assess.

Evidence from multiple evaluations of pooled humanitarian financing instruments vindicates their use as one central funding channel for the Netherlands. Their positive and mutually reinforcing effects of coordination and leadership, however, have to be seen in light of their ongoing challenges and acknowledged limitations. Challenges can be expressed in terms of acknowledged trade-offs: transparency and inclusivity are traded for timeliness; cost efficiency for participating donors is arguably traded for a collectively greater set of inefficiencies for operating agencies and

implementers, an almost certainly creates additional costs for non-participating donors. Although there is positive progress, pooled funds do not provide a silver bullet for the challenge of passing money to national NGOs, and they are ill suited as funding conduits for resilience and capacity building.

As noted in Section 3, the Netherlands relies heavily on trust in the UN system in respect of its funding decisions. A brief review of effectiveness initiatives finds that accountability, most notably collective accountability and accountability to affected populations, remain universally perceived as weaknesses. Neither pooled funds nor the TA have made a significant impact, largely as a result of the UN agencies ability to sustain the argument that their direct, vertical accountability to donors should continue to be the principle accountability chain. Donors' collective acceptance of this standard maintains the status quo. The evaluation set, below, bears out the view that WFP has a positive attitude towards evaluation (as do ECHO and UNICEF). The country case studies confirm the view from the Hague (Section 3), that capacity in the field is inadequate to play a significant role in following up humanitarian projects, or at the very least does not choose to prioritise this activity.

4.2 Evaluation findings: themes in effectiveness

This section considers what can be learned from the available set of evaluation reports on the effectiveness of HA. As far as possible, this section refers to OECD DAC evaluation criteria and their standard definitions, listed in Annex 3. As noted in the methodology and limitations sections above, evaluations are not carried out consistently across humanitarian operations. In keeping with aid volumes in general, responses to chronic/cyclical disasters dominated the evaluation set, but system-wide evaluations were only available for the 'L3' disasters and some of these internal to IASC agencies. A number of other large, chronic crises are under-evaluated. These include Sudan, DRC,

Yemen, South Sudan and CAR. For CAR, the UN's internal Operational Peer Review (OPR) is the only available evaluation, and offers a snapshot of system-wide performance at a point shortly after the declaration of the L3 emergency. The OPR from South Sudan offers a snapshot at a similar point in the response, and is complemented by only 3 other project evaluations. Yemen has a single evaluation (a joint NGO response programme). Perhaps by nature of the duration of the crises and a certain amount of fatigue around evaluations, DRC and Sudan also have a very small set of evaluations. By contrast, and given the ease of access and ongoing attention on the context, there is a wide range of evaluative material on the response to the Philippines. Beyond the Philippines, however, there is a very limited evaluation set in this category, and no system-wide evaluations. As such, there is insufficient evidence on which to make an analysis of effectiveness, including coordination and leadership, or timeliness.

In keeping with the emphasis of the Netherlands' policy, the key research questions and the context section, this section gives an overview of themes related to 'effectiveness'[57] (including leadership, coordination and timeliness) in both rapid onset and chronic disasters, *in cases where there system-level evaluation allows conclusions to be drawn*. For the response in the Philippines, given the emphasis placed on national systems throughout the context section, there is an additional examination of 'connectedness'. Given the central emphasis in the Netherlands' policy on 'efficiency', this criterion is examined in chronic crises. In both rapid and chronic responses, other evaluation criteria are examined in summary, and only where there is specific relevance to the research questions.

As noted in the methodology section, the categorisation 'rapid' is applied to the response,

rather than the backdrop against which the response occurred; for example, in Ethiopia, evaluations of responses to specific events (such as a rapid influx of refugees from South Sudan) are included in this section. Most, however, are in response to natural disasters. Overall, a number of common themes emerge in respect of other evaluation criteria.

4.2.1 What assessment can be made of humanitarian assistance in acute crises?

This section synthesises evaluations of responses to rapid onset crises, in which the response to Typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Yolanda) in the Philippines is clearly the standout event. In total, 27 evaluations looked at disaster responses classified as 'acute', i.e. responses to disasters primarily categorised as requiring a rapid response (such as extreme weather events, or rapid responses to events within ongoing responses to conflict or other complex crises). Other than evaluations of the response to Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in the Philippines, there is a limited set of evaluations, and no system-wide evaluation beyond the IASC ex-post evaluation of the Haiyan response. For this reason, the response to Haiyan is treated separately.

In keeping with the research question as posed, the analysis looks at the specified range of evaluation criteria of effectiveness, timeliness and coverage. As detailed in the context section above, however, the review team takes the view that 'connectedness' – i.e. effective linkages with other response systems, including those of the host government, national civil society and military responses – are of critical importance. The IASC review itself notes the extent to which the evaluation of humanitarian action through the UN-led system itself provides only a partial picture: the "extent to which the inter-agency response contributed to the overall results is difficult to assess in the absence of more data on assistance outside of the inter-agency coordinated system" (Hanley et al. 2014). 'Connectedness' in the sense of linkages to risk reduction, recovery and development programming is also considered.

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[57] See Annex 3 for the definitions of the DAC criteria

4.2.1.1 Response to the effects of Super Typhoon Haiyan

The Philippines provided a challenging physical environment for a rapid and large-scale humanitarian response; the area affected by Super-Typhoon Haiyan covered a number of regions and individual islands, and resulted in significant communication and logistical challenges for both assessment and response. That said, the political environment and potential for full collaboration with national systems was very positive, and described in the IASC evaluation as enabling. The Government of the Philippines had significant standing national disaster response capacity in The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council and had been actively engaged (both internally and with international partners), in a range of disaster preparedness programmes.

Effectiveness overview

Multiple response mechanisms were triggered and it is widely perceived that the overall response was timely and at scale. Response arrived in the form of: bilateral assistance from a number of countries; military assets and equipment from several countries; a huge inflow of remittances and direct support for local groups; and support through the international aid system. As above, it is important to note that the totality of this assistance is not recorded in evaluations of international action. Appropriate emphasis was placed on "key risks such as communicable disease outbreaks, food insecurity, lack of clean water, emergency shelter and protection" (Hanley et al. 2014).

Timeliness, meeting immediate needs, coverage

Evaluations of actors within the core humanitarian system found that on balance, their responses were timely and appropriately targeted to immediate needs. The IAHE found "timely support for immediate needs" overall (Hanley et al. 2014). INGO evaluations (including ACF, World Vision, Care and ACTED) and that of IFRC found responses to be timely overall. UNICEF's evaluation noted timely responses in a number of key areas, supporting the picture of a strong response overall,

and it also suggested improvements for future interventions in WASH and cash, noting that the latter was a relatively new delivery modality.

Evaluations also found levels of coverage to be adequate overall. The IAHE finds that while coverage could be described as 'uneven' in places, there were "no sustained or significant gaps in coverage." With the repeated caveat that many areas were covered by actors beyond the IASC-coordinated response, multiple evaluations found good coverage of hard-to-reach or inaccessible areas, and only one or two noted significant problems.[58] Evaluations of INGO programmes are similarly positive; ACF and World Vision conclude that their response to Typhoon Haiyan had excellent coverage. IFRC also found their coverage levels to be acceptable. IRC noted challenges in some areas, and attributed these to local politics (International Rescue Committee 2014).

Leadership coordination and connectedness with national systems

Overall, evaluations find that within the international system, *coordination* was effective but that *connectedness* between the core international system and other response structures could and should have been stronger. Within the IASC system, clusters were deemed to be strong overall (less so in livelihoods and early recovery) and initially at least, there was "relatively good alignment between the national and the international cluster systems". OCHA's final PMR response to Typhoon Haiyan found that cluster and coordination capacity was able to scale up quickly (faster than operational capacity and relief supplies – which were slower to be positioned in relative terms) (Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, 2014). In terms of both coordination and leadership, however, it is clear

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[58] UNICEF's evaluation found coverage to be limited, and attributed this to a "lack of partner and government capacity in emergency nutrition as well as weaknesses in UNICEF's own capacities" (UNICEF, 2014). At the four month point, UNICEF also noted that "coverage of the programme was limited … reflecting the difficulties of reaching beyond the urban areas and displaced centres to more remote rural locations."

that international systems overwhelmed national capacity in places. The IAHE notes that 462 surge personnel arrived within three weeks, and that "roles and responsibilities in co-leadership were not clearly defined". Although the Government remained nominally in the lead, leadership and coordination mechanisms took on an 'international feel'. The activation of the 'Level 3' emergency compounded this effect. The IAHE also notes that this led to multiple instances of divergent and duplicative coordination structures; the international system having one set of coordination structures and the Government another.

The response, as noted elsewhere (Featherstone & Antequisa 2014), was seen to miss the opportunity to work with and through national NGOs and civil society. There are positive examples, notably in instances where there were existing partnerships between INGOs and NNGOs. Overall, however, this finding speaks of disconnected responses, and the inability of the core system to include national partners in coordination (the IAHE finds that NNGOs were largely unable or unwilling to join cluster meetings), and the inability of the system to pass funding to national entities at scale. At the time of the response, OCHA came under some pressure to open a pooled fund, acknowledging the need to fund qualified national actors, and without the means to do so. Ultimately, it is hard to see how such a fund could have stepped up operations and selected partners in a rapid enough fashion.[59]

Many reports and evaluations relate to direct implementation by international agencies. As noted below, literature points to an overall failure of engagement with national systems and local actors. It is reasonable to surmise, therefore, that international capacity at times supplanted national capacity. In keeping with the arguments in the context section, it is feasible that some of this

assistance could have been delivered in a fashion which was more efficient, more effective and more in keeping with the needs of affected populations. High rates of coverage, impact and relevance cannot be presumed to represent optimal results.

Haiyan response and the Transformative Agenda

The Philippines response was one of the first scenarios in which some elements of the Transformative Agenda were implemented. As noted above, in interviews generally the TA was widely viewed to have had a reasonably successful 'live-run'. Again recognising that evaluations are largely positive, significant criticisms do emerge. Numerous evaluations on coordinated systems highlight the tension between the interests of individual agencies (UN and INGOs) in defining their own priorities and acting in accordance with a collectively constructed plan. The IAHE reveals predictable tensions, again in respect of leadership and coordination. It notes that the HC and the HCT were seen to be in an "uncomfortable position": on the one hand encouraged to make decisions according the TA's empowered leadership model, and in keeping with the principle of field-led decision making; and on the other hand undermined by "constant attention and direction" from agency headquarters.

The IAHE also notes that multiple components of the HPC were "applied rigorously", and in many cases newly-developed tools were applied for the first time. "Transition planning focused more on coordination structures and less on adjusting the response to meet the rapidly changing needs of the affected population" and "the Strategic Response Plan was produced 30 days after the Typhoon. It was generally informed, or at least validated, by MIRA 1, but did not benefit from a Humanitarian Needs Overview of the depth that is envisaged in the HPC and in the SRP guidance, which clearly and correctly states that 'strategy development follows needs analysis'" (Hanley et al. 2014).

4.2.1.2. Other rapid responses

Relevance and appropriateness

A majority of evaluations found needs assessment, targeting and accountability mechanisms had been

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[59] As per Section 4.1.2 above, this is a standing systemic weakness.

adequately addressed. Examples include NGO evaluations from Pakistan (Ahmed, Malik & Nawab 2012), Haiti (Thizy 2013), Ethiopia (Darcy, Banda & Clifton 2012, de Ville et al. 2012) and India (Álvarez Morán 2012). An evaluation of Oxfam's response to flooding in Mozambique provides a typical example: "Relief provided is appropriate to the context, of a quality and scale that would be expected of Oxfam's capacity, and valued by affected population" (Simpson, Sutton & Ngwenya 2013).

Evaluations continue to show that accountability to affected populations is a challenge. Often, implementers are noted as engaging with affected populations, but struggling to redress complaints and other feedback. In Mozambique, for example, the same Oxfam evaluation noted "a recognised gap in the complaints and feedback mechanism" (Simpson, Sutton, & Ngwenya 2013). Similar issues were noted in Pakistan (Murtaza & Nabi 2012) and Nigeria (Bravo, Ahmed & Fogden 2014). A broader and more systemic gap in communication with affected populations was noted in Mali (Enrico & Solé Arqués 2013).

Connectedness

In keeping with the results for the Philippines, evaluations show mixed results in the ability of international actors to form appropriate partnerships. A number of positive examples arise, often in rapid onset responses that took place in contexts of chronic emergency, i.e. where the international system has a standing presence, for example in Ethiopia (Darcy, Banda & Clifton 2012) and Pakistan (Ahmed, Malik & Nawab 2012, House 2012). Self-evidently, partnerships were noted as strong when this was a central pillar of the programme approach (Simpson, Mooney & Saint 2013).

A number of evaluations noted limitations in partnership arrangements. Although the Haiti earthquake occurred in 2010, prior to this evaluation period, a small number of evaluations looked at the ongoing response in 2012 and beyond. Challenges in connecting with national capacity were noted since the beginning of the response, and were noted as

ongoing in the later stages of the response (Thizy 2013), issues with partnerships and coordination were noted in India (Álvarez Morán 2012) and the Comoros (Rees-Gildea 2013) floods. ECHO's evaluation in Ethiopia also noted the tendency (as in the Philippines) for relationships between international and national partners to be asymmetrical, leading the partners being overwhelmed (de Ville et al. 2012).

Summary: Humanitarian action in rapid onset crises

The response to super-Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines was, by and large, a success story. Although the IASC-led system provided only a proportion of the assistance, it is clear that this was timely, at scale, in keeping with assessed priorities and with reasonably consistent coverage. In keeping with L3 protocols, cluster coordination was scaled up very quickly through a timely surge response. In the context of this largely positive evaluation, questions and criticisms do arise, most notably around the failure of the international system to work in full partnership with national actors. These same criticisms were noted in the Haiti earthquake response, the response to which the Haiyan response is often positively compared, but it has to be recognised that the Philippines offered a very different environment. The relative weight of the international surge, in part driven by the L3 declaration, set up a typically asymmetrical relationship with the Government of the Philippines, a willing and capable partner. Referring back to the context section and recognising the extent to which effectiveness is increasingly seen as contingent on the centrality of the host government, as well as connectedness with national response systems and risk reduction, preparedness and recovery programming, the case for critical reflection is clear.

4.2.2 Humanitarian action in chronic crises

As noted in the Section 2.1, the bulk of humanitarian assistance goes to a relatively small number of countries, year after year. Persistent and cyclical crises persist as a result of a combination of development challenges. These include poverty, cyclical natural hazards and conflict and instability. The case for humanitarian intervention is relatively easy to make in relation to the challenge of tackling underlying and

often intractable political or security problems, and can avoid the problem of having to engage with difficult governments. *The State of the Humanitarian System 2012*, and Section 2 above note the extent to which humanitarian action is playing increasingly wider roles — including supporting securitisation, filling gaps left by development actors and substituting for weak or neglectful host governments. This section looks at large-scale, chronic crises which have been the subject of system-wide reviews or evaluations (including the case studies undertaken for this review), namely Syria and its sub-region, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. As noted above, there was no system-wide evaluation of other major chronic crises (including Sudan and Chad, DRC, Yemen or Afghanistan) during this research period. Much of the attention on these crises is directly linked to recent surges in violence and/or their designation by the ERC as L3 emergencies. It is important to note that all of these are long-standing, conflict-related crises, and that the recent case studies or reviews can capture only a snapshot of the response. In keeping with the OECD DAC evaluation criterion of effectiveness,[60] this section looks at the extent to which *system level* evaluations state that responses have met their overarching objectives, including views on leadership and coordination.

4.2.2.1 Effectiveness overview: OCHA-led responses to large-scale chronic crises with system-wide evaluations

System-wide evaluations (L3 emergencies only) support the views expressed in interviews and literature that leadership in IASC/OCHA-led emergencies has been of an adequate standard, and the same can be said of UNHCR's role in the Syria sub-region. Coordination in the large-scale

emergencies, however, looking at the structures which support the HC in the provision of a cohesive response, received mixed reviews.

Syria

The Syria crisis is now in its fifth year, with no sign of abating and it continues to "inflict an excruciating toll on the country and its citizens". Over and above the high numbers of fatalities and injuries,[61] OCHA estimated in 2014 that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance had grown to 12.2 million,[62] including an estimated 7.6 million IDPs, and with more than 4.8 million people, especially in need as they reside in 287 locations identified as hard-to-reach areas. Given the extraordinary levels of need, Syria has also been designated as an L3 emergency by the ERC. The country case study, which covered the responses in Syria (OCHA led) and the sub-region (UNHCR led), was undertaken in late 2014.

The Syria country case study notes serious concerns about the effectiveness of the humanitarian response in Syria, notably around protection, food and shelter, health and education. Access from Damascus has been and remains limited by the Syrian regime, and an enhanced cross-border response by the UN, following the two relevant Security Council Resolutions, has failed to add significant capacity to the response. Cross-border operations by INGOs (see below), supported by the Netherlands among other donors, have played a significant role in meeting needs in some areas under the relatively stable control of opposition forces and with very high concentrations of IDPs. Overall, however, the case study notes that "from the moment that SHARP was initiated, the UN agencies and their partners have struggled to be responsive to the crisis in ways proportionate to its rapidly

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[60] The definition of the DAC criteria is: "Effectiveness measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Implicit within the criterion of effectiveness is timeliness."

[61] From March 2011 until the end of December 2014 an estimated 212,000 people have been killed. More than 520,000 persons have been wounded or maimed in the conflict (figures from Syria country case study).

[62] Up from one million in June 2012 (figures from Syria country case study).

worsening scope". It cites a lag in requests via the SHARP in comparison to the rise in assessed needs over the period since 2012, and also a large funding deficit.

In the absence of evaluative material, the extent to which needs have been met in Syria can only be estimated from the myriad piecemeal reports and assessments. In late 2013, the SINA listed at length the constraints and challenges to access, and also succinctly: "Overall, assistance was reported to be largely insufficient and irregular, and did not reach all sub-districts or all people within a sub-district …. In an overwhelming 91 per cent of all 111 visited sub-districts, key informants for this assessment considered humanitarian assistance provided in the past 30 days, and across all humanitarian sectors, as 'insufficient' or 'largely insufficient' when compared to humanitarian needs" (Syria Integrated Needs Assessment 2013). The MSNA survey (under production at the time of the research visit) was published in October 2014 (Humanitarian Liaison Group 2014). Overall, the MSNA reports notes some changes from the SINA in the relative severity of the needs and number of affected persons by sector, but "does not remove concerns about the overall inadequateness of humanitarian assistance provided" (Giesen et al. forthcoming). The report notes widely varying coverage, with pockets of relatively secure access close the Turkish border and high coverage for some IDPs; poor coverage in most other areas and the highest needs in "water, Sanitation and Hygiene sector (WASH), followed by the food, non-food Items (NFI), health, and shelter sectors". In Syria, a lack of coverage was noted in relation to a known or projected number of beneficiaries in areas which have not been accessed; other examples occurred in Syria (Save the Children 2014).

There has been no qualitative assessment of coordination from Damascus, which runs along normal IASC lines. Co-ordination between Damascus and Gaziantep in Southern Turkey, prior to UN SC resolutions 2139 and 2165, was limited. OCHA had a limited presence and cross-border coordination managed through the NGO Forum,

borne out of necessity. The signing of the Resolutions at the very least broke down the UN's internal firewalls between Damascus and Turkey (Gaziantep) and allowed OCHA and the clusters to play a more formal role in coordination and needs assessment from Turkey. Following a period of deep mistrust between OCHA and the NGOs in Turkey (ICVA 2014b), and through the installation of a Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator in Gaziantep as part of a larger office, it is possible to say that coordination overall has improved. The SC resolutions have finally enabled a 'whole of Syria approach' which takes a country-wide view of needs and delivery gaps.

South Sudan

South Sudan, both prior to and since its cessation from Sudan, has had been the scene of numerous humanitarian responses, both natural and conflict related, some cyclical and some long standing. Transport and communications infrastructure are notoriously poor, and access to the affected, in the event that a crisis reaches the attention of external aid actors, is extremely challenging.[63] It is logistically extremely difficult and costly to respond to emergencies in the rainy season in many areas. Information about crises does not reach humanitarian actors easily and many crises go undetected or are reported late. Over and above the physical challenges of access, additional difficulties are caused by denial of access, insecurity and bureaucratic impediments; incidents of violence against aid workers were on the rise even before the onset of the current crisis. After the latest outbreak of violence, In February 2014, following the most recent outbreak of violence, the UN's ERC declared South Sudan to be an L3 emergency. 1.9 million people were thought to have been displaced by violence in 2014 and 2.5 million people were projected to face severe food insecurity in the first quarter of 2015. 235,000 children were thought to be suffering from severe acute malnutrition

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[63] The UN estimates that over 60% of the country is inaccessible for over half of the year.

(OCHA, 2014c). The country case study for South Sudan was undertaken in late 2014, with a heavy focus on the CHF and provides the basis for the analysis of the context and the relevance of Dutch policy at this time.

The OPR describes South Sudan as a seemingly strong projection of humanitarian capacity under strong leadership, albeit one in which political constraints, delays in funding, human resources and supplies significantly undermined initial response efforts. At the time of its release, the OPR deemed delivery to be inadequate: "the response requires measures above and beyond what is currently in place" (IASC, 2014b). South Sudan has since long before independence been a perpetual recipient of humanitarian assistance, with the obvious and critical challenge that numerous political shifts and state-building efforts have failed to bring an end to persistent conflict and enable a stable environment in which development could take hold at scale. The inflow of assistance in response to the most recent spike in violence was seen to be too heavily focused on immediate life-saving needs and "undermining overall quality and limiting essential and integrated programming related to psychosocial care, gender-based violence and education in emergencies" (IASC 2014b). Interviews with INGOs at the time pointed to a perceived lack of scale up by the *central system* (notably OCHA, global clusters and logistical support) in support of expanding coverage in accordance with a comprehensive plan (IASC 2014b). The South Sudan case study, undertaken some months later, points to a strengthening of response, in part at least due to the application of key parts of the TA.

In South Sudan, the leadership of the current HC was evaluated very positively. "From the outset, the Humanitarian Coordinator and Humanitarian Country Team commendably set a clear vision and prioritization for the humanitarian response … The leadership model in South Sudan is that of a 'triple hatted' function: the HC is also the RC and Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General. Humanitarians expressed broad appreciation for the HC's vision and leadership of the humanitarian

response and for balancing the role and responsibilities of his 'triple hat' despite initial concerns" (IASC 2014b). The country case study, in keeping with other evaluations, found that the CHF was seen to support the HC. Perhaps more specifically in the context of the most recent upsurge in violence, the effective use of the Fund in responding to the altered situation, "in line with the new priorities identified in the newly developed Crisis Response Plan" was seen as a positive example of leadership. The OPR did, however, note weaknesses in some clusters and in the HCTs relationship to the inter-cluster working group.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic has set the recent benchmark for 'forgotten emergencies' (Smith & Swithern 2013).[64] In March 2013, approximately 42% of the population (1.3 million) were noted as affected by a combination of conflict and natural hazards; with 1.6 million people dire need of protection, food, health, clean water and half a million IDPs, including 180,000 recently displaced (Smith & Swithern 2013). Again projected into a context of political failure, the CAR response was initially deemed an "unacceptable performance" (IASC 2014c), strengthened to a certain extent following the L3 declaration and possibly, at least, preventing a more significant deterioration. The L3 declaration is noted as having improved leadership and staffing capacities (including outside Bangui), and prompted a Rapid Response Mechanism which increased the timelines and flexibility of funding. Specific weakness included a significant delay in the production of a joint needs assessment, leading to a delay in the response – and multiple references to problems with accountability to affected people (AAP) (IASC 2014c).

In CAR, as part of a poorly evaluated response overall,

[64] Smith & Swithern's paper on CAR (2013) quotes Samantha Power on CAR "the worst crisis most people have never heard of" and one of nine crises that featured in the ECHO's Global Vulnerability and Crisis Assessment Final Index 2013/2014.

improvements in leadership were noted following application of the TA protocol: "The declaration of an IASC system-wide level 3 emergency response to the crisis resulted in significant capacity and leadership strengthening. Nevertheless, the response remains insufficient in scale and speed given the magnitude of the needs" (IASC 2014c). It is also noted that the implementation of the TA's 'empowered leadership protocol' was undermined, through a lack of full engagement by members of the HCT and under-strength application of the cluster system (IASC 2014b). The OPR noted a specific problem regarding decisive action around protection (below), access and a lack of collective accountability on the part of the HCT. The L3 declaration is noted as having placed renewed emphasis on coordination through the cluster system. A side effect of this surge however, was an excessive number of meetings which did not play an adequately strategic role but rather served as information sharing events (IASC 2014c).

4.2.2.2 UNHCR in the Syria sub-region

The Syria sub-region is classified as a refugee crisis and led, in accordance with its mandate, by UNHCR. The truly enormous influx of refugees into Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, and to a lesser extent Iraq, has required an equally enormous and challenging scale up of assistance by UNCHR. UNHCR is the key agency is this response, being the key implementer (often in the capacity of donor to INGOs and local NGOs) and the key coordinator. With some very significant caveats, UNHCR is deemed to have performed well overall. The recent independent evaluation found that "qualitative and quantitative evidence illustrates overall satisfaction with UNHCR's effectiveness" and that it had been "effective in how it has met refugees' assistance needs", deploying "resources and people quickly and address[ing] needs despite a highly complex and quickly changing environment" (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming). In Jordan, weaknesses are noted in protection needed; needs beyond camp settings and efficiency is noted as poor. In Lebanon, weaknesses are noted in protection and links with longer-term programming; the risk of slipping

coverage is also noted. The country case study undertaken for this review concurs with the overall positive view of UNHCR's performance as the coordinator and key implementer in the response.

The picture of UNHCR leadership and coordination in the Syria sub-region is largely positive in terms of *internal coordination* i.e. within the programmes and structures that it leads, "[q]ualitative and quantitative evidence indicates that most partners are satisfied with UNHCR Jordan's leadership and with how it co-ordinate activities, shares knowledge and information" (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming). The same is broadly the case in Lebanon: "Overall, the evaluation found that in Lebanon UNHCR attempts to promote partnership to further synergies and avoid duplications, gaps, and resource conflicts" (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming). This positive assessment has to be tempered by an overall negative assessment of UNHCR's ability to work in a complementary fashion with other key actors (notably HCs, OCHA and host governments – see below under 'connectedness'). This assessment is also shared by the Syria country case study for this review.

4.2.2.3 Efficiency

The Netherlands' policy asserts that the rationale for its support to multilateral institutions is the UN's leadership and coordination in terms of driving efficiency through fewer gaps and duplications in delivery. Efficiency was evaluated positively overall.[65] Efficiency gains were noted as a result of coordination and attributed to cash programming. In a number of evaluations, programmes were noted as being efficient as a result of being well established in this category. Notwithstanding this positive lean, a number of consistent and significant efficiency challenges are identified. One set relates to UNHCR's role as a management structure for the refugee response in the Syria sub-region (over and above its mandate and function as coordinator and implementer). Another

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[65] Of the 80 chronic crises evaluations that measured efficiency, 48 were rated as 'good' or 'excellent'; 27 received a 'fair' rating with only 7 measured as 'poor'.

significant theme among evaluations is a wide range of issues related to a consistent set of management challenges: delays in contracting and pass through funding; and slow, inadequate or inappropriate human resources.

Beyond Syria and the sub-region, there are multiple references to efficiency gains through coordination (Noij 2013), including complementary, inter-sector coordination leading to multiplier effects (Truelove & Duncalf 2012), gaps identified and filled via coordinated approaches (de Ville et al. 2013, Herd 2013), and economies of scale through joint procurement practices (Mumford & Singh Khatana 2012). These effects have also been noted in reviews of pooled funding arrangements – notably in Ethiopia and Somalia, where pooled funds have supported joint pipelines and joint logistics creating efficiencies at the system level. Given the long-established nature of many programmes in chronic crises, efficiencies are noted in well managed (Zeng 2013) and frequently evaluated programmes – a case in point being DRC's RRMP.

Both evaluations and literature note improving efficiency within individual agencies and programmes and a result of internal analysis and innovation; for example, WFP's Forward Purchase Facility[66] (FPF) (Poole, forthcoming), the use of vouchers as opposed to in-kind distributions of food, and cash transfers as opposed to vouchers. ECHO's evaluation of cash programming notes the potential for cash to create further efficiency by breaking down vertical, sectoral delivery: "an opportunity for increased coordination and efficiency would be combining the food assistance and RRMP activities … whereby cash and vouchers would not be restricted to food or NFI and rather could be used for either" (Baker et al. 2013).

Evaluations, however, noted significant challenges to efficiency, particularly around multiple aspects of programme management. Notably, these include issues with staffing, contract management and the timeliness of 'pass-through' funding, as well as issues with inappropriate funding modalities (see also relevance/appropriateness). Problems with consistency of staffing[67] are noted as undermining efficiency (Godden 2013), as are slow and/or inconsistent financial flows between headquarters and field operations (Yousif & Thiele 2013). Poor contract management practices and delays between donors and implementers are noted as causes of significant inefficiency (O'Hagan 2014, Bhusal & Salmela-Eckstein 2013, Norwegian Refugee Council 2012). As noted in the 'pooled funding' section above, pass-through times from UN agencies to partners (and by extension to the ultimate recipients) are frequently held up as significant and ongoing challenges for the CERF as well as country-based pooled funds.[68]

Short funding cycles, very low levels of funding and/or inconsistent levels of funding are seen as exacerbating other management-related issues (IASC 2014b, Kuğu & Okşak 2013), for example the requirement to hire and fire more frequently or to procure in smaller quantities more frequently effectively constitutes a reversal of the positive, demonstrated effects of consistent, long-term funding (Cabot Venton et al. 2012). The literature review is clear on the extent to which nationally driven responses are projected to improve the efficiency (including cost efficiency) of responses in the long term. Again, frequent short-term funding cycles, and the lack of access of national actors to funding (see also connectedness), is seen as undermining the potential for efficiency gains (ICAI 2012, Sida, Slim &

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[66] An internal arrangement in WFP which enables "the procurement of food at optimal market conditions and more streamlined and efficient supply of commodities in response to demand" – from Poole (forthcoming).

[67] It is widely, if anecdotally, reported that the current surge in demand has resulted in challenges, especially for INGOs, in maintaining levels of qualified staff. It is, of course, too early for evidence of this effect to appear in evaluations.

[68] An issue recently raised at the CERF advisory board by the Netherlands.

Ovington 2014, UNICEF 2013, Christie et al. 2012).

It is clear from interviews with donors and others in the sub-region that negative views of the role of UNHCR revolved, in a significant measure, around perceptions of its inefficiency as a management vehicle for the majority of projects undertaken in the sub-region. This was evident in donors' push for analysis of unit costings during 2014 and in their desire to have basic service delivery channelled through other mechanisms where possible – to break the cycle of repeated short-term contracts through the RRP structure. The independent evaluation of UNHCR is telling in its analysis of UNHCR's efficiency, but its critique remains slightly opaque. The evaluation (using a traffic light system) rates efficiency as 'orange' – avoiding a 'red' grading only on the basis that the fundamental issues stem from the weakness of HQ systems rather than those in the field. The evaluation points to a "dearth of financial management" and an inability of systems to track flows of money in and out of projects, lacking "the primary circuitry for effective management" and to understand "what is working or not" (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming). The OIOS review of UNHCR's evaluation function also highlights this specific issue, noting that tracking expenditures against results and follow up on poorly performing programmes were areas requiring "continued attention"[69] (Office of Internal Oversight Services 2013). The evaluation also notes that human resources (neither consistency of staffing levels nor the balance of staffing in various locations) was not reviewed as part of the evaluation's take on efficiency. In respect of efficiency, the evaluation recommends a staffing/performance audit and a business efficiency review.

4.2.2.4. Relevance and Appropriateness, Connectedness and coverage

Across the evaluation set, other evaluation criteria were rated positively. This was the case for connectedness,[70] coverage and relevance/appropriateness. In keeping with the overarching questions of the review, the key issue here is whether not these positive ratings constitute evidence of positive performance at the system level, which can be partially attributed to the Netherlands' support for multilateral action.

The positive ratings for connectedness might be seen as at odds with the perceived challenges of linking relief and development and working with government and local partners in the context of complex and often highly political crises. It is important to note, however, that positive evaluations refer to predominantly micro-initiatives: localised efforts to build capacity in national partners (Pantera 2013, Visser et al. 2013); localised preparedness for future shocks (Karlsen 2012); positive communication and joint planning with local government and/or NNGOs (Carter, 2012); or sustainability for community-level projects (Ternstrom Consulting 2013). This focus on micro-level initiatives means that while projects may appear to positively contribute to connectedness through capacity-building initiatives, the localised nature of these activities may not be contributing to sustainable programmes or capacity building which is relevant at the whole-of-system level.

Similarly, positive ratings for relevance refer most often to adequate consultations with populations at the project level (and with significant caveats in some cases), in East Africa (Truelove & Duncalf 2012), Sudan (Yousif & Thiele 2013), the Syrian sub-region (Kuğu & Okşak 2013, Crisp et al. 2013), Afghanistan (Carter, 2012) and Liberia. One evaluation, for example, found that "customisation" of voucher programmes and efforts to re-assess needs on an

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[69] In addition to "more transparent processes to prioritise country level funding allocations and decisions; [and] addressing some limitations on procurement practices."

[70] 36 good, 13 excellent, 20 fair, and 6 poor ratings.

ongoing basis had led to a highly relevant response. Where evaluations found inadequate levels of consultation, a variety of reasons were given. In the case of the South Sudan and CAR, organisations were perceived to have scaled up "standard" life-saving responses, with insufficient time for in-depth consultation and feedback. This phenomenon was seen to contribute to the sense of multiple agencies scaling up individually, and less of a collective and strategic approach (IASC 2014b, 2014c). In Sudan (Darfur), South Sudan and Somalia, evaluations also found the negative influence of 'gatekeepers' (Nyagwambo 2013, WFP 2013a); uncertainty as to the extent that interlocutors genuinely represented the views of their communities (IASC 2014b); and challenges with selection criteria undertaken by communities and resulting 'elite capture'.

Under the heading of relevance (intersecting with the concepts of connectedness and efficiency), multiple evaluations point to the inappropriate use of relief activities, with short 'humanitarian' project cycles over extended periods (examples include food and nutrition programming in DRC (O'Hagan 2014) and Kyrgyzstan (WFP 2013b). These findings are typical of those in chronic crises where there appear to be few alternatives to ongoing relief. Well evaluated programmes such as the established 'Rapid Response to Population Movements' (RRPM) note this tension, where needs identified often cannot be addressed within the RRMP 3-month timeframe (Baker et al. 2013).

In a similar fashion, positive evaluations of 'coverage and sufficiency'[71] are most often taken from the *project level,* reporting results which are greater than anticipated or planned, but saying little about system-wide coverage: e.g., "The project was able to cover 970 households instead of 900 under the food voucher component" (Wanyama 2013). A number of positive examples also speak to good

analysis leading to appropriate targeting and coverage (Murtaza, Shirin & Alam 2013, ICAI 2013b, Gubbels & Bousquet 2013, Skran 2012). In keeping with other criteria, a number of well-constructed evaluations were willing to be directly (and constructively) critical of the implementing partners in choices that were made during implementation and resulting gaps in coverage (ADE 2014, Bailey 2014).

Poor coverage levels were seen as resulting from problems with access, low levels of funding and/or a lack of data or analysis on needs in smaller crises. For example: "the ability to identify the most vulnerable villages is constrained by the complete absence of any systematic and scientific analysis in this regard by the government and the UN" (Murtaza 2013). Notwithstanding the relatively large scale of these operations, a consolidated picture of coverage against need has been impossible to clarify.

Declining or poor sufficiency is often seen as a result of falling funding levels, e.g. "Erosion of services provided is perceived to reflect a weakening of commitment of the international community to the Palestine refugees" (ICAI 2013c). There is also recognised trade-off between coverage and sufficiency in some of the better quality evaluations, e.g. "WFP reached roughly the number of beneficiaries planned in the PRRO document, covering 34 provinces, but with reduced volumes of food … This reflects the 'breadth-over-depth' approach that has characterized WFP's programming over the period" (Bennett et al. 2012) (see also ECHO's response in Ethiopia under rapid response).

Summary: Humanitarian action in response to chronic crises

In terms of effectiveness, at the whole of system level, serious gaps in coverage and capacity are noted in Syria, CAR and South Sudan. Evaluations and interviews with the UN note that in some circumstances (L3s and beyond) a lack of funding has restricted coverage in geographical terms, and/or diluted the level of assistance in those areas which are accessible. Funding, however, is far from the only factor. As noted in the context section, MSF in particular has been critical of the low levels of field

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[71] Of the 71 'chronic' evaluations which look at 'coverage and sufficiency', 42 evaluate positively and 29 negatively.

presence beyond capitals and easily accessible areas in certain critical UN-led responses. Their report notes that in responses which were adequately funded, risk-averse behaviour and a lack of drive to reach those most affected were evident, with the implication that UN systems were at the heart of certain dysfunctions. In this respect, the lack of independent, public, system-wide evaluations of action in Syria, CAR and South Sudan are troubling, as there is simply no evaluative material against which to test these claims. There is some evidence that the L3 declarations in CAR and South Sudan went some way towards addressing shortcomings, including additional attention, leadership and coordination capacity; and limited increases in funding. There is, however, no basis on which to judge the longevity of these effects, nor any link to greater impact.

In terms of efficiency, evaluations have consistently drawn links between coordination and gains *in some aspects* of a more efficient response, but there is little hard, cost-based evidence to support this claim. When taking a broader view of efficiency from the review of pooled funding arrangements and other evaluations and literature, however, the picture is complex and mixed. There are a number of positives to be drawn from evaluations and literature, numerous examples in which a coordinated approach has identified and addressed systemic inefficiencies, and others where 'vertical' inefficiencies in a single agency or technical area have been addressed through new approaches. It is clear, however, that a wide range of seemingly inefficient practices, some of them long acknowledged and potentially severe, persist. These include the cascading of overhead costs in top-down funding arrangements, and the cumulative effects of multiple sub-contracting arrangements and short funding cycles. These are created by 'normal' business practices in the humanitarian system, and are often written off or excused as the cost of doing business, justified by virtue of trade-offs (efficiencies created for donors) or by the presentation of arguably false dilemmas around accountability (funding passed through UN to INGOs to NNGOs

carries a negligible corruption risk versus the unacceptable risk of funding directly).

In respect of other evaluation criteria (relevance/appropriateness), the largely positive results from the evaluation set is a good thing in and of itself. In reference to the Netherlands' policy, however, there is little that can be drawn in very concrete terms. The evaluations paint a positive picture of needs assessment overall, albeit with tensions around the use of multiple needs assessment tools. While this indicates a reasonable degree of satisfaction with needs assessment and the level of consultation with affected populations, this can only be taken as representing the view from the project level. Multiple references to the repeated and inappropriate use of relief modalities and project cycles in chronic crises, in the absence of longer term solutions, highlights a systemic weakness. Multiple references to funding gaps, and the consequences of funding shortfalls, would seem to correlate with the broader picture of overstretch in the sectors as a whole.

Protection

Within the extremely challenging circumstances of L3 emergencies, there have been generally positive reviews of protection responses.

In the Syria sub-region, UNHCR's response to the influx of refugees into Lebanon has been viewed as effective and is considered to be successful overall (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming). UNHCR's ability to scale-up response to the increasing number of refugees has also been considered effective. This is due in part to strong inter-agency and sector-level coordination. Specifically, in Lebanon "coordination in 2013 was strengthened by skilled technical coordinators in sectors, separating the coordination from UNHCR's implementation role, enhancing data analysis and information management, and a more participatory RRP" (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming).

In Jordan, UNHCR has sought to integrate its response with the existing national framework, aiming to cooperate with national actors and institutions, including the Family Protection Department, while simultaneously supporting capacity-building (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming). This strength of collaboration has

also been noted by the Syria case study for this review. The case study identifies that the "Government of Jordan and international actors collaborate to align national protection and coordination mechanisms and to ensure that Syrians have access to national protection mechanisms and programmes where possible".

In South Sudan, the CHF has been instrumental in strengthening the capacity of protection partners by providing funding for gap-filling, and for building capacity of local NGO partners (South Sudan case study). The protection cluster in particular has made an explicit commitment to support and develop national civil society actors in order to help them prioritise access to CHF funding.

However, despite these successes in coordination, protection as a goal/activity is extremely challenging. Protection issues span a variety of demographics, and often require integrated responses overlapping with other sectors. For example, in Lebanon, while child protection efforts have seen some success (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming), the challenge of child labour has been difficult to address in isolation, due to its close association with other protection and livelihoods issues. This has in turn required close collaboration by UNHCR with a number of specialised implementing partners to address the variety of protection issues included in its mandate.

As these complex crises persist, protection issues are in some cases increasing, and at risk of increase in others. Specifically in the response to the Syrian refugee crisis, while UNHCR has received positive assessment of its ability to address protection issues, as challenges increase its capacity to adequately address all protection issues is decreasing. The Transtec evaluation highlights a number of problems: "there is an alarming increase of protection issues in Jordan, the situation in Lebanon is highly volatile if not explosive, and there does not seem to be a unifying longer-term strategic plan in place. Plans, like the RRP, are instead linked to funding cycles and short-term needs. At the regional level, the tumult concerning UNHCR's and OCHA's

roles in L3 Emergencies has also deflected energy and efforts, and forestalled longer-term strategic thinking" (Hidalgo et al. forthcoming).

The Syria case study notes that in Lebanon "the cases of SGBV, violations of the rights of the child, statelessness and refoulement are all on the increase," and that UNHCR is having more and more difficulty facilitating the protection of Syrian refugees from potentially harmful policies.[72] There is also concern over a lack of funding, and growing hostile perceptions of refugees among host communities contributing to increased protection challenges. While it is noted that there have been no major protection incidents, and no failing assistance in terms of significant levels of mortality and morbidity, there is concern that this situation could change quite rapidly.

UNHCR in Jordan has faced stronger challenges than those presented throughout Lebanon. As noted in the case study, "protection issues not only continue, but seem to be getting worse, with increasing reports of refoulement, forced encampment, deportation and detention as a result of increasingly restrictive Government policies". Regarding the constrained policy environment, there has been concern that UNHCR (as well as WFP) have not been challenging government policies despite poor shelter standards and camp locations. There has also been concern that UNHCR has not done enough to protest against the Government of Jordan's limiting entry of Syrian refugees, and increased instances of refoulement. However, part of the challenge here is that in both Jordan and Lebanon UNHCR cannot afford to risk expulsion given the enormous number of refugees in the region.

Protection challenges have been noted in other L3 emergencies as well. In CAR, there is concern that protection is not addressed with enough urgency. Suggestions for improvement have been to "agree on

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[72] "UNHCR finds itself less and less able to facilitate the protection of Syrians from the implementation of policies contrary to the letter or the spirit of the 1951 Refugee Conventions."

and implement a comprehensive protection strategy, building on existing elements like the relocation plan, to guide the collective response" (IASC 2014c). Additionally, a need to prioritise response capacity outside of the capital in order to reach more IDPs has been noted (IASC 2014c). Protection challenges have also been found in South Sudan, with a lack of a protection framework in place to guide existing initiatives (IASC 2014b).

4.2.3 Assessment of self-reliance and durable solutions

What assessment can be made of HA contributions to self-reliance and durable solutions for the victims of natural and political crises?

Rapid onset response to natural disasters: linkages between preparedness, relief and recovery

In respect to linkages between relief and recovery in the Philippines, evaluations found numerous examples of relief responses unable to adapt to rapidly evolving circumstances; for example, the ongoing distribution of temporary shelter materials and relief supplies when communities had 'self-started' reconstruction and were in need of a very different type of assistance. This gap in planning and shift in response modalities was noted in a number of evaluations (ACTED, OCHA Periodic Monitoring Reports). Although in the minority, a number of positive examples were cited, and, notably ex-post evaluations tended to conclude that the shift had happened within a reasonable timeframe, as opposed to real-time evaluations which found the pace of change lacking. A number of evaluations noted a broader disconnect between risk-reduction and preparedness plans and their eventual responses. For example, the IFRC real-time evaluation found (in the context of a positive evaluation overall) "little evidence that IFRC took proactive pre-disaster readiness actions that could have enabled an even more effective IFRC response in support of PRC" (Siddiqui, 2014).

The limited set of evaluations for other rapid responses also notes, overall, a set of challenges with transition to (or back to) development approaches.

Response to chronic crises: durable solutions and development linkages

As noted, the situation of the huge numbers of refugees in the Syrian sub-region presents a monumental challenge for humanitarian action. Ultimately, 'durable solutions' for refugees requires some sort of political settlement (in Syria leading to mass returns, or in hosting countries allowing for integration and employment opportunities). In the meantime, UNHCR is under significant pressure to integrate responses better into nationally led frameworks, under the assumption that better-connected responses will deliver more effectively to non-camped refugees, deliver benefits in terms of the social cohesion between refugees and stressed host populations, and deliver better cost efficiency and sustainability.

While there are positive examples,[73] UNCHR is perceived as weak thus far in its efforts to work within government plans, for example, in Jordan: "UNHCR should develop a strategy to transition funding and activities that can be addressed effectively by the Government and other actors that are more in line with the Government's National Resilience Plan"; "There seem to be few comparative examples of where UNHCR, or any other humanitarian actor, has made a smooth transition from emergency relief to direct government involvement and development". Overall, the Transtec evaluation finds that in Jordan, durable solutions are not adequately addressed through RRP6. It is also worth noting that the Transtec evaluation notes caution by the Jordanian Government in accepting the need to shift to long-term development planning. In Lebanon, the evaluation found that "despite efforts there has been little progress in Lebanon vis-a-vis managing the interface between the humanitarian and development

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[73] UNHCR and partners "Together with UNICEF and UNFPA, UNHCR has consistently sought to integrate the response in the existing national framework, seeking the cooperation of national actors and institutions, such as the Family protection Department, and at the same time supporting their capacity building."

responses and crafting practical cooperation on assisting vulnerable populations." A very small set of evaluations of other actors in the Syrian sub-region confirm the challenge of maintaining humanitarian interventions in the absence of durable solutions. For example: "When the cash transfers end, the Syrian refugee families face a potentially disastrous income gap with the removal of their primary income" (Andrew Lawday Evaluations, 2014); "Improvements needed to better link refugee/relief and development funding" (Martin & Taylor 2014); "Need for a shift to sustainable solutions" (Mercy Corps 2014). The Syria country case study for this review also notes the limitations of UNHCR's approach to durable solutions.

Netherlands policy connectivity: Examples from case study countries

Ethiopia provides a case study in the challenges of connecting relief and development in which both types of intervention are common, as well as a small number of large-scale transitional instruments, such as the PSNP and Community Based Nutrition Programme. ECHO's evaluation, which covers both relief and resilience programming, notes that vulnerable groups are not adequately covered by long-term development projects, and that while there is good communication between the development and relief sections of the Commission, flexible transition mechanisms are lacking. Specifically in terms of Dutch assistance, the country case study notes that a central objective of the Dutch Embassy's 2012-2015 Multi Annual Strategic Plan (EKN Addis Ababa, 2011) presupposes a direct link between humanitarian assistance and development for improved food security: "In 2015 Ethiopia will be more food secure, experience more equitable and sustainable economic and social development and will be less vulnerable to disasters and conflict". The study, however, finds very limited practical linkages between The Hague's HA programme and EKN's development oriented programming. It notes gaps in funding strategy and a desire on the part of Embassy staff to strengthen linkages in food insecure areas, towards the building of resilience and

the reduction of disaster risk. Poor communication between the Embassy and The Hague (partly as a result of a high turnover of staff) in Headquarters is noted. Poor planning and a lack of synergy between different funding tools is noted in other evaluations in Ethiopia. The presumption from the Netherlands' strategic plan, that a more food-secure Ethiopia in the general sense will be less vulnerable overall, whilst programmatic approaches on the ground are delinked, is indicative of the problem noted in Section 3.2.1.

The South Sudan case study notes that the relationship between humanitarian and development funding streams and institutions could be considerably improved, and finds "a lack of coordination across humanitarian and development prioritization and decision-making which limits opportunities to advance shared policy objectives". The study notes that while a practical and principled separation of humanitarian and development decision-making processes in the Dutch government is understandable, they may undermine ambitions to support resilience and durable solutions in the apparent absence of "a conscious effort to align humanitarian and development investments". In interviews, INGO partners receiving both development and humanitarian funding noted that there was no specific linkage between the funds. This is borne out by the example given in the South Sudan study where Care was noted as providing separate and unconnected reports for both development and humanitarian divisions. Strategic Partnerships, described as a 'pragmatic solution' to funding recovery and reconstruction activities chronic crisis situations, seem to offer a potential solution.

5. Conclusions, implications and recommendations for Dutch policy

The extensive literature review undertaken for this study provides a clear and consistent critique of humanitarian action. The IASC-led system is facing an unprecedented caseload and, while funding is at a record level, so is the gap between funding and appeals. Additional funding is required, as are solutions to cyclical, systemic problems. Humanitarian Assistance has arguably reached a 10point where need has surpassed its absolute capacity to deliver effectively and comprehensively in accordance with its collective ideals; at the very least it is possible to state that the limits of the IASC-led, core humanitarian system are increasingly clear in the range of contexts in which it is currently engaged. In conflict contexts with high levels of global political interest, faith in and respect for the universality of humanitarian principles has diminished, and maintenance of access for humanitarian actors is clearly a very significant challenge. In natural disasters, principally those in middle-income countries, there is an emerging consensus on the importance of nationally led response, and calls for the transfers of response capacity at a transformative scale to governments, national civil society, communities and the private sector. A range of alternative practices and models have been put forward, among them: a greater focus on managing the risks in each context, including the use of insurance; and a range of response models based on the modelling of contexts which includes relative levels of support which can be expected from host systems. Such models, however, require consistent relationships with national actors, including government and civil society, and between the humanitarian and development components of actors across the system. The core humanitarian system is currently not configured, funded or linked

to development and transitional programming in such a way that that the necessary partnerships are being built. It is also important to note that the bulk of humanitarian action continues to take place in the most challenging of contexts, where support from host states and the capacity of national actors is likely to be low. Moreover, these are the contexts in which one has to return to the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

The evaluation synthesis and country case studies, based as they are on the same set of contexts analysed in the literature, reinforce the messages from the literature. Importantly, however, they reinforce the distance between the current response models and the alternatives proposed, with implications for donors, most notably for those who rely heavily on the multilateral system.

The response to super-Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines was, by and large, a success story. Although the IASC-led system provided only a proportion of the assistance, it is clear that this was timely, at scale, in keeping with assessed priorities and with reasonably consistent coverage. In keeping with L3 protocols, cluster coordination was scaled up very quickly through a timely surge response. In the context of this largely positive evaluation, questions and criticisms do arise, most notably around the failure of the international system to work in full partnership with national actors. These same criticisms were noted in the Haiti earthquake response, the response to which the Haiyan response is often positively com dopared, but it has to be recognised that the Philippines offered a very different environment. The relative weight of the international surge, in part driven by the L3 declaration, set up a typically asymmetrical relationship with the Government of the Philippines, a willing and capable

partner. Referring back to the context section and recognising the extent to which effectiveness is increasingly seen as contingent on the centrality of the host government, as well as connectedness with national response systems and risk reduction, preparedness and recovery programming, the case for critical reflection is clear.

In considering the strength of responses to large scale, chronic crises, it is important to look back to the statements of the ICRC and MSF in the context section. Both note the extent to which humanitarian action in conflict should be evaluated against reasonable expectations of performance and not 'condemned to permanent failure' as a result of unrealistic expectations where the real failure is that of political process. Beyond funding and political and security constraints, however, MSF also argues that low levels of field presence beyond capitals and easily accessible areas are the result of risk-averse behaviour and a lack of drive to reach those most affected. This combination of inherent systemic weakness and external pressure has clearly undermined effectiveness in Syria, CAR and South Sudan where serious gaps in coverage and capacity are noted. Across evaluations, interviews and contexts, funding shortfalls are seen as having restricted coverage and/or diluted assistance levels. There is some evidence that the ERC's declarations of a Level 3 emergency in CAR and South Sudan went some way towards addressing shortcomings, including additional attention, leadership and coordination capacity, and increased funding. Challenges in leadership and coordination in Syria and Turkey speak to inter-agency politics and the genuinely challenging debate around cross-border operations rather than the ability of OCHA or agencies to field strong leaders per se. There is, however, no basis on which to judge the longevity of the effects of the L3 declaration, or their impact.

Although the timing of this study makes it hard to draw firm conclusions, perceptions of the ERC's transformative agenda are largely positive to date. It can be argued, however, that in the prevailing political climate, the system is reaching the limit of what can be achieved by iterative, incremental improvements of existing practice. The new HPC and SRP do appear to go beyond this critique in that they are seen as initiatives which offer at least a partial solution to one key problem; that of addressing the power differential between the UN-led system and governments of affected states built into the appeal system as defined by UN resolution 46 / 1982. Pooled funds have positive and mutually reinforcing effects of coordination and leadership. They have to be seen, however, in light of their ongoing challenges and acknowledged limitations. Challenges can be expressed in terms of acknowledged trade-offs: transparency and inclusivity are traded for timeliness; cost efficiency for participating donors is arguably traded for a collectively greater set of inefficiencies for operating agencies and implementers, and almost certainly creates additional costs for non-participating donors. Although there is positive progress, pooled funds do not provide a silver bullet for the challenge of passing money to national NGOs, and they are ill suited as funding conduits for resilience and capacity building.

Across the humanitarian system, accountability, most notably collective accountability and accountability to affected populations, remain universally perceived as weaknesses. The lack of independent, public, system-wide evaluations of action in Syria, CAR and South Sudan are troubling as is the absence of other system-wide evaluations in other large, chronic contexts. Neither pooled funds nor the TA have made a significant impact in this respect, largely as a result of the UN agencies' ability to sustain the argument that their direct, vertical accountability to donors should continue to be the principle accountability chain. Donors' collective acceptance of this standard maintains the status quo. The evaluation set bears out the view that WFP has a positive stance and significant capacity for evaluation (as do ECHO and UNICEF).

The Netherlands' policy asserts that the rationale for its support to multilateral institutions is due to the UN's leadership and coordination driving efficiency through fewer gaps and duplications in delivery. While there is little hard, cost-based evidence to support this claim, process evaluations, notably those of pooled funding arrangements, have consistently drawn links

between coordination and gains in some aspects of efficiency. When taking a broader view of efficiency from the review of pooled funding arrangements and other evaluations and literature, however, the picture is complex and mixed. There are a number of positives to be drawn from evaluations and literature, numerous examples in which a coordinated approach has identified and addressed systemic inefficiencies, and others where 'vertical' inefficiencies in a single agency or technical area have been addressed through new approaches. It is clear, however, that a wide range of seemingly inefficient practices, some of them long acknowledged and potentially severe, persist. These include the cascading of overhead costs in top-down funding arrangements, and the cumulative effects of multiple sub-contracting arrangements and short funding cycles. These are created by 'normal' business practices in the humanitarian system, and are often written off or excused as the cost of doing business; justified by virtue of trade-offs (efficiencies created for donors), or justified by the presentation of arguably false dilemmas around accountability (funding passed through UN to INGOs to NNGOs carries a negligible corruption risk versus the unacceptable risk of funding directly).

Particularly for countries at high risk of natural disasters, there is value in pursuing context-specific response models and those based on stronger risk analysis. More broadly, investing in a system where power dynamics are balanced in favour of local actors, in which they are prioritised for funding where the context allows, and in which more investment is made in DRR and relationships with national and regional response systems is a significant challenge for all donors, and especially for those who manage humanitarian funding centrally. There is a direct link to the question of efficiency in this respect. For any system which passes funds to NNGOs more systematically in a fashion consistent with sustained partnerships and capacity building, top-down funding through UN agencies is unlikely to provide a solution. It is critical that donors' collective efforts turn to solving the problem of balancing the need for this capacity

transfer with the need for accountability.

Netherlands' humanitarian policy

The Netherlands' humanitarian policy represents a clear step forward in addressing the call for a consolidated set of strategies. It is limited, however, in that the commitments it contains could be more specific, and it lacks a clear roll-out plan, implementation plan and monitoring framework. Dutch humanitarian funding is valued by the main partners that it funds. The fact that it is unearmarked, reliable and flexible is very important in enabling organisations to respond effectively and impartially and to invest in improved performance. The counterpoint to this 'hand-off' approach is a belief, shared by some staff in the ministry, that the performance of the UN agencies, in general and specifically in respect of monitoring and evaluation is uneven, and that support could be more critical. The fact that humanitarian funding was able to be maintained during a period of government cuts is a clear achievement and the announcement of additional funds through the new Relief Fund means that it will start to grow in the coming years. Given the current burden of humanitarian crises this commitment to increased funding is clearly welcome.

Notwithstanding positive views of the constructively critical and supportive role of Dutch humanitarian staff overall, there has been a shortfall in staff capacity in both sheer numbers and experience in humanitarian affairs (notably field experience). The burden of a challenging humanitarian portfolio; the need to invest in relationships with multiple partners (including other departments); as well as the added burden of ensuring better alignment in policy and practical terms between humanitarian and other types of action requires greater capacity. Country case studies confirm the view from The Hague that there is inadequate capacity in embassies to play a significant role in supplementing or critiquing self-reporting through monitoring or follow-up on humanitarian projects (or at the very least that this activity is not prioritised). This is problematic for the Netherlands in light of the collective accountability deficit noted above, and especially given its reliance on the multilateral system

and the reporting that it generates. This issue also holds for like-minded and similar-sized donors and, realistically, would be best addressed through a concerted effort by a group of donors.

Although the multilateral system has clear limits, it remains appropriate as a primary channel for the Netherlands' humanitarian funding. Evidence from multiple evaluations of pooled humanitarian financing instruments supports their use as another central funding channel for the Netherlands. It should be recognised, however, that in their current form, pooled funds are unlikely to provide a significant channel or lever for linking relief and development. While appropriate, however, it is clear that as a funding channel for the Netherlands, the UN has become overly dominant. In implementing its policy the Netherlands needs to recognise the challenges faced by the multilateral system and to acknowledge the need for alternative delivery models and additional, complementary delivery channels. The new Relief Fund, among other funding channels, is seen as a way of redressing this balance. There is little or no evidence on which to judge the comparative effectiveness or efficiency of the range of funding channels available, leaving room for criticism of bias, and in this light the tying of funding almost exclusively to Dutch NGOs could be viewed as problematic. The desire to maintain the connection between Dutch citizens and humanitarian action, especially by those NGOs with a genuine constituency in the Netherlands, is valid. In purely operational terms, however, it is harder to make the case that that any value is added by using solely Dutch NGOs as a channel. An initial impression of the projects funded by the Relief Fund in South Sudan, as well as the policy exception for INGOs working cross border into Syria, finds no added value in the coordination arrangements between federated INGOs which received funding through their Netherlands-based offices or partners.

As well as working on alternative delivery mechanisms, there is also value in the Netherlands pursuing context-specific response models, and those based on stronger risk analysis, particularly for countries at high risk of natural disasters. Investing in a system where power dynamics are balanced in favour of local actors, in which they are prioritised for funding where the context allows, and in which more investment is made in DRR and relationships with national and regional response systems is a significant challenge for all donors, however, and especially for those who manage humanitarian funding centrally. There is a direct link to the question of efficiency in this respect. For any system which passes funds to National NGOs more systematically in a fashion consistent with sustained partnerships and capacity building, top down funding through UN agencies is unlikely to provide a solution. It is critical that donors' collective efforts turn to solving the problem of balancing the need for this capacity transfer with the need for accountability.

Recommendation 1: Update or refresh the current humanitarian policy and include a clearer strategy and set of activities for implementing and monitoring it.

Recommendation 2: As part of an updated policy, include clear and transparent criteria for making choices between funding channels. Creating a stronger evidence base, in conjunction with other donors, would enable these choices to be elaborated more clearly.

Recommendation 3: Invest in more staffing capacity in the humanitarian department, both in absolute numbers and in skills, training and expertise, to ensure that policy ambitions are ultimately matched by implementation capacity.

Recommendation 4: As part of an investment in capacity, ensure an adequate level of engagement in and feedback from the field. If greater standing capacity in embassies is impractical, options to achieve this might include: dedicated humanitarian expertise with a specific geographical remit; stronger communication links between DSH and embassies; collaboration, joint action and/or partnerships with donors facing similar staffing constraints.

Recommendation 5: In addition to current work with development colleagues and funding streams on risk reduction, place a specific emphasis on sustaining partnerships and building capacity for disaster response and resilience (for governments of at-risk countries and also NNGOs.) Emphasis would need to be evident in policy and practice (including a specific funding niche, for example as a window within Strategic Partnerships for Chronic Crises).

In conjunction with other donors:

Recommendation 6: Collaborate to improve the strength of critical, independent, system-wide monitoring.

Recommendation 7: Continue to investigate the potential of alternative, context-specific response models (including those which work with risk analysis and insurance when appropriate).

Recommendation 8: Invest specifically in investigating the efficiency of funding channels (through UN and INGOs), taking an approach that looks at all aspects of funding cycles and fund management.

Annex 1. Terms of reference

1. Introduction

The 2014 evaluation programming of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs includes the policy review of the Netherlands' Humanitarian Assistance, which has been attached in annex VIII, describes the objectives, methodology and scope of the evaluation. The evaluation department of the ministry, IOB, is responsible for the implementation of the review. The set-up of the evaluation envisages the assignment of the following research activities to external consultants.

a) Consultancy for a review of the UN Reform Agenda and the overview research report

b) Three country studies.

2. These Terms of Reference concern the first assignment. Background information on the Netherlands HA policy and the evaluation

2.1. Background information on the Netherlands HA policy

The overall objective of Dutch humanitarian assistance is to contribute to the relief of life-threatening human needs amongst the most vulnerable people, mostly women and children, caused by (chronic) crisis situations and/or natural disasters. In principle, the Netherlands provides humanitarian assistance throughout the world with a focus on chronic crisis areas in the developing world. The basic principles underlying Dutch humanitarian assistance are the humanitarian imperative (assistance is provided wherever the needs are most urgent), neutrality, impartiality and independence.

In 2011 a policy document was drawn up to outline how the Netherlands acts upon lessons learned in recent years in order to respond to new developments and challenges.[74] In this policy document the following goals were prioritised:

1. More self-reliance and resilience: In the case of humanitarian aid, prioritising and strengthening the use of local capacity and structures. More attention will be devoted to disaster risk reduction (DRR): preventing disasters, mitigating the impact of disasters, and disaster preparedness.

2. More effectiveness through less duplication and more coordination: Emergency appeals need to become more uniform, so that they are mutually comparable and better coordinated. At present, each aid organisation operates its own system, which is inefficient. More cooperation in needs assessments will ensure more cohesion, less duplication, and fewer gaps in aid provision.

3. Humanitarian access and neutrality Aid organisations must have free access to the people affected. The humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence must be upheld. This protects humanitarian aid from being equated with politics and from the potential risks this brings for both victims and aid workers. The

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[74] Staatssecretaris van Buitenlandse Zaken, Hulp aan Mensen in Nood, 23 december 2011, Kamerstuk 32605 nr. 64.

Netherlands wants to be an active advocate in this area.

4. Greater accountability The Netherlands will continue to focus on accountability for results in humanitarian aid. Furthermore, the government has a role in ensuring adequate communication towards the Dutch public on the results of the humanitarian assistance provided.

The policy document includes four to six commitments for the realisation of each of the four goals.

The Netherlands does not implement humanitarian aid directly but, as a donor, enables humanitarian organisations to do so. Dutch policy emphasises the importance of a strong central coordinating role of the UN in humanitarian crisis situations. For reasons of assumed efficiency, the Netherlands in principle prefers the UN channel for humanitarian assistance and only in cases where this is not suitable, channels funding through NGOs.

The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), led by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), guides Dutch humanitarian action in countries and regions characterised by chronic crises. In case of an acute crisis situation, this applies to the Emergency Appeals of the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The Netherlands sees itself as a partner in the global humanitarian system, with a global portfolio – and thus it focuses its attention on improving that global system. The Netherlands provides flexible funding, with the vast majority of its contributions to UN agencies and the ICRC being either wholly, or partially, unearmarked and it is a timely donor, aiming to commit 75% of the annual humanitarian budget before the end of April each year. In return for these good humanitarian donorship practices, the Netherlands asks the humanitarian system to implement the full range of its planned reforms, to further strengthen the capacity of UN leadership, and for all involved agencies to coordinate under the cluster system. All these forms of aid are subject to international agreements and principles, especially the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, which largely determine Dutch policy choices.

In the period 2009-2012 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spent a total of €1.1 billion on humanitarian assistance.[75] Since 2009 the annual expenditure has slowly decreased from €293 million to €258 million in 2012.[76] Furthermore, the Netherlands funded EU humanitarian assistance through its ODA contribution to the EU institutions. The Global Humanitarian Assistance report (2013) estimates the contribution to have been €71 million in 2012, thus adding a substantial amount to the humanitarian assistance funded through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[77]

2.2. Background information on the evaluation

The objective of the evaluation is to render account for the policy by providing insight into the Netherlands' HA policy development, its implementation and whether the envisaged results were achieved. It also aims to provide lessons learned from experiences of the implementation of HA, particularly with regard to adaption of the Netherlands' policy to the rapidly changing contexts in which HA is provided.

The central evaluation question is: to what extent has the central objective of the Netherlands' humanitarian

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[75] This is spending allocated through the six budget articles for humanitarian aid, namely: UNHCR, UNRWA, WFP, emergency aid to developing countries, emergency aid to non-OECD/DAC countries, disaster risk reduction.

[76] For 2013 the total indicative budget was set at 215 million.

[77] Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013 and correspondence with the authors.

assistance policy, i.e. to provide humanitarian assistance in an effective way, been realised?

The approach envisages three main activities: a) Assessment of the policy relevance b) A systematic review of available literature and evaluation reports to gain more insight into the extent to which the expected improvements in HA delivery have been realised and in particular what progress has been made on the implementation of the HA reform agenda. c) Three country studies (on the Common Humanitarian Fund in Sudan, the Syria Regional Response and the Human Response Fund Drought Crisis in Ethiopia) for a more in-depth study about the expected improvements in HA delivery at country-level and its effectiveness.

The evaluation research will focus on the last five years (2009-2013) and will be updated for the first half of 2014 when relevant.

The planning envisages the implementation of the desk studies and country studies: between June- and October. All desk and literature studies will be completed in December and the draft report will be ready in February 2015.

3. The consultancy

The research to be conducted consists of the following parts: 1) Sub study on relevance of Dutch HA policy (together with IOB). 2) Sub study on the efficiency and the effectiveness of the HA provided by the UN-system 3) Overview research report (on the basis of conducted research and contributions of others)

The specification for the three sections is described below.

3.1. Sub study on the relevance of the Netherlands' HA policy

Central evaluation questions

This study consists of an analysis of the relevance of the Netherlands HA policy. The following questions should be answered:

1.1. How does Dutch policy respond to new developments in HA (innovation, new/emerging donors, politicisation of HA etc.)?

1.2. Have the principles for Good Humanitarian Donorship and other international HA standards (Sphere/EU consensus on HA) been complied with?

1.3. What assessment can be made of the contributions (together with other like-minded donors) made to promote coordination and the UN's central role in HA?

1.4. What assessment can be made of the contributions (together with other like-minded donors) made to promote more self-reliance and resilience in HA (strengthening local capacity, transition, exit strategies, disaster risk reduction and reconstruction after conflicts)?

Approach and research activities

IOB staff will undertake a review of the main policy developments, trends in expenditures and accomplishment of the commitments as stated in Netherlands' policy. On the basis of this review the consultant will make an assessment of Dutch HA policy and funding against the international standards for HA donorship and through benchmarking with other like-minded donors. For this analysis use can be made of the data of the Global Development Initiative, the evaluation of the European Consensus that is due to be completed soon and available evaluation reports on HA of other European donors. Furthermore, interviews with staff members in the ministry and some Dutch NGO's will form part of this sub study.

The activities to be undertaken as well as the division of labour are as follows:

Fig. 1.1 Activities and division of labour for the sub study on the relevance of the Netherlands' HA policy

Issues Activities	Responsible	
	IOB	Consultants
Description and analysis of new context for HA and the implications for bilateral donors		This analysis will comprise a description of the main trends and new developments in HA with social attention to: - Increase of natural and conflict disasters -Trends in funding of HA - Politicisation of HA -Rise of new actors and donors - Innovation in HA The analysis will concentrate on the capacity of the traditional Humanitarian System to cope with these new challenges and on the consequences for the role of bilateral HA donors
Analysis of how Dutch policy responds to new developments in HA	Internal document review	Analysis on the basis of the internal document review and interviews at the ministry
Description and analysis of funding policy and expenditures	Analysis of decision-making and monitoring in Dutch funding policy: a) justification for choice of channel and prioritisation of crises in terms of funding b) monitoring and evaluation of funded programmes and organisations.	
Review of the compliance/implementation of the commitments as established in the policy note	Review of activities undertaken, internal documents and expenditures	
Review of the compliance/implementation of the	Review of internal documentation and	Final analysis against data from the Evaluation

principles for Good Humanitarian Donorship and other international HA standards (Sphere/EU consensus on HA)	interviews	European Consensus, performance rankings, databank Development Initiatives, Sphere and others
Lobby for Reform HA: Activities undertaken by the ministry and perception/results in the UN, especially as regards to promoting coordination and the UN's central role in HA	Review of internal documentation and interviews at the ministry	Interviews ministry and with UN organisations and ICRC
Assessment (engagement and results) of Dutch interventions in the EU Council's working group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) with special attention to Dutch policy priorities (linking relief and development, accountability).	Review of internal documentation and reporting council meetings	Interviews EU and minutes board meetings
Assessment (engagement and results) of Dutch interventions in the boards of UNHCR WFP, UNICEF and OCHA, the OCHA Donor Support Group and ICRC, with special attention to Dutch policy priorities (linking relief and development, accountability).	Review of internal documentation and reporting board meetings	Interviews and some desk study at the level of the UN organisations concerned
Benchmarking: comparison of the Netherlands policy with selected other bilateral donors		Analysis on the basis of current evaluation reports of like-minded donors: the UK, Sweden, Germany and Denmark. Use will also be made of the evaluation of the European Consensus on HA. Possibly some skype-interviews
Products/Deliverables		
Chapter on changing context		Chapter on changing context and its implications for bilateral donors
Chapter on relevance of NL policy	Contributions draft sections	Writing chapter policy review: relevance of the

		Netherlands HA on the basis of IOB contributions and own research

The main sources of information are: internal documentation in the ministry and the Permanent Representations in Geneva, New York and Rome (instruction notes, meeting minutes and written interventions by representatives of the Netherlands). Furthermore use can be made of evaluation reports of other donors, the evaluation of the EU consensus on HA as well as data on HA funding from Global Development Initiatives. Also interviews will be held with relevant key informants and staff of UN-organisations and ICRC.

3.2. Sub study on the efficiency and effectiveness of the HA provided by the UN system

Evaluation Questions

The main evaluation question of this sub study is: to what extent did the Netherlands' (funding) policy contribute to increased delivery capacity of HA and the effectiveness of HA?

The specific evaluation questions are as follows:

1. To what extent did the Netherlands non-earmarked funding of UN HA-organisations allow for reliable funding and flexible planning of their interventions?

2. Does the option to channel most of Dutch HA through UN-organisations meet the underlying expectations as regards to:

-efficiency gains as a consequence of less fragmentation? -leadership and coordination of HA? -demand driven HA?

3. What can be learned from available evaluation reports and international literature on specific themes and cases about the effectiveness of HA and what explanations can be given for the main findings?

3.1. What assessment can be made of the support to HA interventions in acute crises in terms of timeliness, coverage and responding to immediate needs?

3.2 What assessment can be made of the effectiveness of supported HA interventions in chronic crises especially in terms of protection, shelter and income?

3.3. What assessment can be made of HA contributions to self-reliance and durable solutions for the victims of natural and political crises?

The evaluation framework

The evaluation framework for the assessment will be developed on the basis of the Dutch HA policy theory, which has been described above and is schematically represented in the following figure

Figure 1.2 Policy theory of the Netherlands Humanitarian Assistance Policy: more effectiveness through less duplication and more coordination

Impact	Affected people are increasingly able to address the needs/risks brought about by the emergency and are more resilient to future crises				
Expected longer-term results	- Lifesaving supplies and services provided: protection, shelter, food and health - Access to assistance and availability of basic services - Creation of conditions conducive to durable solutions, increased self-reliance and peaceful co-existence for IDPs and other crisis-affected populations. - Protection of, promotion of and respect for human rights for people in vulnerable situations				
Expected immediate results (acute needs)	- HA is demand driven and responds to needs of target population - Timeliness of HA - Coverage of population affected - Targeting of vulnerable groups				
Expected improvements of HA system (capacity to deliver HA)	- Leaves opportunity for the UN system to coordinate and allocate as a central coordinator -Improved leadership of Humanitarian Coordinators and cluster leaders -Partnerships with NGOs strengthened and efficient UN operational and logistical support to NGOs	Capacity to timely respond to acute crises: -Initial and bridge funding delivered - Capacity for timely allocation and distribution -Flexibility allows interventions to be adjusted to respond to changing needs	Increased capacity to respond to chronic crises: -Coordinated planning allows for the formulation of strategic objectives, activities and resources mobilisation -Flexibility and predictability of aid -Less fragmentation and more coherence of HA -Efficient allocation of means and staff	-Enables hum. UN organisations to deploy means and staff according to their own priorities - Strengthening of ICRC principles and their capacity to respond to humanitarian crises -Access through ICRC to victims where UN cannot intervene	NGO's fulfil complementary role/added value in access and coverage of vulnerable population groups

Netherlands' inputs	Lobby/diplomacy along NL priorities: -strengthening the role of the ERC -improving efficiency of the cluster approach -involving NGOs more effectively -improving coordination between OCHA and UN bodies	Funding UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)	Funding pooled funds at country level	Non- earmarked funding to UN humanitarian organisations and ICRC	Ad hoc NGO funding (preferably taking part in coordinated structures)

This policy theory is based on (an adaption of) the policy note of the ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (2011)*: Aid for people in need.*

The current literature at the system wide level (OCHA, CERF and UN evaluation capacity) allows for collecting evidence (however, not always systematic) on the quality of HA delivery capacity and the extent to which progress has been made on the HA reform agenda. However, only at output level can evidence be found (for particular cases or issues) for a causal relation between improvement of coordination and leadership and (better conditions) for effectiveness of HA. Furthermore, evaluations provide some, but not necessarily systematic, insights into the effectiveness and sometimes impact of HA, but attribution remains a major limitation.

The preliminary study undertaken for the elaboration of the ToR made it clear that there are serious limitations to collect evidence for the expected results and particularly for the attribution of improvements as a consequence of Dutch contributions. However, in some specific cases, like the CERF or the CHF in Sudan the Netherlands is a significant donor and findings from the case studies on these funds can partly be related to Dutch contributions. In most cases the Netherlands acted together with other like-minded donors and the evaluation should try to show some evidence for leverage and influence from this group of like-minded donors.

The evaluation criteria for the framework will have to be developed on the basis of the existing frameworks as adopted by the UN organisations concerned. The figure below presents the minimum indicators and sub questions as well as the sources for information.

Fig. 1.3 Indicators, sub questions and sources for the sub study on the efficiency and effectiveness of the HA provided by the UN system

	Criteria/sub questions	Source of information
Efficiency		
Coordination and leadership	The indicators included in the logical framework of CERF	a) Evaluation CERF b) Evaluation CAP's c) Progress reports OCHA and
	Progress criteria for the cluster approach	ISAC d) Evaluation reports on cluster
	The indicators for progress as established in the ISAC transformative agenda	approach e) Development Effectiveness
	Role of Emergency Relief Coordinator and of Humanitarian Coordinator	reports and peer reviews UN Humanitarian organisations
	Quality of needs assessments: more demand driven HA	In case studies: programme documents, progress reports and evaluations
Increased capacity to deliver	Targeting and filling critical gaps	
	Quality of funding policy and support for NGOs (quality criteria for decision- making on allocation and monitoring)	
	Funding secured and efficient allocation mechanisms in place	
	Efficiency gains: less fragmentation	
Effectiveness		
a. HA delivery	Achievement of objectives as defined in programme documents for:	In case studies: programme documents, progress reports and evaluations
	Timeliness	
	Coverage	

	Targeting vulnerable groups	
b. Thematic		
Shelter	UNHCR quantitative and qualitative standard criteria for assessment of HA for shelter	a) Programme and country evaluations b) Thematic evaluations c) Field reports and interviews
Food	-WFP quantitative and qualitative standard criteria for food aid: has food assistance met life saving-needs?	with field staff and local stakeholders d) Academic literature
Income	-UNHCR,UNICEF and WFP standardised assessment criteria for voucher and non-cash programmes	
Protection	-UNHCR and UNICEF assessment criteria for protection of specific groups: children, women.	
Contributions to longer term self-reliance	Long term perspectives refugees protracted crises: increased capacity to recover from /adapt to crises: increasing own efforts in relation to HA	
LRRD/withdrawal scenarios	LRRD/withdrawal scenarios in place?	
	Promoting self-help and capacity building as an important component of HA	
	Inclusion of longer term development perspective in HA	
	Mobilisation of local resources	
	Withdrawal scenarios were included in HA strategies?	

Research activities

The research activities will take place at two levels.

1) Analysis of efficiency and effectiveness of HA humanitarian system in general:

   i) Establishment of a framework for the literature review

ii) Systematic literature review of available evaluation and progress reports as well as scientific literature.

iii) Interviews and background conversations with UN staff and experts.

2) Aggregation and analysis of the results on efficiency and effectiveness from the three country-studies (Syria, Sudan and Ethiopia) that will be undertaken by regional experts:

i) It is important that these studies follow a common framework. To this end, the consultant will support the coordination of the country studies by commenting on draft reports and proposals for further (field) research.[78]

ii) The results of the country studies will be used as an important input for the assessment and will be integrated in the analysis.

Planning:

This sub study will start with an inception phase (3-4 days) in which a working plan will be elaborated. The working plan will consist of a more detailed overview of the approach to be followed, activities to be undertaken and the planning. After approval of the working plan by IOB the literature review will be implemented and in a later phase the analysis will be completed with the country study findings.

3.3. The overview research report

The consultant will write a final analysis on the basis of the own research conducted, as well as the contributions of others (IOB, country studies).

The final analysis will result in a summary document with the main findings and a summary of the evidence. This document will be used for verification and consultation with the policy unit in the ministry and other stakeholders. With the inputs received the overview research report will be drafted.

This overview research report will include the following chapters:

Chapter	Contents	Indication number of pages	Contributions/responsibility
1. Context	Main developments in context for HA and their consequences for bilateral donors	10	Consultant
2. Dutch HA policy		15	
	Review of policy development and expenditure		IOB
	Accomplishment of commitments		IOB/Consultant
	Benchmarking other donors		IOB/Consultant
	Compliance with international		Consultant

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[78] The design and implementation of the county studies will be coordinated in consultation with the consultant when possible. However, due to reasons of timing, close coordination may not be possible in the first phases of the country studies.

	HA standards		
	Conclusions on policy relevance		
3. Effectiveness of UN HA		15	
	Description of the organisation of HA system and main trends		Consultant
	Progress made on the Reform Agenda		Consultant
	Does reform lead to increased delivery capacity?		Consultant
	Dutch contributions to reform		IOB
	Considerations/findings		
4. Country studies	Sudan	12	Country study consultant
5. Country studies	Ethiopia	12	Country study consultant
6. Country studies	Syria	15	Country study consultant
Alternative	Thematic overview findings country studies		
7. Final analysis	Responding to the three main evaluation question of the IOB evaluation	15	IOB/Consultant
8. Considerations/ issues for future policies		3	IOB/Consultant
Total		Maximum 100	

The consultants for the country studies will provide their chapters according to a common framework. IOB will be responsible for the contributions to chapter 2 and will provide inputs for other chapters. The consultant will be responsible for the report as a whole. If necessary, external support for the editing of the report may be considered.

4. Planning

Main activities	2014/2015
Elaboration of working plan and first visit the Hague	Before August 1
Draft Chapter 1	September 1

Contributions chapter 2 policy review	October 1
Sub study on UN HA/Reform Agenda	December 1
Supporting country studies	July-November
Summary document for consultation and feedback	January 15
Draft final report	February 15
Final report	March 15

5. Organisation

IOB is responsible for the management and organisation of the evaluation activities, which do not form part of the responsibilities of the consultant. This holds especially true for the timely availability of the draft country report studies.

The consultant will coordinate his/her activities closely with IOB and possible changes in the planning and activities will be presented to IOB for approval.

6. Product

As described above, the final product that is to be delivered by the consultant is an overview research report of maximum 100 pages on the extent to which the central objective of the Netherlands' humanitarian assistance policy, i.e. to provide humanitarian assistance in an effective way, has been realised.

As discussed, IOB and regional experts will provide input for parts of the report.

Annex 2.
Abbreviations

ATHA – Advanced Training Program on Humanitarian Action

CAP – Consolidated Appeal Process

CAR – Central African Republic

CBPFs – Country based pooled funds

CERF – Central Emergency Response Fund

CHASE – DFID Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department

CHF – Common Humanitarian Fund

COHAFA – European Commission Council Working on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid

DAC – Development Assistance Committee

DANIDA – Danish International Development Agency

DFID – UK Department for International Development

DMH – Department for Human Rights and Humanitarian Assistance

DMM – Department of Multilateral Institutions and Human Rights

DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

DSH/HH – Humanitarian Assistance Division of the Department for Stability and Humanitarian Assistance

ECHO – European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department

EFV – Fragile States Unit (Netherlands)

EKN – Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

ERC – Emergency Relief Coordinator

ERF – Emergency Response Fund

FPF – Forward Purchase Facility

FTS – Financial Tracking Service

GHA – Global Humanitarian Assistance programme

GHD – Good Humanitarian Donorship

HA – Humanitarian assistance

HC/RC – Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator

HPC – Humanitarian Programme Cycle

HRF – Humanitarian Response Fund

IAHE – Inter-Agency humanitarian evaluation

IARRM – Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism

IASC – Inter-Agency Standing Committee

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

INGO – International non-governmental organisation

IOB – Policy and Operations Evaluation Department

ISDR – UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

L3 – Level 3

LRRD – Linking relief, rehabilitation and development

MAR – Multilateral Aid Review

MIC – Middle Income Country

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands)

MOPAN – Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network

MSF – Medecins Sans Froniteres / Doctors Without Borders

NCE – No Cost Extension

NNGO – National non-governmental organisation

OCHA – Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODA – Official Development Assistance

ODI – Overseas Development Institute

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OIOS – Office of Internal Oversight Services

OPR – Operational Peer Review

PMR – Periodic Monitoring Review

PSNP – Productive Safety Net Programme

RTE – Real-Time Evaluation

SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

SIDA – Swedish international Development Agency

SRP – Strategic Response Plan

TA – Transformative Agenda

TSI – Transitional Solutions Initiative

UAVs – Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR – UN High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WHS – World Humanitarian Summit

WFP – World Food Programme

Annex 3. Definitions of DAC criteria

Criterion	Definition
Relevance/Appropriateness	Relevance is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy). Appropriateness is the tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness accordingly.
Connectedness	Connectedness refers to the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account.
Coherence	The need to assess security, developmental, trade and military policies as well as humanitarian policies, to ensure that there is consistency and, in particular, that all policies take into account humanitarian and human-rights considerations.
Coverage and Sufficiency	The need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are.
Efficiency	Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving an output, to see whether the most efficient approach has been used.
Effectiveness	Effectiveness measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Implicit within the criterion of effectiveness is timeliness.
Impact	Impact looks at the wider effects of the project – social, economic, technical, environmental – on individuals, gender- and age-groups, communities and institutions. Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro (sector) and micro (household).

Annex 4.
Evaluation criteria

Matrix category	Explanation/evaluation questions
Subject area	Identify the subject matter addressed and / or the context of the response evaluated. Subject areas include: • Sudden onset disaster response • Support to chronic crises • Preparedness / Resilience • Coordination • Financing • Sector-specific
Coverage/sufficiency	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Does the response reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are?
Relevance/appropriateness	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Is the response concerned with assessing local needs and priorities? • Are humanitarian activities tailored to local needs? • Is there use of joint needs assessments? • Is there evidence of use of joint needs assessment results in allocations or funding decisions? • Is there accountability to affected populations? Evidence of affected populations views in allocations or project design? Evidence of feedback mechanisms for affected populations? • Is assistance demand-driven and needs-based?
Effectiveness	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Did the response meet its defined objectives? • Is assistance delivered in a timely manner? • Are vulnerable groups targeted? • In chronic crises: Is there evidence of appropriate attention to food, shelter, protection, and income? • Is there evidence that CBPFs or the CERF contributed to the adequacy of the response?
Leadership (effectiveness sub-criterion)	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Is there evidence of HC-driven, cluster-led, consultative and inclusive appeals?

	• Is there evidence of ERC intervention and enhancement of the HC function? • Is there evidence of use of the HC roster or empowered leadership?
Coordination (effectiveness sub-criterion)	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Is there evidence of the strategic use of clusters? Simplified cluster management? • Is there NGO representation in the HCT? • Is there reference to efficiency gains through coordination mechanisms?
Efficiency	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Are the results achieved an efficient use of inputs? • Have critical gaps been targeted and filled? • Are NGOs funded through quality policy and transparent decision-making? • Is funding secure and sufficient? • Is there evidence of efficiency gains and less fragmentation?
Connectedness	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Are longer-term problems taken into account? • Are activities sustainable? • Does the response have a viable exit strategy? • Is there evidence of explicit collaboration between humanitarian and development instruments? • Is there evidence of capacity-building of local structures and partners? • Is there evidence of attention to disaster risk reduction, resilience-building, or preparedness initiatives?
Coherence	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Is there a consistent application of humanitarian policy and principles by all coordinating parties? • Is there evidence of compliance with GHD principles? • Is there room for UN leadership? • Is there evidence of coordinated and flexible planning?
Impact	Rate 1-4 (1 – poor, 4 – excellent) • Is there evidence that assistance has had wider effects on target populations? • Are these positive or negative?

Annex 5. List of Interviewees

Name	Position	Organisation
Dutch Government Representatives		
Martin Adelaar		Netherlands Permanent Mission, Rome
Carmen Hagenaars		Netherlands Permanent Mission, Brussels
Nathalie Kröner	First Secretary	Netherlands Permanent Mission, Geneva
Sanne Löwenhardt		Netherlands Permanent Mission to the UN, New York
Luuk Nijman		Netherlands Permanent Mission, Brussels
Maurits ter Kuile	First Secretary	Netherlands Permanent Representation
Reinout Vos	Deputy Permanent Representative	Netherlands Permanent Mission, Geneva
Joost Andriessen	Director, Department for Stability and Humanitarian Assistance	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands
Margriet Sruyff	Senior Policy Officer, Humanitarian Assistance Division, Department for Stability and Humanitarian Assistance	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands
Jelte van Wiean	Head of the Humanitarian Assistance Division, Department for Stability and Humanitarian Assistance	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands
Ronal Wormgoor	Head of Multilateral Division	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands
Jorg Zinken	Policy Officer, Humanitarian Assistance Division, Department for Stability and Humanitarian Assistance	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands
Other Donor Governments		
Dominique Albert		ECHO
Joachim Nason		ECHO
Cecile Patillet		ECHO
Gosia Pearson		ECHO
Wolfgang Streiter		ECHO
Jessica Eliasson	Specialist Humanitarian Affairs,	Swedish International

	Department for Conflict and Post-Conflict Cooperation	Development Agency
Andreas Hilmersson		Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations, New York
Joanna Macrae	Head of Humanitarian Policy	DFID
Anita Malley		United States Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York
Anke Reiffenstuel	Deputy Head, Task Force for Humanitarian Aid	Federal Foreign Office, Federal Government of Germany
Pilvi Taipale		Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, New York
Thomas Thomsen		Danish International Development Agency
Evgeny Varganov		Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, New York
Ingunn Vatne	Deputy Director, Section for Humanitarian Affairs	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
Victoria Wheeler	Director, Humanitarian Policy and Partnerships, Humanitarian Response Branch, Humanitarian Division	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
Arno Wicki		Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
UN Organisations		
Yasmin Ali Haque		UNICEF
Nancy Alvarez		WFP
Gian Carlo Cirri		WFP
Tony Craig	Emergency Preparedness Division	WFP
Paul Howe	Chief, Humanitarian Crises and Transitions Unit, Policy, Programme, and Innovation Division	WFP
Caroline Legros	Donor Relations Officer, partnerships & Governance Services Department	WFP
Claudia Von Roehl	Director, Government Partnerships, Partnership & Governance Services Department	WFP
Shoko Arakaki		OCHA FCS
Tensai Asfaw	Head of Desk, Donor Relations	OCHA Geneva
Loretta Hiber Girardet	Chief, Inter-Cluster Coordination Section	OCHA Geneva
Antoine Gerard		OCHA

John Ging		OCHA
Rashid Khalikov	Director	OCHA Geneva
Luke McCallin	Chief, Donor Relations Section	OCHA Geneva
Gemma Connell		Emergency Directors Group
Kemlin Furley	Chief, Governance & Partnership Service, Division of External Relations	UNHCR
Arafat Jamal	Head, Inter-Agency Service, Division of External Relations	UNHCR
Machiel Salomons	Principal Policy & Evaluation Office, Policy Development and Evaluation Service	UNHCR
Paul Spiegel		UNHCR
Shelley Cheatham		CERF
Michael Jensen		CERF
Susan Le Roux		CERF
Manisha Thomas		IASC Secretariat
Other		
Yves Daccord	Director General	ICRC
Regis Savioz		ICRC
Tasneem Mowjee		Consultant

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