From Voices to Choices

IARAN

Expanding crisis-affected people's influence over aid decisions: An outlook to 2040

PHOTO: SERGEY NEAMOSCOU

Contents

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List of acronyms

AI: Artificial Intelligence
CBO: Community Based Organization
CHS: Core Humanitarian Standard
CSO: Civil Society Organization
DAC: Development Assistance Committee
DESA: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
GBV: Gender Based Violence
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
GHA: Global Humanitarian Assistance program
GNI: Gross National Income
GTS: Ground Truth Solutions
HAP: Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HIC: High-Income Country
HPG: Humanitarian Policy Group
ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross
IASC: Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICT: Information and Communications Technology
INGO: International Non-Governmental Organization
ITU: International Telecommunications Union
LDC: Least Developed Countries
LIC: Low-Income Country
LMIC: Lower Middle-Income Country
LNGO: Local Non-Governmental Organization
MENA: Middle East and North Africa
MIC: Middle-Income Country
NEAR: Network for Aid Response
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
NNGO: National Non-Governmental Organization
ODA: Official Development Assistance
ODI: Overseas Development Institute
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIC: Organization for Islamic Cooperation
SIDS: Small Island Developing States
UAV: Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UMIC: Upper Middle-Income Country
UN: United Nations
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
V&TC: Volunteer and Technical Community
WHS: World Humanitarian Summit

Glossary

Accountability (as per the Core Humanitarian Standard): The process of using power responsibly, taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power.

Country Classifications (as per the World Bank 2019 Country and Lending Groups):

- Low-Income Countries are countries with a 2017 Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of $995;
- Lower Middle-Income Countries between $996 and $3,895;
- Upper Middle-Income Countries between $3,896 and $12,055; and
- High-Income Countries with $12,056 or higher.

Formal humanitarian sector: Those actors for whom humanitarian work is their primary purpose, those that have had a role in shaping the institutions that govern and structure international humanitarian action, and those that subscribe to traditional humanitarian principles. These actors include the UN, INGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and traditional donor governments such as those in the OECD-Development Assistance Committee.

Humanitarian ecosystem: All actors who participate in and contribute to humanitarian action (those who are part of the formal humanitarian sector and those who are not), the dynamics of the relationships between them and the factors that impact their operation.

Individual Agency: The capacity of individuals to exercise their will and make their own free choices.

International Aid Actors: In this paper, this term is used to refer to the operational actors within the formal humanitarian sector. Specific international actor groups are defined based on the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team, Localization Marker Working Group Definitions Paper of January 2018:

- International NGOs: Organizations headquartered in countries that are not aid recipients and operating in one or more aid recipient countries.
- United Nations agencies and other international organizations.
- International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: The International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies operating outside of their own countries.

Least Developed Countries (as per the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs): A group of countries determined to be facing severe impediments to sustainable development. The determination is based on GNI per capita, health and education indicators, and vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks.

Local Actors: This paper employs a broad definition of local actors which includes civil society organizations engaged in relief and recovery in their own country (LNGOs, NNGOs and National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies), local and national level state authorities of an affected country that are engaged in relief and recovery, and private-sector (for-profit) entities engaged in relief and recovery in their own country. Specific local actor groups are defined based on the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team, Localization Marker Working Group Definitions Paper of January 2018:

- National NGOs: Organizations operating in the country in which they are headquartered, working in multiple regions of that country, and not affiliated to an international NGO (note: being part of a network does not necessarily mean "affiliated" if the organization maintains independent fundraising and governance).
- Local NGOs: Organizations headquartered and operating only in a specific sub-national area of a country, and not affiliated to an international NGOs. Includes community-based organizations.

Participation: In this report, participation refers to the engagement of crisis-affected populations in humanitarian action, including and beyond the project cycle. For an explanation of nominal, instrumental, representative and transformative participation, please see the typology on page 13.

People Affected by Crisis: The totality of women, men, girls and boys with different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities who are affected by disasters, conflict, or other crises at a specific location. For the purposes of this report, this includes people directly affected and indirectly affected, as well as members of communities who are hosting displaced affected people.

Southern International NGOs (based on the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team, Localization Marker Working Group Definitions Paper of January 2018): Organizations headquartered in aid recipient, non-OECD member countries and operating outside of the country in which they are based (and not affiliated to an international NGO). Southern INGOs may also be considered as National NGOs when operating in the country where they are headquartered.

Worldview: The culture, values, beliefs and language that frame how a system operates.

Executive Summary

People affected by crisis make decisions every day about how to use their capacities and the resources available to them to best meet their needs. However, when it comes to the aid provided by the formal humanitarian sector, crisis-affected people continue to report having extremely limited ability to influence the aid decisions that affect them. After decades of talk and commitments to put people at the center of aid, we, as a sector, continue to fall short.

The purpose

This report seeks to support efforts to put crisis-affected people in the driver seat of humanitarian action. It analyzes inertias internal to the formal humanitarian sector that have held back transformative change and explores how trends external to the formal sector may help to break these inertias and catalyze shifts in power.

Accepted but unachieved

The formal humanitarian sector knows what it "should" do. It knows that meaningful participation of crisis-affected people in aid decision-making is essential to ensuring the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of aid interventions, and to respecting people's individual dignity and right to determine their own lives. It also knows that local expertise is essential to understanding the context and working within the complexity of crises. Over the past two decades, there have been many commitments and guidelines to support more transformative engagement of crisis-affected people and local actors in aid decision-making, and formal sector actors are increasingly seeking to listen to the voices of crisis-affected people. However, there are powerful inertias within the incentive structure, power dynamics, bureaucracy and worldview of the formal humanitarian sector. These have prevented reform efforts from producing the transformative change necessary to put people at the center of choices about aid.

Disruptive potential

Powerful external trends are changing the ecosystem in which the formal humanitarian sector operates, and will continue to, over the coming two decades. Together with emerging agents of change, these trends will produce cracks in internal formal sector inertias, which could provide crisis-affected people with greater influence over the assistance they receive. Growing interconnectivity between people and communities globally, supported by the spread of technology, transnational communities, urbanization and the coming of age of today's youth, will provide **more choices for people to organize their own response.** It will also expand avenues for people to connect with formal and non-formal aid providers who are willing to meet their priorities and enable people to demand more from formal sector actors. People will have greater ability to amplify their own voices and narratives to influence aid decisions, both domestically and internationally, whilst local actors will have greater access to, and an advantage in, alternative funding opportunities and partnerships.

Aid worldview

The culture, values, beliefs and language that make up the worldview of the formal humanitarian sector frame how the sector operates. People affected by crisis are often presented as passive recipients reliant on international assistance. But people are their own first responders. They may seek out support from the formal humanitarian sector, but even more-so they seek it out from family, friends, religious institutions, businesses, local government and civil society. The aid worldview also places greater trust and less scrutiny on international actors than local actors. Technical experience and Western management practices are valued more than contextual understanding, lived experience and local expertise, promoting an environment in which the formal sector fails to equally value the knowledge and experience of its own national staff in decision-making, let alone that of crisis-affected people.

Urbanization, environmental change and protracted conflict will increase the complexity of response, magnifying the importance of contextual understanding and local expertise. The tolerance of parallel systems and the need for intermediaries will decline, especially as technology enables systems to be streamlined, crisis-affected MIC governments increase their role in response management and needs vs. resource pressures demand efficiency. Local actors will have greater power to leverage in partnerships as their funding options expand and as governments demand a nationalized response. This will provide **increased competitive advantage for local actors** and shift incentives within the formal sector to support real moves towards subsidiarity and genuine partnerships, supported by new technologies that help expand trust and a political environment that inspires solidarity.

However, these trends will also produce new patterns of need and concentrated vulnerability. Inequalities in access to technology and education will leave many people behind. Urbanization, environmental change and conflict will exacerbate both needs and inequalities, leaving many with fewer choices for managing greater risks. People will continue to move across borders, but international migration laws will likely harden, trapping many people in dangerous circumstances.

The resurgence of sovereignty may result in both increased resource pressures, with funds reduced or more politically apportioned, and more access constraints as governments restrict local civil society and international assistance. This will lead to large numbers of people being left behind who will continue to need support from the formal humanitarian sector. Their influence over the aid choices available to them will depend in large part on **formal sector actors pursuing more transformative participation.** The odds of this may improve if cracks that have already appeared in the aid worldview widen as a result of crisis-affected people increasingly being able to present their own narratives to aid power-holders and the general public, and as formal sector actors work in greater genuine partnership with local actors. If these cracks widen, transformative participation and new technologies will amplify the effectiveness of choice-enabling approaches (such as cash transfers).

Implications for the Formal Humanitarian Sector:

These trends will precipitate fundamental changes in how the formal humanitarian sector works. Some of these changes, such as a reduction of parallel systems, fewer intermediary roles for international aid actors, and working with and through national and local systems, will happen regardless of what formal sector actors choose to do. Other changes lend themselves towards incentivizing and encouraging formal sector actors to make choices that will result in more influence and decision-making shifting towards crisis-affected people and local actors.

Formal sector actors have choices to make about whether they will adapt to these changes in ways that support greater subsidiarity and genuine moves towards more people-centered aid, or if they will attempt to further centralize power. International aid actors who currently play intermediary roles have reason to be concerned – both that they will be squeezed out, and about the impact that attempts to further centralize power will have on the voices and choices of crisis-affected people. Formal sector actors who dramatically increase the value they place on local expertise and contextual understanding, pursue genuine power-sharing partnerships with local actors, and support transformative participation, will be more likely to remain relevant, present and effective.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, the formal humanitarian sector knows what it "should" do; the arguments have changed little in decades. Formal sector actors know that they have a role to play in relinquishing their own control and promoting an enabling environment for crisis-affected people and local actors to influence and make decisions. Humanitarian business-as-usual is changing. Formal humanitarian sector actors can choose to use this moment to focus on those being left behind: by stepping back and following the lead of crisis-affected people and local actors, co-designing interventions together with them, amplifying the power of their voices and supporting the expansion and realization of their choices. Only then will crisis-affected people finally sit at the center of aid.

1. Introduction

"One call has arisen more than any other in World Humanitarian Summit consultations: recognize that affected people are the central actors in their own survival and recovery, and put them at the heart of humanitarian action. This requires a fundamental change in the humanitarian enterprise, from one driven by the impulses of charity to one driven by the imperative of solidarity"
– Restoring Humanity: Synthesis of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit

People affected by crisis make decisions every day about how to best use their capacities and the resources available to them to meet their needs. Yet, when it comes to the aid that is meant to support them in doing so, they continue to report that they "feel unable to participate in decisions that affect them."[1] It is broadly accepted within the formal humanitarian sector that people affected by crisis should "play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them."[2] The right of crisis-affected people – as "the central agent of their lives and their futures"[3] – to meaningfully participate in and influence decision-making in humanitarian action is not disputed. It has also long been accepted that engaging people affected by crisis, in aid decisions, is essential for ensuring that aid interventions are relevant, effective and sustainable. But after decades of commitments, we are still falling short.

There has been considerable investment over the past twenty years in tools, guidelines and standards to support formal humanitarian actors in improving people's participation in aid decision-making. These efforts have improved the degree to which the voices of crisis-affected people inform aid decisions. However, people affected by crisis still have extremely limited ability to influence aid decisions, or hold aid actors accountable for decisions made. The widespread consultations in advance of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) confirmed this, calling "clearly and consistently for major shifts in humanitarian action to put people at the heart of humanitarian action, with a greater voice, choice and co-leadership of assistance and protection."[4] The report on the consultations highlighted that such a shift "requires a fundamental change in the humanitarian enterprise, from one driven by the impulses of charity to one driven by the imperative of solidarity," and that "despite years of reforms…this transformation has not taken place."[5] Many reports and recommendations in recent years have similarly called for radical change and a new paradigm in humanitarian aid that shifts power to crisis-affected people and local actors.[6]

Despite this clear call from the WHS consultations and others, the issue was – disappointingly – not a central theme of the summit itself or the resulting core commitments. Many participants in the summit independently committed to improving accountability to affected populations and putting people at the center of humanitarian action,[7] but the first annual synthesis report on progress since the summit found no evidence of the transformative changes required to "truly put affected people in the driver's seat of humanitarian response."[8] This is not surprising. There are powerful inertias to change within the formal humanitarian sector.

This report posits that people affected by crisis lack influence over aid decisions primarily due to the prevailing interests, incentives and worldview in the formal humanitarian sector, not due to gaps in the "how to." It seeks to support efforts to put crisis-affected people in the driver seat of humanitarian action, by exploring factors that will disrupt humanitarian business-as-usual and the broader humanitarian ecosystem, and the potential for these disruptions to shift incentives, challenge the worldview, expand options and increase people's influence over their aid choices. The report analyzes the inertias internal to the formal humanitarian sector that have held back transformation, and explores how changes outside the formal humanitarian sector may help to break these inertias and catalyze shifts in power. Major external trends are already changing humanitarian action and the lives of those it intends to serve. Humanitarian "business-as-usual" is being disrupted and in the coming decades the formal humanitarian sector will be forced to adapt in ways that upset the power dynamics of the current system. The future relevance of formal humanitarian actors will be determined by how they harness new relationships and incentives, to engage with local actors and expand the choices of people affected by crisis.

1. GTS 2018, pg. 2
2. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2011), Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations, Commitment 4
3. UNGA 2016, pg. 5
4. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 26
5. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 12
6. See for example: ODI 2016; Gingerich and Cohen 2015
7 UN WHS 2016 Commitments, pg. 6
8. UN OCHA 2017, pg. 10

The first section of this report, Section 2, addresses the importance of crisis-affected people participating in aid decision-making, and the different forms that participation can take. It looks at the importance of transformative participation and the role of subsidiarity. Section 3 reviews the current state-of-play with respect to crisis-affected people's participation in and influence over aid decision-making, based on the remarkably consistent feedback that people have provided over the past 15 years. Section 4 outlines the internal inertias that have kept the formal humanitarian sector from making transformative changes towards greater participation and influence of crisis-affected people, including the existing power and incentive structure, donor interests, risk-averse and bureaucratic systems, and the worldview that underpins humanitarian action. Section 5 explores how external trends are changing the broader ecosystem in which formal humanitarian actors operate and how these changes have the potential to disrupt, or provide ways around the internal inertias.

The external trends explored include: technology (interconnectivity, new technological solutions for aid and technological empowerment), urbanization, youth and education, environmental change, international migration, the changing nature of conflict and violence, and the resurgence of sovereignty and nationalism. Section 6 then discusses key actors who also have a disruptive potential on the status quo of the formal humanitarian sector, such as middle-income country governments, the private sector and local, national and Southern international NGOs. The report concludes in Section 7, with the implications these changes will have for actors within the formal humanitarian sector and how they can position themselves to be relevant and effective.

METHODOLOGY

The development of this report relied on the analytical toolkit developed by the IARAN. For a longer description of the analysis methods, see Annex 1.

1. **Architecture** – Identification (through literature review) of factors internal to the formal humanitarian sector that impact crisis-affected people's participation in aid decision-making, and factors external to the formal humanitarian sector that are changing the ecosystem in which formal sector actors operate.

2. **Refinement of Factors** – Ranking of factors (through in person and virtual workshops with the IARAN team and fellows) using Importance-Preparedness and Impact-Uncertainty matrices to identify the critical factors (trends, inertias and uncertainties).

3. **MICMAC** – A structural analysis (conducted virtually with the IARAN team and fellows) of the critical factors to identify those that are most influential in the system of interactions. The factors explored in this report are the factors identified by the MICMAC analysis as being the most influential on the system.

2. The Rightful Role of Crisis-Affected People in Aid Decision-Making

"participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless"

– Sherry Arnstein, A Ladder of Citizen Participation

The first principle of humanitarian action is humanity: "that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."[9] This principle calls on humanitarian actors not only "to prevent and alleviate human suffering" and "to protect life and health," but also "to ensure respect for the human being."[10] The word "dignity" as it is used in humanitarian discourse reflects that human beings are more than just flesh and blood, but whole persons with individuality and agency. The principle of humanity thus calls on humanitarian actors to respect and enable crisis-affected people's agency – their ability to make their own choices about and exercise their will in their own lives.[11] This, in turn, entails that people affected by crisis are participating in and have some control over making the aid-related decisions that affect their lives.[12] Aid programs that seek to uphold the principle of humanity must promote crisis-affected peoples' participation in and therefore agency over the aid they receive.

The modalities of how the formal humanitarian sector engages people affected by crisis in the decisions that affect their lives are found in the interlinked discussions of "participation" and "accountability to affected populations." Both concepts involve the discussion of power: "participation" from the perspective of sharing power over decision-making with people affected by crisis, and "accountability" from the perspective of providing people affected by crisis with greater power to hold aid actors responsible for the decisions they make.[13] This is not a new discussion. The concepts of participation and accountability began to gain prominence in international aid more than 40 years ago,[14] and since at least the 1970s **the rationale for people affected by crisis being engaged in aid decision-making has been two-pronged: it is essential to ensuring the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of interventions, and it is essential to respecting individual dignity and the fundamental right of people to determine their own lives.**[15] Arguably, aid rhetoric in recent decades has implied the latter, while corresponding practice has focused on the former.[16]

9. SPHERE Handbook 2011, The Humanitarian Charter, paragraph 1
10. The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, ICRC publication 1996 ref. 0513
11. Slim 2015, pgs. 45-49
12. Slim 2015, pgs. 75-77
13. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 12-15
14. By the early 1970s, as it was recognized that top-down development approaches had had little impact on poverty, donor governments and others were already promoting people's participation in development programs. By the late 1970s, emergency relief practitioners had recognized the importance of considering disaster survivors' priorities and social/cultural values in designing effective responses, and some also called on international aid actors to be accountable to disaster survivors (not only to their organizational head offices and donors), highlighting that disaster-affected people had no voice. Participatory approaches expanded during the 1980s in both development and humanitarian aid, and were common practice in development by the 1990s. A renewed interest in meaningful participation of and accountability to affected people developed during the 1990s, alongside criticisms of aid effectiveness, the emergence of rights-based approaches (which reframed "beneficiaries" as "rights-holders" and governments and aid organizations as "duty-bearers"), and the failures of the response to the Rwandan Genocide. Sources: Cornwall/SIDA 2000; Davey et al. 2013; Ressler 1978; Lancaster 2007.
15. See for example: Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 20-21; Slim 2015, pgs. 75, 84; Ressler 1978, pgs. 6-7; Cornwall/SIDA 2000, pgs. 20-21
16. ODI 2016, pg. 60

"There can be significant indignity in a humanitarian operation when people from the outside rush in to solve your problems without consulting and involving you, drive big cars that spew dust in your face and then make all sorts of decisions over your head"

– Hugo Slim, Humanitarian Ethics

PHOTO: MAX CABELLO FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER

DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS OVER TIME

PARTICIPATION:

- **Sherry Arnstein** (1969): "It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future."[17]

- **World Bank Participation Sourcebook** (1996): "A process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them."[18]

- **ALNAP/Groupe URD Participation Handbook** (2003): "Participation in humanitarian action is understood as the engagement of affected populations in one or more phases of the project cycle: assessment; design; implementation; monitoring; and evaluation…Far more than a set of tools, participation is first and foremost a state of mind, according to which members of affected populations are at the heart of humanitarian action, as social actors, with insights on their situation, and with competencies, energy and ideas of their own."[19] The 2009 version of this handbook further clarifies that activities that involve people are "not 'participation' unless the population itself is involved in decision-making processes and has an impact on decisions that affect them."

- **The Grand Bargain** (2017): "Effective 'participation' of people affected by humanitarian crises puts the needs and interests of those people at the core of humanitarian decision making, by actively engaging them throughout decision-making processes." [20]

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- **Everett Ressler** (1978): "The process of participation that insures, through both formal and informal means, that beneficiaries influence the content and direction of the activity with reasonable expectations of compliance by those in authoritative positions." [21]

- **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership** (2007): "The means by which power is used responsibly. Humanitarian accountability involves taking account of, and accounting to disaster survivors." [22]

- **IASC Guidance on Collective Accountability to Affected People** (2017): "An active commitment by humanitarian actors and organizations to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to and being held to account by the people they seek to assist. It requires humanitarian actors to involve people affected by crisis in key decisions and processes that impact them, and have effective communication and feedback channels that engage all sectors in a community, especially those most vulnerable or marginalized."[23]

17. Arnstein 1969, pg. 216
18. World Bank 1996, pg. xi
19. ALNAP/Groupe URD 2003, pg. 20; Groupe URD 2009, pg. 25
20. The Grand Bargain "Participation Revolution" workstream: "Recommendations that promote effective participation of people affected by crisis in humanitarian decisions and incentivize participation as a way of working for GB signatories," July 2017
21. Ressler 1978, pg. 6
22. HAP 2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management
23. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Collective Accountability to Affected People: Practical steps for Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams, January 2017

Engaging people affected by crisis in aid decision-making is a complex challenge. Various scholars have highlighted that using the word "participation" (or its synonyms "engage," "involve," and "play a role") without specificity obscures critical questions such as how people are participating, on whose terms, and for what purpose. Clarifying these questions through the use of typologies of participation helps to distinguish rhetoric from practice.[24] Scholarship over the past several decades has provided different typologies for analyzing participation, often presented in ladders that ascend from forms of non-participation/passive engagement, through forms of tokenistic and instrumental engagement, and ultimately towards levels of decision-making power/ownership.[25]

With respect to aid practice, it is important to highlight that "informing" and "consulting with" people are largely tokenistic (reflecting a low or nominal level of participation) because "When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no 'muscle,' hence no assurance of changing the status quo" (i.e., there is no corresponding accountability linked to the participation).[26] This rings true with many examples of aid programs that use community consultation as a means to rubber-stamp or gain buy-in on a project plan that has already been designed, proposed and – in some cases – agreed with the donor, with little if any room to adjust the plan based on the interests and priorities of the community in question. It is also important to highlight, how even when some limited decision-making is delegated to people affected by crisis, it is often instrumental, with participants serving in many ways as instruments to accomplish priorities and outcomes that have been decided by the aid actor. Forming groups within the population to undertake pre-determined activities and make some low-level decisions about project outputs will be familiar to many aid actors, as will the utilization of "participatory" program delivery modalities in order to reduce costs.[27]

A key complexity of engaging people affected by crisis in aid decision-making is that it does not only hinge on the interests and responsibility of aid actors; it fundamentally hinges on the interests that people affected by crisis have in participating. This is a complexity that many ladders of participation do not reflect, but that is clearly developed by Sarah White in her 1996 analysis of the political nature of participation in development. **This typology is compelling as it underscores that agency is not something that aid actors "give" to crisis-affected people, it is something inherent to all people, which aid actors opt to engage or disregard.**

PHOTO: SERGEY NEAMOSCOU

It is commonplace enough for external agencies to conduct a 'participatory' assessment of needs and priorities, then to plump for those corresponding with their own agenda. This sends a strong signal to people that their priorities do not count...It is even more common for rhetoric about involving people in decision-making to boil down to engaging them in marginal choices when the real decisions are clearly being made elsewhere.

– Andrea Cornwall, Unpacking 'Participation': models, meanings and practices

24. Cornwall 2008, pg. 281
25. See for example: Arnstein 1969, Pretty 1995, White 1996, ALNAP/Groupe URD 2003, Cornwall 2008
26. Arnstein 1969, pg. 217. Arnstein's 1969 Ladder of Citizen Participation, although developed with respect to citizen-state relationships in the United States, has been variously adapted by and retains relevance for aid practitioners. She articulated eight levels of participation in a ladder ascending from non-participation, where the objective is not really participation but "to enable powerholders to 'educate' or 'cure' the participants," through various types of tokenism where people may "be heard" or even "advise" but decision-making remains with the powerholders, to partnership that enables negotiation with powerholders, and finally to the top-most levels where people actually have decision-making power and control.
27. Pretty 1995, pgs. 9-10. Pretty outlines seven ascending types of participation in development projects: manipulative (pretense), passive (information provision), participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation and self-mobilization. Functional participation is explained as "a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision-making but tends to arise only after major decisions have already been made by external agents." Interactive participation, by contrast, is where "participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals." Cornwall critiques normative hierarchical typologies such as that of Arnstein and Pretty, noting that in practice the situation is more ambiguous. For example, on information sharing, "it could be argued that transparency over certain kinds of information opens up the possibility of collective action in monitoring the consistency of rhetoric with practice. But keeping a flow of information going is in itself important, rather than being simply a 'lesser' form of participation" (Cornwall 2008, pgs. 271-272).

A Typology of Participation and Interests in it

(Adapted from White 1996 and Cornwall 2008, italicized column added for explanation)

Form of Participation	**Top-Down Interests** Interest of the aid actor in participation	**Bottom-Up Interests** How the participants see / what they get out of participation	**Function** Purpose of participation	***Respective Roles in Aid Decision-Making***
Nominal	**Legitimation** (e.g. demonstrating that they are "working with the people")	**Inclusion** (e.g. enabling them to be "on the list" to access benefits provided by the aid actor)	**Display** (e.g. to provide an appearance of engagement)	*Aid actors are making decisions, with information from affected people.*
Instrumental	**Efficiency** (e.g. utilizing participant knowledge and resources to make their work more effective and/or less costly)	**Cost** (e.g. the comparative value of time spent participating and how that time could otherwise be used)	**Means** (e.g. for people to obtain the project outputs and for the aid actor to achieve cost-effectiveness)	
Representative	**Sustainability** (of their work by ensuring relevance and appropriateness)	**Leverage** (to influence the aid actor's work to better meet their needs and priorities)	**Voice** (e.g., to enable the views of the people to impact the shape of the project)	*Affected people are influencing aid actor decisions.*
Transformative	**Empowerment** (by facilitating and working in solidarity with local initiatives)	**Empowerment** (by taking action on their own local initiatives)	**Means and End** (ongoing dynamic of growth and change by both the aid actor and the people)	*Affected people are in the lead and/or working as partners with aid actors in making decisions.*

Locating where formal aid actors are within typologies of participation tells us much about who has power over what decisions. Where aid actors find themselves fitting the description of **nominal** or **instrumental** participation, they may be involving people in decisions but only insofar as the information and insights obtained from their participation is important for aid actors to determine what decisions they will make (such as how to better align assistance with the needs people have reported). People have a voice through the feedback they provide (e.g., in surveys or group discussions), but it is the aid actors who determine what weight and influence to give that voice vis-à-vis other available information and priorities (e.g., what aspects of people's feedback will be prioritized in the program strategy in light of donor priorities and "hard data" from external sources). Where aid actors engage in **representative** participation, they are enabling people to influence and make some decisions, but only within bounds that aid actors have pre-determined (e.g., selecting what kind of small-scale infrastructure project will be implemented in the community). People have a voice, and aid actors are aiming to give them greater influence or negotiating power over some choices, but aid actors are keeping overall control in their own hands. Where participation is **transformative,** aid actors will follow the lead of crisis-affected people, co-designing programs and interventions that support people to expand and realize their choices, and amplifying their voices to influence powers beyond the formal humanitarian sector.

It is important to recognize that moves towards transformative participation present inherent, internal challenges for aid actors: "While external agencies may genuinely desire the people's empowerment, they may find it rather uncomfortable when empowerment actually occurs."[28] Transformation is also a "continuing dynamic." White provides an example of a group of families in the Philippines who initially were part of an NGO's health and education program. Through their participation in this program, they came to see poverty as the underlying cause of their health problems and, encouraged by a community organizer, formed a co-operative with the support of an NGO. Through their experience running the co-operative they became more politically aware, felt that local officials were not responding to their needs and organized to take independent collective political action during a Presidential election. White goes on to note that, as a result of such transformative processes, tensions developed between some people's groups and the NGOs that originally helped to form them: the people wanted to work directly with the donors, but the NGOs didn't want to give up control.[29] **Transformative participation requires the aid actor to change; it requires a transformation of the relationship between aid actors and those they aim to serve.**[30] Through thousands of interviews with aid recipients, The Listening Project found that "Aid providers and aid recipients need not only to listen to and respect each other, but also to be willing to change what they do and how they do it based on what they hear…Knowledge and understanding do not automatically lead to agreement."[31]

"Accountability should be about more than just transparency and soliciting feedback. Much can be gained by advancing participatory programming and taking ownership for actions and non-actions and accepting credit and blame" – Dorothea Hilhorst, Taking accountability to the next level

Crisis-affected people have very limited means within the structures of the formal humanitarian sector to hold aid actors accountable for respecting their interests, or for moving towards more representative and transformative forms of participation. While "upward" accountability to donors is critical for aid actors to maintain funding eligibility and business continuity, punitive mechanisms are rare for "downward" accountability, if aid actors make decisions that do not accord with crisis-affected people's interests.[32] However, **aid actors disregard the interests and agency of crisis-affected people at risk of failing to accomplish the very goals that their work seeks to achieve.** On a macro level, "top-down short-term fixes" often soon see "people back in their original state of powerlessness, vulnerability and risk."[33] On a mezzo level, an aid actor's ability to continue working in or with a community or group, is often dependent on the interests of the people to continue working with the aid actor (which also includes comparative interest and opportunity cost in relation to their alternative options). On a micro level, the achievement of program outcomes hinges both on people opting to be part of the program, and on how people choose to utilize and sustain the program outputs. People are smart. Especially after successive interactions with aid actors, many people figure out what to say or how to utilize the interaction to best meet their needs. Actions that may be viewed as "gaming the system" could in many cases also be viewed as an alternative means to exercise agency over aid decision-making. White illustrates this with an anecdote:

> *"In Bangladesh…an NGO introduced a hand-tube well program for irrigation. The pumps were located in the fields to be used for vegetable production. The villagers, however, considered water for domestic use a higher priority. They therefore moved the pumps from the fields to their homes. Rather than recognizing this as the expression of people's genuine interests, the NGO began to issue plastic pipes, which could not be re-located. Applications for the tube wells rapidly declined, and the program was deemed a failure."*[34]

28. White 1996, pg. 13
29. White 1996, pg. 9, 11, 13
30. White 1996, pg. 13
31. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 124
32. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 94
33. Slim 2015, pg. 75
34. White 1996, pg. 14

A further complexity in the participation of crisis-affected people in aid decision-making is the fact that the interests of the aid actor and the interests of the various individuals and groups who make up "the community" are influenced by existing and changing power dynamics. These include power dynamics between the aid actor and community actors, and power dynamics between community actors and other actors within the broader socio-political environment. Furthermore, "crisis-affected people" and "communities" are heterogenous groups. Not all crisis-affected people will have the same interests or power to express their interests, and not all crisis-affected people will have the same ability to opt in to or out of participation. People will have different – and potentially conflicting – priorities and needs that have to be negotiated in group decision-making. People's interests in, and expectations of participation, will change over time and as the crisis and context evolve. Multiple forms of participation may also exist simultaneously; for example, local leaders may participate to gain (and expect to have) leverage over the project, while the participation of less powerful individuals remains nominal.[35] Engaging crisis-affected people effectively requires "a dynamic understanding of people's social networks and the institutions and dimensions of difference that matter in the pursuit of their livelihoods."[36]

Context is critical, and complexity is inevitable. Local expertise is essential to understanding the context and working within the complexity of any aid operating environment. The knowledge, experience and understanding of local actors are critical resources for effective aid. **Subsidiarity is the principle that decisions should be made at the level closest to where they will have their impact,** unless higher level support is required to solve the problem or coordinate broader impacts. For example, crisis-affected households are best-placed to determine their priority needs. A local NGO may be best-placed to support a group of households or a community to develop workable solutions to a collective problem like access to water, and an international NGO may be best-placed to provide technical support on water quality and environmental impact.

"Local actors may also reflect and perpetuate existing inequalities in societies, and we must be vigilant about this. Because it engages local knowledge, however, locally led humanitarian assistance is more likely to be relevant and appropriate for the context, and thus more responsive to the needs of the population, as opposed to much of current international assistance"
– Oxfam, Turning the Humanitarian System on its Head

Subsidiarity is largely accepted as being key – although not a panacea – to people being able to participate in, inform, influence and benefit from development efforts. Greater subsidiarity is critical to transformative change, helping to ensure that decision-making is informed by a greater level of contextual understanding and relevant local knowledge, and supporting crisis-affected people to have greater influence over decision-making by situating decision-making closer to them.

"People affected by crises innovate every day to creatively solve the challenges they face."[37] Aid from the formal humanitarian sector is just one means through which people face these challenges, but it is often a significant means that has a critical impact on people's ability to respond to, cope with, and recover from, crisis. Progress towards more transformative participation is essential both to ensure that aid is relevant and effective, and for aid to enable people's individual agency – helping to remove limitations and expand the choices that crisis-affected people have in managing the impacts of crisis. **Aid should not be about dictating crisis response, it should be about enabling it.**

35. White 1996, pgs. 11-13. White highlights that the form of participation may change (in either direction) over the life of a project or the life of an aid actor's relationship with a community. For example, community members may initially participate with the interest/expectation of having leverage, but if this is not forthcoming (from the implementing agency or due to elite capture of the process), decide that limiting their participation to a nominal level makes more sense.
36. Cornwall 2008, pg. 278
37. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 116

Individual Agency

The first principle of humanitarian action is humanity: "that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." This principle requires humanitarian actors to alleviate suffering and protect life, and also demands respect for people affected by crisis as individuals with agency. "Agency" refers to each individual's ability to make their own choices and exercise their will. Agency is not something bestowed, it is something that individuals have. However, the conception and exercise of agency is influenced by social structures and by real and perceived limitations and opportunities with respect to resources, capacities, risks and needs, among others. People affected by crisis face a host of constraints on their exercise of agency and on the choices available to them – unique to their situation, the environment in which they live, and the nature of the crisis. Aid is just one piece of this environment, but it can have a critical impact on people's limitations and opportunities to exercise agency in responding to, coping with and recovering from crisis. How the formal humanitarian sector engages with people affected by crisis reveals the degree to which it is respecting people as individuals with agency and shapes whether aid is helping to expand opportunities for people to exercise their agency or contributing to limitations.

PHOTO: SERGEY NEAMOSCOU

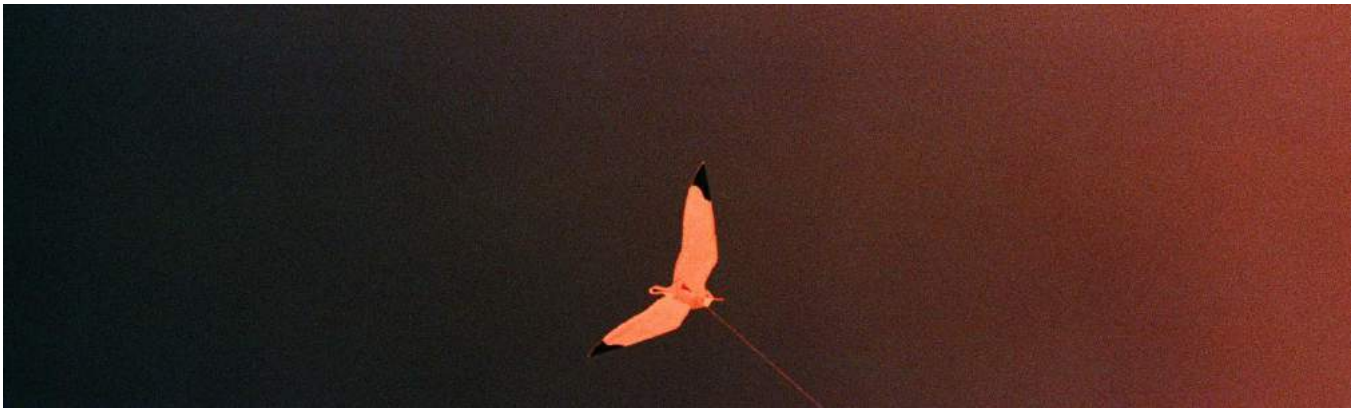


PHOTO: SERGEY NEAMOSCOU

VOICES TO CHOICES: PEOPLE CENTRED AID

IARAN

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The current state of play for formal aid decision-making fails to respect and enable the agency of people affected by crises. It is built on **limited participation and upward accountability**. This results in aid that is less effective, less relevant and less sustainable.

AID PARTICIPATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

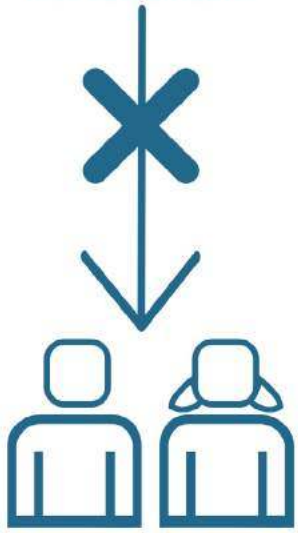
Participation of crisis-affected people in aid decision-making is used by the existing power structure as a means to **accomplish its goals, which may or may not match the priorities of crisis-affected people.**

The aid sector has a role to play in promoting an enabling environment where individuals make decisions themselves.

INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

Crisis-affected people are the central agents in their own survival and recovery.

Crisis-affected people innovate every day to solve their own problems often without the support of the aid sector, such as utilising technology and their own social networks.



PEOPLE-CENTRED AID

TRANSFORMATIVE PARTICIPATION

By respecting and engaging with individual agency we can **design interventions together, in partnership,** which helps to support the expansion and realization of people's choices and also helps to **improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aid.**

As crisis-affected people gain influence and means to hold the aid sector to account, **this will support aid that is relevant, effective and respectful of human dignity.**

3. The Current State of Play for Participation of Crisis-Affected People in Aid Decision-Making

"This is how the verb 'to participate' is conjugated: I participate. You participate. They decide."
– Participant in The Listening Project, Ecuador

Over the past two decades, international aid actors have made many commitments and launched various initiatives to improve participation of and accountability to people affected by crisis with respect to the aid decisions that affect them. Some of these initiatives have engaged crisis-affected people in making decisions around project activities or the "last-mile" use of resources (such as with cash transfers). However, **people affected by crisis generally do not have influence over the strategic decisions of aid organizations or donors,** such as programmatic approaches, organizational policies or how to prioritize and allocate resources across different geographic areas, sectors and people.[38] Some of the strategic decisions which may be among the most consequential for crisis-affected people in many cases are rarely even listed among those decisions that people should be engaged in. For example, decisions around strategic planning, resource allocation, staff recruitment, partnership agreements, contracting, which donors to appeal to for funding, and what information people are required to share (or by what means or with who) in order to be eligible to receive assistance. See Annex 2 for a summary of participation commitments and practice.

Also during the past two decades, crisis-affected people across many contexts have shared their remarkably consistent views and concerns around participation in aid decision-making (although their views have not been nearly as well-documented as they should have been).[39] The Listening Project, the largest study documenting aid recipients' voices to-date, found that "the vast majority of people in recipient societies report that they do not feel included in the critical decisions about assistance they receive."[40] Another study conveyed the same message: "the provision of aid is a top-down, externally driven, and relatively rigid process that allows little space for local participation beyond formalistic consultation. Much of what happens escapes local scrutiny and control."[41]

The consistency of feedback in studies conducted across more than a decade indicates that, despite the wealth of commitments and practical guidance, there has been little improvement on meaningful participation in decision-making. Similar to The Listening Project's findings 10 years earlier, a 2017 survey found that while people "are appreciative of aid providers" they also "feel unable to participate in decisions that affect them."[42]

"Affected people and civil society organizations have consistently highlighted that they are insufficiently consulted and involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian responses"
– Restoring Humanity: Synthesis of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit

38. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 39, 51; GTS 2018, pg. 4; ALNAP 2015, pgs. 12-13. Between the 2009-2011 and the 2012-2014 State of the Humanitarian System reporting periods, ALNAP found that "More feedback mechanisms were developed, but there is little evidence of affected populations' input to project design or approach."
Initiatives to document the views of crisis-affected people over the past 15 years have included, for example (but not limited to):
39. "The Listening Project" undertaken by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (working with over 125 local and international organizations) from 2005-2009 to systematically listen to and document the voices of a broad cross-section of nearly 6,000 people in 20 aid recipient countries (Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 1). The Humanitarian Agenda 2015 research undertaken by the Feinstein International Center in 2006-2007 conducted 12 country case studies on local perceptions of humanitarian action via community-level interviews and focus group discussions engaging more than 2,000 people in Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Nepal, northern Uganda, the occupied Palestinian territory, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Sudan (Donini et al. 2008, pg. 3). In advance of the World Humanitarian Summit, the WHS Secretariat oversaw a consultation process in 2014-2015, that consulted 23,000 people (including affected people, local and national organizations, national governments, international aid actors, private sector actors, and others) across 151 countries via consultation meetings, focus group discussions, surveys and online discussion (UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pgs. 7-8). Ground Truth Solutions conducted surveys with 3,697 affected people in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Lebanon, Somalia, and northern Uganda in late 2016 and 2017 to gather perspectives with respect to The Grand Bargain commitments (GTS 2018, pgs. 2, 9).
40. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 68
41. Donini et al. 2008, pg. 11
42. GTS 2018, pg. 2.

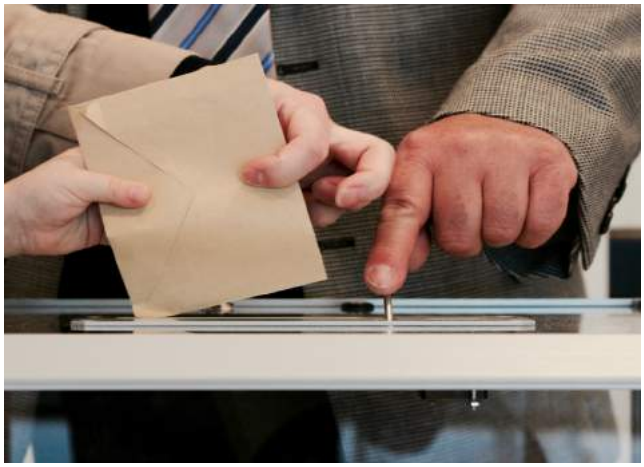
Through repeated surveys and studies, the people whom aid actors aim to serve have conveyed clear messages about their role in aid decision-making:

- **Nominal/Instrumental participation in aid decision-making:** In general, crisis-affected people do not perceive that they have influence over decisions about project designs and approaches. Although they may be encouraged to participate or provide feedback, it is more often to feed in on a specific initiative rather than to speak openly about their views. In many cases, there is little-to-no consultation on project design or key decisions have already been made prior to the aid actor arriving in the community, and there is little room for people to influence or change these decisions over the course of the project.[43] People "say it is disempowering to 'feel used' in activities others design and run."[44]

- **Local knowledge, experience and capacities are disregarded:** In many contexts, people affected by crisis have viewed aid as "inflexible, arrogant, and culturally insensitive."[45] Crisis-affected people have reported that aid actors do not consider their opinions very highly in planning and implementation,[46] and in many cases have failed to even consult with them in advance of aid programming.[47] When crisis-affected people provide feedback to aid actors, they often find there is no-follow up and nothing changes.[48] Some "resent an assumption that people who receive assistance have not thought of certain issues before or that they have no experience or ideas that can be useful in developing solutions to their problems."[49] People have called on aid actors to recognize the value of local and traditional knowledge with respect to designing relevant actions.[50] Crisis-affected people have also consistently highlighted the need for aid actors to take the time to understand local resources, structures, priorities, social and political dynamics, and way of life, in order to avoid making incorrect diagnoses of problems, evaluations of vulnerabilities and capacities, or assumptions about the ability of "out-of-the-box" approaches to be successful, and to avoid exacerbating conflict.[51]

- **Poor communication about aid decisions:** Crisis-affected people report that aid actors often fail to communicate basic information about project timeframes, criteria, types of assistance available or decision-making processes.[52] Not only do such behaviors fail to communicate decisions with the people impacted by them, it also makes it difficult for crisis-affected people to make their own decisions about how to best use their available resources and the aid they may receive to meet their needs.[53] People want more and better information to help them plan and make their own decisions. This includes information about what goods and services are available, eligibility/selection criteria and how they can access assistance, and how long projects/assistance will last. Some people also would like to know about project purposes and timeframes before implementation, have access to more information about project funding, and understand why certain decisions have been taken.[54]

- **People want to have a say:** Many people are seeking more meaningful and transformative engagement that enables co-production of aid initiatives. They want to have their analyses taken seriously in aid strategies and decisions[55] and to have a level of influence and decision-making power with respect to aid.[56] Some have indicated that having choices over the assistance they receive is key to upholding their dignity.[57] Others have indicated that they are seeking "informed consent" with respect to aid programs.[58] People do not want assistance that is driven "by supply or by organizational mandates and preferences."[59] Participants in The Listening Project spoke of how the values, resources, capacities and experiences of both insiders (e.g., crisis-affected people) and outsiders (e.g., aid actors) could come together in dialogue to develop policies and strategies that are mutually agreed and relevant to the local context.[60] Having a say is not limited to aid actors: some people have also said that they want aid actors to support them in having greater voice towards their own governments.[61]



43. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 14, 68; ALNAP 2015, pgs. 72-73
44. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 21
45. Donini et al. 2008, pg. 11
46. UN WHS MENA 2015, pg. 14; UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 94
47. ALNAP 2015, pg. 96
48. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 42; ALNAP 2015, pg. 96
49. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 28
50. See for example: UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 19; Brown and Donini, pg. 42
51. Anderson, Brown and Jean, pgs. 25, 38
52. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 26; GTS 2018, pg. 4
53. GTS 2018, pg. 4
54. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 42; GTS 2018, pg. 4; Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pgs. 114, 116
55. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 114
56. UN WHS MENA 2015, pg. 14
57. UN WHS MENA 2015, pg. 16
58. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 42
59. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 17
60. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pgs. 64, 137
61. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 18

Gender Equity

The Listening Project found that "an exception to the general resentment of the imposition of external agendas can be found in a widespread appreciation among [aid] recipient societies for the international promotion of gender equity." Based on the Project's analysis, the reason for this may be found in the successful use of international aid and policy to support already existing efforts of women in aid recipient countries advocating for equality.[62] The cause of gender equity itself is both internal and external, using the resources of both to move it forward.

The Listening Project found that when looking over the longer term, "The consistency of views from people across all regions and social strata of countries, and across all the countries… was striking. Everywhere people described markedly similar experiences with the processes of assistance and explained how these processes undermined the very goals of the assistance."[63] The way that aid programs are designed and implemented is disempowering and undermines local capabilities, and in many cases lack of local contextual understanding has resulted in aid programs serving to increase tensions rather than decrease them.[64] Similarly, a recent study has found that crisis-affected people "criticize the quality and relevance of aid and do not feel the aid they currently receive will help them to become self-reliant in the future."[65]

Disregarding the agency of people affected by crises is detrimental to the short-term response and the long-term goals of both aid actors and crisis-affected people. As discussed above, aid actors' interests in "participation" and "accountability" come from two angles: (1) to improve the relevance and effectiveness of aid, and/or (2) to respect the rights and dignity (i.e., humanity) of people affected by crisis. Neither of these aims can be accomplished if engagement with affected people is merely nominal or instrumental; there must be a willingness to learn from crisis-affected people and to adjust programing in accordance with their knowledge, priorities and guidance. Without a shift to more transformative engagement, international aid will, in the words of The Listening Project authors:

> *"continue to save some lives (greatly appreciated!); provide some useful infrastructure as well as much that is not useful or sustainable; benefit some people and marginalize others (often reinforcing preexisting social and economic inequalities); weaken local structures, and undermine local creativity; and simply waste a great deal of money and time contributed by both external and internal actors."*[66]

This assessment is not news to the aid community, and **there are positive trends, internal to the formal humanitarian sector, that are supportive of greater decision-making power for crisis-affected people.** Formal humanitarian sector actors have broadly accepted the normative framework of participation and accountability and, as mentioned above and outlined in Annex 2, made many commitments to both. A plethora of guidelines and mechanisms have been put in place to work towards these commitments. There have been meaningful improvements and examples of good practice within specific programs and organizations.[67] The perspectives, opinions and feedback of crisis-affected people are more regularly and systematically gathered, reported on, and considered in program monitoring and evaluation and, more recently, system-wide studies

With the expansion of cash-based assistance, more crisis-affected people have decision-making power over the type, quality and source of goods and services to meet their needs.[68] This is a major shift (although, it is worth noting that crisis-affected people have long taken decisions about how to use the aid they received to best meet their needs, even when this meant repurposing or selling unneeded in-kind goods). Other choice-enabling approaches, such as adaptive/iterative programming, area-based programming and "client-responsive" programming, are being piloted and expanded.[69] There has also been recognition of the need for aid to be more localized, understanding – in line with the concept of subsidiarity – that the further away decisions are made, the harder it is to adapt them to specific contexts. However, **while valuable and important in themselves, the analysis found that these initiatives are not particularly influential with respect to systemic change,** and thus have not to-date, (and after many years), catalyzed the transformation necessary to put people at the center of aid. Their impact has remained limited with respect to increasing people's influence over aid decision-making and will likely remain so if there is not a shift in the underlying inertias.

62. Anderson, Brown and Jean, pgs. 63
63. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 21
64. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pgs. 21-25
65. GTS 2018, pg. 2
66. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 32
67. See for example Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 35-37

67. See for example Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 35-37
68. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 21
69. See for example: IASC "Second Action Plan for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas 2015-2017" recommendation for area-based approaches, International Rescue Committee "Client-Responsive Programming Framework", USAID Food for Peace "Refine and Implement Pilot"

"Given the strong case for cash transfers, why has it taken as long as it has for the international humanitarian system to embrace its use more fully? Part of the answer is the long tradition of governments and organizations deciding what people need, and assuming that they cannot be trusted to make sensible decisions themselves. These priorities often reflect organizational mandates and interests hard-wired into the humanitarian system."
– Overseas Development Institute and Center for Global Development, Doing cash differently: How cash transfers can transform humanitarian aid

COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURES

Engaging crisis-affected people in aid decision-making may – knowingly or unknowingly – challenge existing social and power structures, or it may re-enforce them, but what it cannot do is escape them. [70]

"Crisis-affected people" and "communities" are heterogeneous groups of individuals with intersectional identities and diverse interests. There may be different and overlapping "communities" living within a single geographic area (for example, a refugee community and a host community), and people within any given "community" will have different capabilities to exercise their individual agency and to participate in group decision-making.

Even the most robust processes for participation rarely involve every relevant constituent. Aid actors make decisions about who to engage and at what depth.[71] All leadership and social structures are subject to power dynamics, and most of these structures intentionally or unintentionally exclude certain groups of people. It is therefore generally recognized, if not always practiced, that aid actors need to ensure that the "who" does not only include elites and that marginalized groups within the community need to be specifically involved. To help ensure this, working with representative individuals is a common practice, as is the use of pre-determined groups such as women, youth, etc. However, even if they make sense in the context of the aid actor's mandate or program objectives, these representative mechanisms and categories may or may not be the most relevant for the community context or for the individuals that the aid actor is seeking to include. External actors establishing alternative "inclusive" structures, without an in-depth awareness of the social and power dynamics within and between communities, may be ineffective or even create new risks for marginalized people who participate in these structures.[72] "People need to feel able to express themselves without fear of reprisals or the expectation of not being listened to or taken seriously."[73] Reprisals could come, for example, from others in the community, from the aid organization's staff, from government authorities, or from other actors. People who are members of marginalized groups will likely know the risks of participating better than outsiders, but they may not be able to speak of the risks freely and they may also feel compelled to participate in order to obtain assistance that they need.[74]

Addressing the very real challenges presented by the complexity of local social and power structures requires addressing the inertias internal to the formal humanitarian sector. Time, relationship building, understanding of local context, knowledge of local languages, facilitation and conflict resolution skillsets, working in partnership with local actors who are seeking change (such as women's organizations and other organizations run by people from marginalized groups) are all essential. Social structures are not immutable; they can be changed by the very people who are part of them.[75]

70. White 1996, pgs. 13-14
71. Cornwall 2008, pgs. 276-277
72. Cornwall 2008, pg. 280
73. Cornwall 2008, pgs. 277-278
74. Aguaconsult Ltd 2012, pg. 38; Cornwall 2008, pg. 280
75. See Anthony Giddens structuration theory.

4. Inertia internal to the formal humanitarian sector

The obstacles to enabling meaningful participation of crisis-affected people and local actors in aid decision-making have been well diagnosed in humanitarian literature for many years.[76] **Some of the most influential factors within the formal humanitarian sector are themselves among these obstacles, which helps to explain why reform efforts and voluntary initiatives have produced limited change.** The analysis for this report found that the power and incentive structure of the aid system and the interests of top donors are the two most influential internal inertias blocking systemic change. These are supported by the formal humanitarian sector's risk-averse bureaucracy and importantly, the worldview that underpins formal humanitarian action. This section will summarize these key internal inertias, which will be familiar to many aid practitioners. The following sections of the report will explore external factors that are disrupting humanitarian business-as-usual and have the potential to disrupt these internal inertias going forward.

4.1 Aid Power/Incentive Structure

Key messages

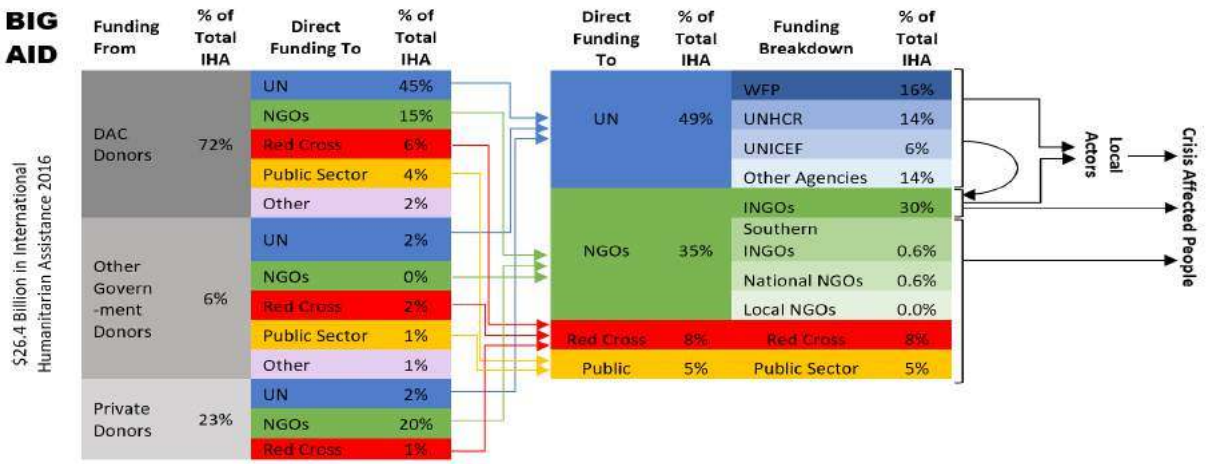
- The formal humanitarian sector is top-down and hierarchical, with funding and power concentrated within an oligopoly of Western-dominated international actors.
- The incentive structure focuses actors on "upward accountability," financial growth and programmatic protectionism, at the expense of collaboration and diversity.
- There are few (if any) punitive mechanisms for not meeting "downward" commitments to crisis-affected people and local actors.

Crisis-affected people are not the primary stakeholders in the current structure of international aid.[77] The formal humanitarian sector is top-down and hierarchical, with funding and power concentrated within an oligopoly of Western-dominated international actors.

"the funding attracted by UN agencies and large INGOs is so disproportionately large compared with medium-sized and small international NGOs, as well as national and local organizations, that, when taken together with their donors, they can justifiably be called an oligopoly" – Overseas Development Institute, Time to Let Go: Remaking Humanitarian Action for the Modern Era

The majority of institutional funding flows from a handful of Western governmental donors, primarily to a handful of UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, and large international NGOs, who subsequently program this funding or disburse it further within the wider ecosystem of international, national and local organizations engaged in crisis response and recovery. Power over policy priorities, leadership mechanisms, industry standards, coordination structures and public messaging follows a similar pathway.[78] Local actors in crisis-affected countries find themselves at the bottom of this pyramid, undertaking a considerable share of the direct work on the ground while receiving a fraction of the direct funding and little decision-making power.[79] Even the national governments of crisis-affected countries can find themselves on the margins.[80] Crisis-affected people are "beneficiaries" of the structure's outcomes.

The rewards and sanctions embedded in the incentive structure which currently governs the formal humanitarian sector focus organizations and their management staff on "upward accountability."[81] International aid actors' success – for both organizational and staff performance – is judged in large part on growth and funding levels, and ensuring financial and legal compliance with the regulations of donor agencies is a top priority to maintain eligibility for future funding.[82] In contrast, commitments to participation of and accountability to crisis-affected populations are largely voluntary and self-regulating, with few (if any) punitive mechanisms for not meeting these commitments.[83] Even when feedback from crisis-affected people is available, it is largely marginalized in decision-making processes because information related to "upward" accountability is considered more important and a higher priority.[84]



The "upward" focus perpetuates a system that advantages larger, international organizations and incentivizes financial growth and organizational protectionism. The system for obtaining funding is highly competitive, short-term, and project-based, incentivizing organizations to spend disproportionate amounts of time and resources on fundraising and brand identity, as well as to protect their "market share" and competitive advantages (e.g. turf/positions of power, proprietary methodologies, data, innovations, etc.) rather than to collaborate and openly share information with others. The barriers to entry into the system are high, limiting the diversity of organizations that are part of the formal humanitarian sector. Battles over "turf" encourage specialized/mandated organizations to promote and respond to needs or population groups within their mandate/specialty regardless of the overarching or priority needs of crisis-affected people. All organizations are incentivized to market their own interventions even if others are better placed, and to design and implement programs that are in line with the policy priorities of their respective funders (in some cases even when they lack the proper expertise).[85] Some have argued that humanitarian organizations, once driven by mission, "have started to turn into corporations, self-perpetuating and self-interested."[86] **There are no internal incentives to restructure this system or to devolve/diversify power, both of which would be required to enable local actors and crisis-affected people to have meaningful influence over decision-making.** [87]

There must be political will and incentives for crisis-affected people to influence aid decision-making. However, the formal humanitarian sector has given little indication that it is willing to fundamentally change. Various efforts to reform the humanitarian system since 2000 have not changed the underlying power and incentive structure,[88] and in some ways reform efforts have served to further concentrate power at the top (with larger, international organizations) and further distance decision-making from aid recipients.[89] Reform efforts have tended to focus on the technical level, rather than addressing core issues with the system and its incentives.[90] In addition, reform efforts themselves have generally been top down. Even with the recent reform efforts towards localization following the WHS, the structural power dynamics remain unchanged and local actors have reported continuing to feel excluded.[91] Powerful aid actors may choose to listen to and consider the voices of crisis-affected people, especially it if makes their work more efficient and effective. It is, however, unlikely that those at the top will voluntarily give up significant aspects of their power.[92]

76. For more in-depth discussion of these obstacles see, for example: Brown and Donini 2014; Gingerich and Cohen 2015; ODI 2016; Currion 2018; Konyndyk 2018
77. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 62-63
78. Bennet et al. 2016, pgs. 57-58, 63; Currion, pgs. 4-5; Donini et al 2008, pg. 12
79. DI 2017, pgs. 73-75; Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 14-15
80. ODI 2016, pg. 58
81. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 65
82. ODI 2016, pg. 59
83. HAP 2013, pg. 5; UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 94; Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 72
84. See for example: IRC et al 2018, pg. 7
85. ODI 2016, pg. 61-63; Currion 2018, pgs. 4-5; Konyndyk 2018, pg. 5
86. Anonymous humanitarian expert, as quoted in Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 32
87. ODI 2016, pgs. 57, 60; Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 23; Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 62-63, 71-72
88. Konyndyk 2018, pgs. 7-9
89. ODI 2016, pg. 62; UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 99
90. Ramalingam and Mitchell 2014, pg. 25

4.2 Donor Interests

Key messages

- What crises, sectors and initiatives receive funding depends on how they fit with donor government policy priorities and political interests.
- Top donors have a preference for funding international aid actors, who they rely on as intermediaries to oversee local and community-level actors.
- Short-term funding cycles, failure to provide time/funding for program design with crisis-affected people, and obstacles to program flexibility serve as barriers to crisis-affected people's participation in decision-making.
- Donors have required considerable accountability on financial and legal compliance but have not demanded similar levels of accountability for including people in decision-making.
- Decision-making power over policy and resources remains in the hands of donors, who have the power to accept or reject the concerns and priorities of crisis-affected people.

In the analysis, top donor governments presented as the most influential and independent factor within the formal humanitarian sector. They have considerable influence on the dynamics of humanitarian action, but the factors that influence them are predominantly external to the sector (e.g. domestic politics, public opinion, among others). This means that they can change the formal humanitarian sector, but other actors within the sector are unlikely to change them. The coordination body for the top governmental aid donors is the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is a primarily Western institution.[93] Over 70% of total humanitarian funding came from DAC donors in 2016, with 57% of public humanitarian funding coming from the US, Germany and the UK alone.[94] The priorities of the formal humanitarian sector are inherently reflective of the interests and priorities of these donors. Their interests cascade down and across the sector, impacting both actors who they fund and those they do not.[95] These donors have the power to ensure that crisis-affected people have greater influence over aid decision-making. However, funding from these donors is raised through taxes, which means that accountability to their own publics is paramount and will often trump the voices of crisis-affected people.

91. UN OCHA 2017, pg. 6
92. There have been many calls for such change. See for example: Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 62-63; UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pgs. 94-96, 99-102; Gingerich and Cohen 2015; ODI 2016, pg. 70-73
93. Most of the DAC members are European nations, along with the US, Canada, Australia, Japan and Korea. The only top 20 governmental aid donors who are not DAC members are Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Source: http://www.oecd.org/). Note per DI 2017, pg. 44: "Turkey voluntarily reports its aid expenditure to the OECD DAC and, unlike other donors, includes its expenditure on hosting Syrian refugees on its territory in its reported humanitarian assistance" (which accounts for 99% of its humanitarian assistance).
94. DI 2018, pg. 44; DI 2017, pgs. 43-45
95. Currion 2018, pg. 5; ODI 2016, pg. 58; Konyndyk 2018, pgs. 3-4

"People on the receiving side of international assistance name three areas where donor policies, decided by those at the 'top' and applied across all aid-receiving contexts, do not work. These are: 1) decisions about how to allocate assistance; 2) the lack of "fit" with local priorities; and 3) what appear to be frequent, and arbitrary, policy shifts."

– Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid

What crises, sectors and initiatives receive funding depends on how they fit with donor government policy priorities and political interests, which are highly influenced by domestic constituencies and are lobbied by special interest groups.[96] Donor priorities may also fluctuate, in some cases considerably, with prevailing domestic political winds, such as if public support for aid (or certain types of aid) declines or if a different political party comes to power.[97] In some cases, aid decisions have been influenced by domestic economic considerations and commercial interests, such as the provision of in-kind assistance sourced from the donor country.[98] Crises that are within close geographic proximity or considered important to national security interests have an edge over crises that are geographically or politically remote.[99] Over the past 20 years, humanitarian action has become particularly closely linked to Western political and security agendas, such as the global war on terror and migration crises. These agendas directly affect funding allocation, program restrictions and access to local partners and affected populations (e.g. via counter-terrorism regulations).[100]

DAC donor governments have a preference for funding UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent (often through their own national societies), and international NGOs (often those that are from or headquartered in their own country).[101] Funding to UN agencies may be politically easier to justify and distance donor agencies from funding prioritization and use. For smaller donor governments, there is less capacity to develop and manage many aid strategies and grants across many countries, and thus funding larger entities serves as a way to outsource this management capacity. For all donor governments, large grants to UN agencies or other big organizations keeps their own (donor) administrative overhead lower.[102] Many donors are skeptical of funding local actors without an international actor acting as an intermediary or trust broker, overseeing the local actor's work (and accepting the responsibility and risk for financial and legal compliance).[103] Some donors are prohibited by legislation or policy from directly funding local actors.[104] Donors' risk aversion may also be seen in funding processes that seek firm outputs and results to be outlined in advance of funding being granted. While some donors enable a certain amount of flexibility for program changes during implementation, there is often a considerable amount of administrative and bureaucratic work required to apply for changes to be accepted.[105] The result is that there is often limited space for representative or transformative participation from crisis-affected people.

There is little incentive for donors to cede power to the interests of crisis-affected people that do not align with their own interests (such as, for example, the alignment of cash-based assistance and value for money). This creates a challenge for crisis-affected people whose needs and priorities have to fall into donor priorities, categories and restrictions.[106] However, as value for money[107] is a consistent priority for most donors, there is (or should be) incentive for donors to promote greater participation in decision-making by crisis-affected people as a means to improve program effectiveness. Donors could play a powerful role in incentivizing other actors within the formal humanitarian sector to better engage crisis-affected people, at least on a more representative level. Donors have required considerable accountability from aid actors on financial and legal compliance, achievement of program results, and cost-effectiveness. They have not demanded or funded similar levels of accountability with respect to including people on the "receiving end" of aid in making aid decisions.[108] Donors' prioritization of "results" within short-term projects and funding cycles, while neglecting to fund and allow sufficient time for program planning and design with crisis-affected people, or to fund the tracking of longer term outcomes, serve as barriers to greater participation in decision-making for crisis-affected people. Obstacles to program flexibility are also a challenge, as meaningfully engaging crisis-affected people is an iterative process.[109]

"Participation is challenging and needs to be constantly re-invented to adapt to a rapidly changing world and people's changing ways of living."

– Dalia Sbeih, Aid Worker

96. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 37
97. See for example: Valters and Whitty 2017
98. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pgs. 13, 37; Lancaster 2007, pgs. 25-61
99. ODI 2016, pg. 58; Slim 2015, pg. 14
100. Donini et al. 2008, pg. 14-16, 21
101. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 14-15, 23-24; DI 2018, pg. 44
102. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 25; Konyndyk 2018, pgs. 3-5
103. ODI 2016, pg. 63
104. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 15
105. Aguaconsult Ltd. 2012, pg. 56
106. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 62-63
107. "Value for money" refers to obtaining the maximum efficiency and effectiveness at the minimum possible cost.
108. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 72
109. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 73-74; Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 70

DAC donors have accepted the normative framework of participation and accountability to affected populations, and many have incorporated this framework into their own policies.[110] All of the DAC donors are members of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative which includes, as one of its principles:, "Request implementing humanitarian organizations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response."[111] Nearly three-quarters of the DAC donors have signed on to The Grand Bargain, which commits to more cash assistance, a "participation revolution," and consolidated needs assessments to reduce the negative impacts of silos and inter-agency competition.[112] Including engagement of crisis-affected people as a matter of policy with partners is a strong step. However, **without prioritization and enforcement, and unless programs can be routinely both planned and changed based on the priorities of crisis-affected people, as opposed to pre-agreed targets, such mechanisms may become tick box exercises with limited impact.**[113] Even if these commitments and policies are fully embraced and enforced by donors (which remains to be seen), it is important to recognize that they still have a ceiling on the participation of crisis-affected people. Decision-making power over policy, strategy and resource allocation remains in the hands of donors, who continue to hold the power to accept or reject the concerns and priorities of crisis-affected people. To-date, there have been few, if any, means for crisis-affected people to hold donor governments accountable.

"Donors do a lot of assessments and focus groups, but then when what comes out of these focus groups doesn't fit their agenda, they simply change it to make it fit."
– Lebanese researcher, The Listening Project

110. For example: The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid notes both that "Aid administrators…should be accountable to affected people and to donor taxpayers" and that "Affected populations should participate in the making of decisions that affect their lives. Participation is both a universal right and good management practice" (para 24, 44 and Annex). More recently, USAID released proposal guidelines that require articulation of "how the affected population was involved in the program design; what mechanisms are in place to…receive beneficiary feedback throughout the duration of the project; [and] how will beneficiary feedback be incorporated into program implementation…designing course corrections as needed" (USAID OFDA Proposal Guidelines February 2018).
111. Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative: Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, Principle 7
112. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, The Grand Bargain
113. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 19; Valters and Whitty 2017, pgs. 8-9
114. ODI 2016, pg. 61-63; Konyndyk 2018, pg. 5-6
115. Serventy 2015, pg. 84; Aguaconsult Ltd. 2012, p. 47; Konyndyk 2018, pg. 7
116. Aguaconsult Ltd 2012, pg. 47; ALNAP 2015, pg. 73-74

4.3 Bureaucratic and Risk Averse Aid System

Key messages

- The formal humanitarian sector's siloed web of bureaucracies is slow and expensive to change, and encourages path dependent, process-driven behaviors.
- Time is an obstacle to meaningful participation in rapid-onset emergencies. But most crises are not short-term. There is time to build relationships, except the formal humanitarian sector has created its own internal time constraints and challenges.
- There is considerable risk aversion and fear-of-failure, which is often managed through institutional controls that are detrimental to developing equal partnerships with local actors.

The bureaucratic inertia of the formal humanitarian sector's web of organizational and inter-agency bureaucracies is slow and expensive to change, helping to keep the status quo in place. The formal humanitarian sector is unwieldy. It is comprised of many actors all pursuing their organizational missions, mandates and interests, as they implement a vast array of ever-shifting programs at the local, national and global levels. In many cases, actors are in vertical funding relationships with one another, but otherwise they have limited accountability to each other, and are often in direct competition for resources and visibility.[114] This makes the system difficult to coordinate and often politically charged. The formal humanitarian sector is also siloed into many distinct sectors of focus (even though crisis-affected people do not view their needs in silos). This approach makes it challenging to address needs holistically and over time, injects institutional competition between which needs are "most important," and shifts decision-making around needs prioritization further away from crisis-affected people. While specific needs that the system focuses on may be better covered than in the past, needs that fall between silos or that don't have an institution to advocate for them can, and have, gone unaddressed, even when they have been clearly indicated as a priority by crisis-affected people.[115]

Every humanitarian context is different. Even as the formal humanitarian sector's systems provide a source of consistency which can be helpful for management and organization, they can also encourage path dependent behaviors, for example, in funding relationships, in pre-defined conceptions of needs, in assumptions about vulnerability, in blue print approaches and out-of-the-box interventions, and even in recruitment practices.[116] The formal humanitarian sector has made considerable effort to improve management and professionalize in order to improve the quality and efficacy of programs. Internal

and inter-agency systems have been established to promote compliance with principles, minimum standards and best practices.[117] These rubrics are essential, especially in areas where matters of public health and safety are at risk, such as water quality, disease prevention, and the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation. However, focusing on "upward" compliance can result in less focus on engaging with crisis-affected people on critical contextual issues that may also be essential for success and protection.[118] In addition, within the context of the aid incentive structure, and notably on issues of accountability to affected populations, some of these efforts have ended up being process-driven rather than outcome-driven,[119] making them into box ticking exercises rather than genuine opportunities for transformative change.

Engagement of crisis-affected people in decision-making takes time, relationship-building, specific skill sets (languages, listening, facilitation, humility, etc.) and strong contextual understanding.[120] Crisis-affected people themselves have highlighted this. Time is often named by aid practitioners as the primary barrier to engagement. Time is certainly an obstacle in some, notably rapid-onset emergencies, where the space and scope for participation in decision-making can be extremely limited (although rarely if ever non-existent).[121] However, this is not the case for most instances of humanitarian action. In 2016, only 14% of humanitarian assistance was for short-term crises.[122] **In protracted, slow-onset and reoccurring emergencies, there is time to build relationships (which also helps to manage expectations and participation fatigue) and engage crisis-affected people in decision-making. There is also time to build partnerships with local actors who already have an understanding of the context and ongoing relationships with crisis-affected communities.** However, the formal humanitarian sector has created its own internal time constraints, such as short-term funding arrangements, which result in short-term planning, short-term projects and short-term staff contracts. There have been commitments to correct this, but the results have yet to be seen.[123]

Another factor related to time is how much someone has to learn, and international staff will almost always have a lower level of base knowledge about the context than their national counterparts. Research has found that employing local staff and working with local partners is the best way for international aid actors to acquire contextual understanding. However, this research also notes that "**Most international organizations already employ national staff and/or work with local partners, but their knowledge of the context is not informing decision-making.**"[124] This is particularly problematic when considering, that "Short-term assignments often mean international staff are not recruited for their knowledge of the context or their interpersonal or language skills, but rather for their technical or managerial capacities."[125] This demonstrates a failure of organizational management systems to recognize the complementary expertise of local and international staff, and to properly value and integrate contextual information and local knowledge in decision-making.

The formal humanitarian sector has been accused of becoming increasingly risk averse.[126] Humanitarian action has become more dangerous over the past 20 years, with more aid workers becoming victims of targeted attacks, kidnapping, airstrikes and other acts of violence.[127] This has prompted an increase in risk averse approaches to physical security, in particular for international staff. In many cases, these "bunkerized" approaches have further removed international aid actors – and subsequently aid decision-making – from the context on the ground and from people affected by crisis.[128] The sector has also become more risk averse with respect to financial compliance and organizational financial sustainability, legal compliance (notably with anti-terrorism and anti-corruption legislation), aid diversion and reputational risk.[129]

International aid actors often seek to minimize risk through institutional controls on partners, programs and information,[130] which are detrimental to building the capacity of and developing equal partnerships with local organizations, as well as to enabling crisis-affected people to have influence on program decision-making. Some local actors may be excluded from partnership opportunities altogether because they cannot provide acceptable "proof" that they are not a risk.[131] Speaking for many national and local organizations, NEAR has articulated the cost of risk aversion:

> *"While acknowledging the responsibility of public institutions to ensure tax-payer funds are spent effectively and accountably, there is a point at which efforts to control fiduciary risk reach a point of diminishing returns and begin to undermine the very purpose of the exercise. The humanitarian system urgently needs to find better ways of managing risk that enable the actors best placed to respond to get on with their jobs."* [132]

Shifting aid decision-making towards local actors and crisis-affected people also requires risk tolerance with respect to path deviation and failure on "upward" commitments[133] that the formal humanitarian sector does not possess (especially for local actors), although the formal sector regularly tolerates failures with respect to "downward" commitments. Accepting feedback means accepting critical feedback, and enabling influence over program decisions means be willing to accept and admit decisions and directions that were "wrong." This is a challenge in any entrenched bureaucracy. In addition, embracing transformative participation means accepting decisions taken by people affected by crises even when formal actors may disagree with the conclusion and be reticent to accept the risk

117. Ramalingam and Mitchell 2014, pg. 23
118. Aguaconsult Ltd 2012, pg. 47-48
119. ODI 2016, pgs. 18, 42-43
120. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 52-57; Groupe URD 2009, chapters 2 and 3
121. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 52-54; Groupe URD 2009, pg. 49.
122. DI 2018, pg. 22
123. DI 2017, pg. 63-64; Aguaconsult Ltd 2012, pg. 85
124. Campbell 2018, pg. 39, 87
125. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 55
126. See for example: NEAR 2018, pgs. 5-6; Donini and Maxwell 2013, pg. 3

of supporting such programming. The bureaucracy of the formal humanitarian aid sector has resulted in several advancements towards efficiency and improvements in quality. However, its path dependence and risk aversion support the current aid power and incentive structure, and serve as an obstacle to transformative change.

4.4 Aid Worldview

Key messages

- The culture, values, beliefs and language that make up the worldview of the formal humanitarian sector frame how the sector operates.
- People affected by crisis are often presented as passive recipients reliant on the formal humanitarian sector. But people are their own first responders and often receive a greater proportion of support from family, friends and local actors.
- The formal humanitarian sector bestows a greater amount of trust, faith and acceptance for missteps on international actors than it provides for local actors
- Technical expertise and Western management practices are valued over contextual understanding, local knowledge and lived experience
- The formal humanitarian sector does not equally value the knowledge and experience of its national staff in decision-making, let alone that of crisis-affected people.

"Worldview" refers to the culture, values, beliefs and language that legitimate a system, underpin its assumptions and frame how it operates.[134] Some key features of the aid worldview that serve as inertias to crisis-affected people having greater influence over aid decision-making include:

Humanitarians as the "saviors": **The notion that people affected by crisis are passive recipients belies the reality of most crisis response and recovery.** People and communities affected by crises are their own first responders, and from first response onwards they innovate and adapt to meet their needs.[135] Crisis-affected people seek out resources and support from the formal humanitarian sector, but also – and in many cases even more-so – from family, friends, local government, religious institutions, businesses, local civil society and other actors.[136]

Formal humanitarian aid is just one component (albeit often a very important one) of their own personal response. In the surveys conducted for the 2015 State of the Humanitarian System study, respondents reported that while a significant 33% of the assistance they received came from aid organizations, two-thirds came from a variety of other sources: government (30%), family living abroad (22%), and local businesses (15%).[137]

People affected by an emergency are the best judges of their own interests...when people are not involved, a response can miss its mark, leave out vulnerable groups, waste money, and add to suffering."
– Emergency Capacity Building Project, The Good Enough Guide

Who humanitarians inherently trust/distrust: **The formal humanitarian sector bestows a greater amount of trust, faith and acceptance for missteps on international actors than it provides for local actors.** The sector needs to ask the question: "Why would an international actor, often distanced from the problem and lacking understanding of the context, be expected to make better decisions than a local actor?" Similarly, it needs to ask: "Are international actors more likely to be accountable to crisis-affected people because they are not part of local power structures, or are local actors more likely to be accountable because they have an ongoing relationship with the people they are serving?"[138] The technical capacities, interests and even values of local actors are often the subject of considerable scrutiny,[139] despite that locally led response can mean a "more timely response that is based on better knowledge of the local context, saving more lives, possibly at lower cost."[140] Contextual understanding is essential to both program quality and risk management.[141] However, the capacities and interests of international actors – for example, to be able to understand the context well enough to design and implement relevant, effective, inclusive and accountable programs – is much less scrutinized in practice.

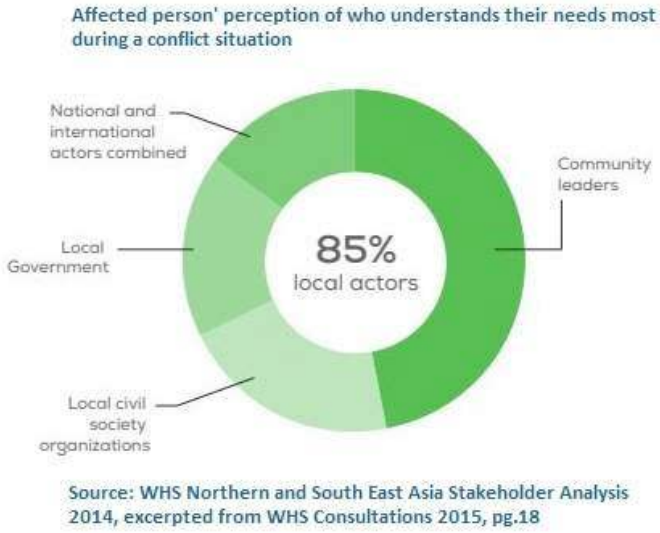
PHOTO: SERGEY NEAMOSCOU

127. Humanitarian Outcomes (2017). Aid Worker Security Report 2017, pgs. 1-2. Some have noted that humanitarian action may not be becoming inherently or proportionally more dangerous, but that there may be more aid workers in more dangerous locations (see for example: Donini and Maxwell 2013, pgs. 388-389).
128. Donini and Maxwell 2013, pgs. 411-412
129. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 56; ODI 2016, pgs. 62-63; NEAR 2018, pg. 31
130. Donini et al. 2008, pg. 25
131. ODI 2016, pgs. 62-63
132. NEAR 2018, pg. 31
133 CALP 2018, pg. 90

134. Inayatullah 2004, pg. 17
135. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 116
136. Donini et al. 2008, pg. 4
137. ALNAP 2015, pg. 95
138. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 5
139. ODI 2016, pg. 60; Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 21-22
140. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 18
141. Donini et al. 2008, pg. 25

The humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence form the normative basis for international humanitarian response, but they are not consistently applied to international and local actors.[142] It may be easier for an "outsider" to be impartial in theory, but prioritizing and delivering aid impartially hinges on evidence and contextual understanding of needs that may be much more accessible to an "insider." It may be extremely difficult for local actors to be independent from local power structures, but it may also be extremely difficult for international actors, who are reliant on donor governments for their continued funding, to be independent from foreign policy objectives.[143] Local actors and staff may perpetuate the power dynamics, biases and social inequalities of the community. On the other hand, international staff and actors' preconceptions and lack of understanding of the community, may result in incorrect assumptions about and unintentional perpetuation of dynamics.

What expertise humanitarians value: The formal humanitarian sector values technical expertise and Western management practices over contextual understanding, local knowledge and lived experience.[148] A charity-based model continues to dominate in international aid[149]– a "professional gift" model where "people are perceived to be in need, people of good intent agree to help or support them, interventions are made available and the person on the receiving end is expected to be, and often is, grateful."[150] The formal humanitarian sector may be able to learn from advocates of "co-production" in high-income countries: that is, considering people as holding lived experience that makes them experts in their own right (with knowledge and understanding that outsiders do not have access to) and working in a way that positions people who access services as equal partners in a problem-solving process with people who provide services.[151] This should not be a foreign concept to formal sector actors. The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief states



Both international and local actors may choose not to be neutral, for both "right" (e.g., promoting justice) and "wrong" (e.g., political or personal interest) reasons. Despite often considerable differences in capacity and internal controls, corruption is found among both local and international aid actors, abuse of vulnerable populations is found among both local and international aid actors, and prejudice is found among both local and international aid actors.[144] Crisis-affected people have expressed concerns about corruption, mismanagement, ethnic and tribal bias and other issues with local actors.[145] However, crisis-affected people have also expressed concerns about the motives and interests of international aid actors and about being unable to hold international aid actors accountable for bad programming or behaviors.[146] In addition, despite concerns reported, crisis-affected people have expressed the importance of international aid actors working with local actors.[147]

that "respect for the disaster victim as an equal partner in action should never be lost."[152] **Good decisions require *both* technical *and* contextual understanding**. Contextual understanding is particularly important to ensuring the inclusion of women and other marginalized groups. Oxfam has found that "local actors, particularly local female actors, are more likely than international actors to know how a particular crisis may affect women differently from men."[153] Lack of contextual understanding can also result in dangerous decisions. Participants in The Learning Project pointed out that the criteria that international aid actors use to define target groups and vulnerability, and the design of projects around external agendas without proper consideration of the local social and political context can, and has, served to exacerbate tensions and divisions.[154]

142. See for example ODI 2016 pg. 60: "The fact that many organizations pick and choose when and which humanitarian principles apply, while claiming to be abiding by all of them all of the time, reinforces the perception that the humanitarian system is operating to a double standard and undermines trust in the aid endeavor." See also Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 22.
143. ODI 2016, pg. 51-52
144. A. Donini et al. 2008, p. 10-13, 25; UN WHS MENA 2015, pg. 11; Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pgs. 18, 21-22
145. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 89-90, 99; Donini et al. 2008, pg. 12
146. Donini et al. 2008, pgs. 10-12; Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 46
147. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 93
148. ODI 2016, pg. 23
149. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 13
150. Definition excerpted from British Red Cross, Co-production Principles
151. British Red Cross Co-Production Principles. Principle 10: "Treat people who access our services as assets and equal partners in decision-making, with lived experience that make them experts on their own lives offering unique perspectives and insights to decision-making processes." Co-production incorporates co-design (strategy and planning), co-decision making (on the allocation of resources or recruitment of staff), co-delivery (involving people who use services in service provision) and co-evaluation of services. The concept of was initially developed in the 1970s from the perspective of public services delivery in the US and UK, but fell out of favor in the 1980s as market-based approaches were preferred. Over the past 15 years, the concept has re-emerged strongly in the UK. See: Social Care Institute for Excellence (https://www.scie.org.uk/co-production/)
152. The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, Article 10
153. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 19
154. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pg. 25

"Humanitarian thought patterns still assume Western technical superiority and an obligation to act as tutors to poorer and badly organized countries."
– Hugo Slim, Humanitarian Ethics

Colonialism: The formal humanitarian sector does not equally value the knowledge and experience of its national and local staff in decision-making, let alone that of crisis-affected people. Excellent historical research by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and others has traced the linkages between humanitarian action and colonialism.[155] Those linkages are not gone. Outside of the obvious overlap between rich (aid donor) countries and colonizers and poor (aid recipient) countries and former colonies, international aid actors (in the words of Hugo Slim) "'set out' from the West/North and go 'into the field' to give to the poor. It is a one-way sell."[156] While international actors undertake "capacity building" for local actors, knowledge of local languages, systems and practices are rarely if ever considered as capacities that local actors need to help international actors to build. Despite the fact that the vast majority of humanitarian aid workers are national staff (over 95% by some estimates), they hold far less management and decision-making power.[157] The difference in salary and benefits between international and national staff in aid organizations has been the source of much frustration and contention, with international staff receiving higher salaries (even in cases of similar education and experience), additional monetary and in-kind benefits, better security training and protections, and more supportive insurance packages.[158] In addition, the fact that aid practitioners still need to be reminded in guidance documents that national staff are important sources of local and contextual knowledge, implies on the one hand that the guidance documents do not have national staff as their primary audience (despite that national staff are the majority of staff) and on the other hand that respect for the expertise of national staff is not something taken as a given for the international staff who are being recruited.[159]

"we address those vulnerabilities that we recognize and fit our schemas, we speak to those who speak our language and who have copied our institutions, we impose our mental models, we tend to shape reality in our image rather than trying to see it from the ground up"
– Antonio Donini, Humanitarianism, Perceptions, Power

The worldview of the formal humanitarian sector underpins the power structure and is influential within the dynamics of how aid operates and, critically, in how aid decision-making is considered. Within the frame of the prevailing worldview, international aid actors set the parameters of what the problem is, they also determine how it should be approached and what success looks like. Without challenging this worldview, it is unlikely that crisis-affected people and local actors will gain greater influence over formal sector decisions.

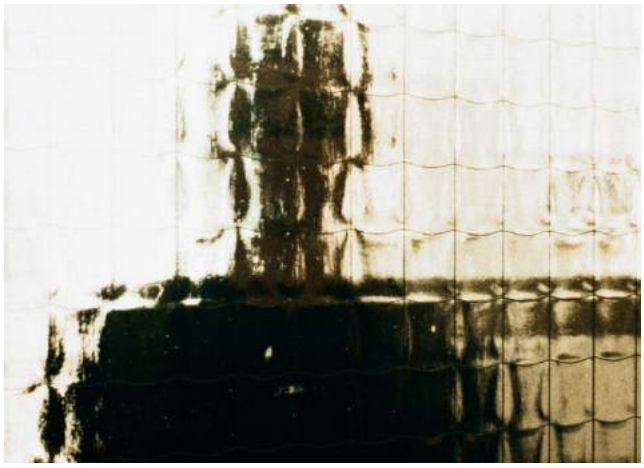


PHOTO: SERGEY NEAMOSCOU

155. See for example: Davey et al 2013
156. Slim Innovation, pg. 11-12
157. Slim Innovation, pg. 14
158. See for example: The Guardian 2016
159. See for example: Campbell 2018, pgs. 87-89

5. External trends that have high influence on the humanitarian ecosystem

"There are...a range of alternative channels for life-saving assistance, such as remittances from diaspora communities, which the humanitarian community fails to consider. As a result of these blind spots, the community is ill-equipped to identify, let alone respond to, potential disruption emerging from outside its (admittedly contested) boundaries."

– Paul Currion, Network Humanitarianism

There are major global trends that are changing the ecosystem in which the formal humanitarian sector operates. These trends are happening regardless to how the formal humanitarian sector does or does not change, and they have the potential to disrupt the internal inertias to people's participation in aid decision-making by disrupting aid "business-as-usual" and, in some cases, by providing more support and assistance choices to crisis-affected people.

5.1 Technology

The development and spread of new technologies is already creating new opportunities, strategies and risks for people affected by crisis; in how they are able to mobilize their own response,; in how they engage with the formal humanitarian sector, and in their options for support outside of the formal humanitarian sector. The ability to use technology to access different services and form connections, locally and internationally, is a game-changer that will not only provide new opportunities for many people affected by crisis, but will also force changes in how the formal humanitarian sector communicates with, and serves, people affected by crisis. However, access to technology is not equal or equally empowering. New technologies will also open crisis-affected people up to new risks and leave many behind on the other side of the "digital divide." The following three sub-sections will explore how growing global interconnectivity, the use of new technologies for aid delivery, and broader personal empowerment enabled by new technologies may provide crisis-affected people with more choices and disrupt the formal humanitarian sector, as well as the risks that they may present for crisis-affected people.

160. In 2017, the world reached 5 billion unique mobile phone subscribers and nearly 3.6 billion individuals were estimated to be using the internet (including 2.5 billion people in developing countries), a roughly 1 billion increase in 4 years on both counts. ITU notes that mobile services have not only connected "urban, better educated and wealthier groups, but also people in previously unconnected and rural areas." By the end of 2017, it was estimated that 70 out of every 100 people in LDCs would have mobile phone subscriptions and by 2020, the mobile phone industry estimates that 75% of the world's population will have mobile service. It is also estimated that just under 3 billion people will be using social media by 2020 (up from just under 1 billion people in 2010). Sources: ITU 2018; GSMA 2017; ITU, World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database; Statista, Number of social network users worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (in billions).
161. UNHCR 2016, pg. 8; EUPHA 2014, pgs. 18-19
162. See for example: UNHCR 2016; BBC Media Action 2012
163. Davey et al. 2013, pg. 15
164. Phillips 2016

5.1.1 Interconnectivity

Key messages

- Growing interconnectivity will provide more choices for people to organize their own response and expand avenues for people to connect with formal and non-formal aid providers, as well as funders who are willing to meet their priorities (rather than relying on "who shows up").
- People will have the tools to amplify their own unfiltered voices and narratives to influence aid decisions and demand more from formal sector actors.
- Social media, crowd-funding and financial technologies will provide local actors with greater access to expanding funding opportunities, and their contextual knowledge will provide them with a competitive advantage to leverage in new partnerships.

The people of the world are more interconnected today than ever before, a trend markedly accelerated from the beginning of this century with advancements in, and the spread of, information and communications technology (ICT),[160] supported by continued economic globalization, more accessible air travel and international migration. This interconnectivity has changed and continues to change politics, business, interpersonal relationships – and aid. Globally, mobile phones, internet connectivity and social media have become essential for accessing news, business opportunities and official information, communicating with friends and family across the globe, and even – in many places – for organizing services like health and education. Likewise, they have become critical tools for many crisis-affected people, expanding the opportunities they have to communicate among themselves, access the information they need to make decisions, appeal for external support, and make their voices heard.[161] The evidence is clear that communication and access to information are extremely important to crisis-affected people, and can be seen in families' and individuals' prioritization of often scare resources towards mobile connectivity.[162] Furthermore, just as innovations in communications technology and global mobility helped to catalyze ordinary citizens to start the humanitarian movement in the mid-1800s,[163] new levels of interconnectivity are catalyzing changes in how ordinary citizens – outside of the formal humanitarian sector – respond to crises today.[164]

There are numerous examples of crisis-affected people, diaspora populations from crisis-affected countries, community groups, "digital humanitarians", individual citizens, and more, who – enabled and empowered by interconnectivity – reach out to seek help, provide help or do both. **Crisis-affected people are better able to connect with the world outside the crisis, and the world outside the crisis is better able to connect with them.**

Interconnectivity enables crisis-affected people to mobilize and organize their own responses more effectively. Disaster survivors use mobile connectivity to call for immediate support from their community and from response organizations: in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, Haitians sent hundreds of thousands of SMS and social media messages to communicate their needs.[165] Interconnectivity also helps communities to better organize to meet needs. Peer-to-peer support has always been critical to crisis response: communities have always been their own first responders and family and friends unaffected by the crisis have always supported affected people.[166] Following the eruption of Mount Merapi in Indonesia in 2010, traditional media (in the form of local radio) and social media (in the form of Twitter and Facebook) were used together to organize a community-based response to immediate needs.[167] In Somaliland in 2017, as drought hit again, people created a WhatsApp group to communicate their needs with each other, resulting in hundreds of families receiving the water and food they needed through a combination of community and outside support (further enabled by mobile money – **see text box on page 35).**[168] Syrian and other refugees use closed Facebook and WhatsApp groups to share information and support each other while fleeing to safety and to negotiate the needs and risks they face in their countries or asylum.[169]

Interconnectivity also enables crisis-affected people to have greater access to direct financial support, through remittances from family living abroad. Migrants and refugees from LICs and MICs send hundreds of billions of dollars back to family members every year.[170] This includes fragile and crisis-affected countries: for example, it is estimated that one out of four adults in Somalia receives remittances from abroad.[171] Remittances have been increasing considerably since 2000, from $104 million in 2000 to over $380 million in 2015.[172] This support is critical for resilience to and recovery from crises, but the fees to send this money can be extremely costly (e.g., 12% to send $200 to Africa).[173] As internet access and the use of blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies expand, sending money will become cheaper and faster.[174] Some experts indicate that cryptocurrencies are on track to become the "remittance money of the future" by significantly reducing both the time (from days to hours) and costs (by as much as 75%) for international financial transfers.[175]

In addition, interconnectivity supports "decentralized individual action"[176] and international citizen support for crisis-affected people, further enhancing assistance options outside of the formal humanitarian sector. Crowd-sourcing and crowd-funding platforms are providing more avenues for people around the world who want to support people affected by crisis to do so – directly in contact with crisis affected people, local organizations or members of the diaspora, without working through formal sector actors.[177] When Haitians sent out messages about their needs in 2010, thousands of Haitians in the diaspora and citizens from other countries responded by processing this massive amount of data: aggregating, translating and creating open source maps to plot the needs and map the changed face of the country.[178] While refugees were using social media to help each other navigate flight to Europe in 2015, Europeans were using social media and creating crowd-sourcing platforms to coordinate grassroots support for refugees, matching them with housing and other resources, without the support of the funding, or coordination mechanisms, of the formal humanitarian sector.[179] In the aftermath of the earthquakes in Kathmandu (2015) and Mexico City (2017), members of the Nepali and Mexican diasporas used social media and both low-tech and high-tech crowd-sourcing to map the crises and connect affected people with volunteers and organizations who could help.[180]

As interconnectivity and financial technologies (see more below) expand, crowd-funding is increasing as an avenue for funding. The internet, mobile technology and social media have already proven to be powerful direct fundraising tools, both for formal humanitarian sector actors and – importantly – for small organizations and individuals.[181] The costs to grassroots organizations of getting their message out and connecting with potential funders, supporters and influencers, has drastically reduced. In the aftermath of the Kathmandu earthquake, Nepalis living abroad used their networks, crowd-funding platforms and social media to raise money for their communities and local organizations back home.[182] More recently, in June 2018, Facebook experienced its largest-ever single fundraising effort, when over half a million people – spurred by collective outrage over the treatment of immigrants and refugees at the U.S. southern border – contributed a combined $20+ million dollars in just over 1 week to a local Texas immigration organization.[183] Crowd-funding is expected to grow to a $300 billion industry by 2025, and the World Bank estimates that $96 billion of this could go to developing countries.[184]

165. HHI 2011, pg. 11; BBC Media Action 2012; Phillips 2016
166. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 67; Phillips 2016
167. Jalin Merapi network, as cited in BBC Media Action 2012, pg. 14
168. Daryeel as cited in Currion 2018, pg. 12; Peterson 2017
169. See for example: Sancton 2016
170. UN DESA 2017, pg. 1
171. ODI/CGD 2015, pg. 13
172. OECD, Non-ODA flows to developing countries: Remittances
173. ODI 2016, pg. 37
174. A blockchain is a "distributed database." The key disruptive feature of this technology is that it removes the need for intermediaries or central authorities: you don't need to trust the person or institution you are dealing with, or have the information verified by authorities, because the entire history of transactions is on the blockchain. Blockchain has supported the development and spread of crypto-currencies. Crypto-currencies exist purely in the digital realm and without the backing of a government authority, because the decentralized control of the blockchain provides the necessary security and substitutes for the centralized control of a state. Crypto-currencies can be transferred easily across borders through the blockchain and, via brokers, traded for hard currency.
175. Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 7, 15.
176. As referenced in Currion 2018, pg. 10. This is defined as "cooperative and coordinated action carried out through radically distributed, nonmarket mechanisms that do not depend on proprietary strategies."
177. Qadir et at 2016
178. HHI 2011, pg. 11; Qadir et at 2016
179. Currion 2018, pgs. 8, 12; Sancton 2016
180. Sinha 2015; MIT News 2018
181. For example: Maron 2013. The American Red Cross raised $5 million through text message donations in the first 48 hours after the 2010 Haiti earthquake in 2010. Trejos 2017, The "Ice Bucket Challenge" that went viral on YouTube in 2014 famously raised over $115 million dollars from millions of participants for the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Association.
182. Maron 2013
183. Guynn 2018
184. Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 19; DI 2017, pg. 53
Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 19; DI 2017, pg. 53

Perhaps most importantly, interconnectivity also turns the crisis communications paradigm on its head. Crisis-affected people can directly raise their own voices (and needs) to aid power-holders, to the media, and to the general public without the filters of journalists or aid agencies. Via current ICT channels, crisis-affected people already have the tools to communicate directly with the very individuals who are making funding and management decisions over aid.[185] Interactive communications via websites and social media are already an expected norm for businesses, media, government and other civil organizations in developed countries, and are becoming a norm globally. There is no reason that aid actors should expect to be exempt from this expectation.

Disruptive Potential: **Interconnectivity enables crisis-affected people to present their own narratives – publicly and thus also to donors, the taxpayers of donor countries, and other powerful aid actors – about the crisis and the response, narratives which may conflict with the "official" narrative of the government, or the aid community.** Furthermore, the access to information facilitated by interconnectivity can also enable crisis-affected people to find out how international aid actors are presenting them, the crisis, and response programs. This not only provides a groundwork for setting expectations and demanding accountability,[186] but may also enable crisis-affected people to play a direct role in the global discussion of the crisis, potentially influencing aid actor response strategies. Unsolicited feedback from crisis-affected people to donors and other aid actors without intermediary filters, will increase opportunities for power-holders to utilize direct information in decision-making. It will not address the issue of power-holders being able to cherry pick what feedback they take into consideration; however, it may open cracks that have already appeared in the aid worldview around decision-making. For example, some actors have already envisaged more transformative ways that new technologies could impact aid decision-making, such as donors using models that facilitate direct decision-making by crisis-affected people on aid priorities and partnerships, through voting for specific services or providers, or even individual selection of assistance from a menu of available aid offers.[187]

Local aid actors may be able to harness competitive advantages in a more interconnected and technological world, providing competition that pushes change towards more localized aid decision-making. "There are sectors where digitalization favors the local players:"[188] local context and in-depth understanding of the market matters, and local actors may thus have an advantage. For example, local ride-sharing service Grab was able to push global giant Uber out of Southeast Asia in part, because Uber relied on its template that had worked in much of the rest of the world, rather than adapting its platform. Grab, however, understood and adapted to "hyper-local" contexts: providing communication in local dialects, accepting cash payments, offering motorcycle taxis, including locally relevant safety measures for passengers, and enabling pick-up location identifiers that don't rely on addresses, among others. These adaptations made Grab a better, more effective option for service delivery.[189] It is easy to see the parallels to aid and hypothesize a growing advantage for local aid actors. The formal humanitarian sector favors standard templates and models that can "go to scale," whereas local actors may have the agility and contextual understanding to create locally adapted models for aid delivery. This may well-place local actors to harness crowd-funding and to develop partnerships with donors, national governments, and private sector companies (including platform companies), especially as the expanded use of blockchain technology reduces the need for international intermediaries. This may prove particularly valuable with the expansion of cash-based assistance, where understanding of the local context is critical to determining eligibility criteria, risk assessment, what needs cannot be met through cash transfers, and other key program design considerations that surround the actual financial transaction.

Crowd-funding efforts to directly support crisis-affected people and local organizations are likely to grow further, as the advancement of blockchain and cryptocurrency technologies reduces the need for intermediaries. Personal appeals have long been an effective means to harness collective feeling in support of a cause, and crowd-funding platforms and social media enable direct appeals more easily, more effectively and – critically – less expensively. Crowdfunding enables initiatives proposed by crisis-affected people, other private citizens (notably members of the diaspora from crisis-affected countries) and smaller direct implementers (such as local organizations) to be funded by the public. Multiple examples have shown that it works as a mechanism for mobilizing donations from people all over the world.[190] Crowd-funding may prove a powerful tool for providing alternative and more localized avenues for assistance outside of the formal humanitarian sector. It may also prove to be a more risk-tolerant way of funding innovative organizations, ideas and approaches (for better or worse).[191]

"networked technologies are changing the types of resources that are important and changing the way in which those resources flow, which will in turn affect power relationships within the sector."
– Paul Currion, Network Humanitarianism

185. See example in Currion 2018, pg. 1
186. Currion 2014; Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 53
187. See for example: Currion 2018, pg. 12 "United Beyond Nations" proposal and Sustainia et al 2017, pgs. 32-34
188. Yu 2018
189. Yu 2018
190. IARAN 2016, pg. 169.
191. Sustainia et al 2017

Growing interconnectivity will enable crisis-affected people to more effectively self-organize and connect with a host of potential funders and aid providers who are willing and able to meet their needs and priorities (rather than relying on "who shows up").[192] In addition to providing more choices for crisis-affected people in coping with crisis, these enhanced opportunities for self-organization, and access to alternative sources of assistance, combined with amplified voices of crisis-affected people, may – over time – provide real competition that incentivizes formal humanitarian actors to move towards more transformative participation and genuine partnerships, supporting local actors and initiatives.

5.1.2 New Technological Solutions for Delivering Aid

Key messages

- Aid actors are increasingly using digital and mobile technology to gather more information more directly from a greater number of people, informing response planning and coordination.
- New technologies are supporting the growth of cash-based assistance, remote program modalities, and other approaches that can transfer more decision-making towards crisis-affected people.
- These technologies have the potential to increase both the choices and influence of crisis-affected people with respect to the aid they receive, *if* powerful actors within the sector use new technologies to enable such shifts.

While the interconnectivity enabled by new technologies is changing the ecosystem in which the formal humanitarian sector operates, new technologies are also changing how the formal humanitarian sector interacts with, and delivers aid, to people affected by crisis. Aid actors are increasingly using digital and mobile technology to gather and analyze information directly from crisis-affected people and communities.[193] Mobile phone-based data collection, open source survey tools like Open Data Kit (ODK), crowd-sourcing platforms, and the engagement of Volunteer and Technical Communities (V&TC), or "digital humanitarians," are increasing formal actors' abilities to gather, process and analyze high volumes of information. The result is more information on needs and priorities coming more directly from a greater number people affected by crisis, to inform response planning and coordination.[194] Going forward, advances in data analytics and machine learning may further expand the ability of the formal humanitarian sector to integrate large amounts of data coming directly from crisis-affected people to better inform aid decision-making.[195]

The establishment of "Feedback Mechanisms" is perhaps the area where the formal humanitarian sector has invested the most in using new technologies to increase participation of, and accountability, to people affected by crisis,[196] as the normative push for greater accountability to affected populations since 2000 has paralleled advancements in ICT and data technology. Formal humanitarian actors have used, and are continuing to experiment, with call centers, SMS, social media, websites, and other tools to enable "two-way communication" with crisis-affected people, expand Q&A about programs, undertake monitoring and evaluation, and improve complaints and grievance reporting.[197] New technologies have been employed to undertake initiatives focused on capturing the voices of crisis-affected people and to use private-sector "customer satisfaction" techniques to gather, and better understand, the views and opinions of crisis-affected people with respect to aid programs and actors.[198] Various actors within the formal humanitarian sector are also exploring how ICT can be used to enable people who access aid services to rate the quality of goods and services and/or the performance of aid actors (similar to the ubiquitous use of online public reviews in other sectors), and how such ratings could be used to inform donor decision-making on what to fund.[199]

New technologies are also supporting choice-enabling program delivery modalities. A key example of this is the growth of cash-based programming. In 2015, the High Level Panel on Cash Transfers concluded that unrestricted cash transfers "provide affected populations with choice and more control over their own lives."[200] Technologies such as mobile phones, digital payments and biometrics (fingerprints and iris scans) have enabled cash-based programming to become more accessible to crisis-affected people and – importantly as incentives to the formal humanitarian sector – more secure and more cost-effective.[201] It is anticipated that blockchain technology will amplify (and streamline) the use of cash-based approaches as it will decrease the need to pay or share information with third party intermediaries.[202] Technological advancements may similarly open new doors to expand locally managed programs in difficult to access areas, by providing not only the means to more efficiently get goods and expertise to these areas (via telemedicine, remote sensing, 3D printing, UAVs, etc.),[203] but also greater security and confidence in such programs. Blockchain may decrease risks[204] and increase the confidence with respect to working directly with local actors. Confidence and accountability may also be enhanced through technologies that enable greater participation of people in monitoring and evaluation, or even joint quality control by crisis-affected people on the ground and formal humanitarian sector actors located elsewhere (e.g., via combinations of ICT and sensor technologies to enable community monitoring and reporting).[205]

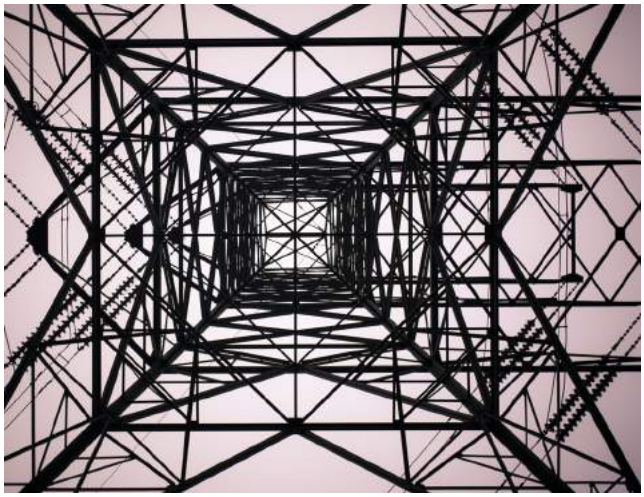
192. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 69; Currion 2014; Currion 2018
193. ODI 2016, pg. 40-41
194. Qadir et at 2016; Sinha 2015; EUPHA 2014, pgs. 18-19
195. The Future Red Cross and Red Crescent, Emerging Technology; UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 97-98
196. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 40-41
197. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 40-41
198. ODI 2016, pgs. 41, 60
199. See for example: IRC 2015
200. ODI/CGD 2015, pg. 8
201. CALP 2018, pgs. 90-91, ODI/CGD 2015, pg. 18
202. CALP 2018, pgs. 90-91; Gerard 2017
203. ITU 2018, pg. 6-7; The Future Red Cross and Red Crescent, Emerging Technology; Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 6
204. See for example: Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 31
205. Brown and Donini 2014, pgs. 40-41; Currion 2018, pg. 10

Mass Communications

Timely and accurate information is essential for people to be able to make informed decisions about their own crisis preparedness, response and recovery strategies. New technologies are enabling both governments and the formal humanitarian sector to undertake more effective mass communication and better address the information needs of at-risk and crisis-affected communities. For example, governments and other actors use social media and SMS – alongside traditional methods like radio – to provide early warning in advance of hazard events, to provide information about evacuation and safety during events, and to provide information about how to access assistance and recovery support after events.[206] New ICTs enable mass communications and information campaigns to be better targeted to specific communities and groups within the community, and even individualized.[207]

Disruptive Potential: The formal humanitarian sector has shown a keen interest in harnessing new technology to make crisis response and recovery more efficient and effective.[208] New technologies have the potential to increase both the choices and the influence of crisis-affected people with respect to the aid they receive, *if* powerful actors within the sector use new technologies to enable such shifts. However, some have argued that efforts to-date have been too focused on improving the efficiency of the sector (instrumental participation) and not enough on how these technologies can help to evolve modes of partnership and collaboration with crisis-affected people and local actors.[209] **The potential to support paradigm change is there,**[210] **but aid workers consulted for this report also expressed concerns about the potential for technology to serve as a tool for further concentrating power among even fewer, larger aid actors** (those who already have a greater ability to harness technology at scale and force out smaller actors), thus further entrenching the existing power structure.

New technologies improve the formal humanitarian sector's ability to collect, analyze and use information from crisis-affected people. This may or may not translate into greater influence for crisis-affected people. Firstly, collecting, analyzing and using evidence are not value-neutral activities. What information to collect, who to collect it from, how to weigh different types and sources of information, and how to act on evidence entails judgements, and these judgements are influenced by the prevailing incentive structure and worldview. Just as the private sector uses customer feedback in line with its profit-seeking incentive structure, so most aid actors are likely to use feedback from crisis-affected people in line with the sector's "upward" looking incentive structure.[211] If feedback from crisis-affected people continues to be crowded-out by other, "higher priority" information or concerns, then enhanced technological capabilities will result in very limited increase to the influence of crisis-affected people over aid decisions. However, it will be a different story if this new ease and wealth of feedback inspires movement among top donors to systematically refer to, and respect, feedback from crisis-affected people amongst competing data and priorities. In this case, it would strongly increase the influence of crisis-affected people on the decisions of formal sector actors who rely on top donor funding. Secondly, feedback from crisis-affected people is – like crisis-affected people themselves – heterogeneous. Aid workers struggle with how to understand, interpret and use feedback coming from affected populations, especially if it is contradictory or challenges "hard data." Gathering and understanding feedback is an iterative process that takes time and engagement.[212] However, while technology may facilitate more efficient gathering of information from people, it may also do so without actually engaging with people (and by leaving out people who have fallen behind in the digital divide). Some crisis-affected people have already highlighted that technological approaches can "dehumanize" the interaction with aid actors.[213] Technology cannot replace the face-to-face listening and understanding that is essential to interpreting feedback.



206. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 9; Aguaconsult Ltd 2012, pg. 48; EUPHA 2014, pgs. 18-19
207. See for example: ITU 2018, pg. 6-7; www.refugee.info
208. See for example: The Grand Bargain commitments 4.1 and 6.3
209. Currion 2018, pg. 10; Currion 2014
210. See for example: Sustainia et al 2017
211. It is worth noting that "customer" is only an empowered paradigm in the private sector when the customer has the power to withdraw their business or shift their business to a competitor; this is often not the case for the "customers" of aid agencies.
212. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, p. 19; IRC et al 2018, pg. 7
213. UN WHS MENA 2015, pg. 16

New technologies may support program delivery strategies that put more choices in the hands of crisis-affected people, and more responsibilities in the hands of local actors. However, similar to above, the structure in which these approaches are embedded is important. Cash-based assistance provides greater choice for crisis-affected people with respect to meeting their needs, but crisis-affected people may have very limited, if any, influence on key aspects of the design and implementation of cash-based programs (e.g., eligibility criteria, delivery modality, personal data sharing, etc.). By helping to alleviate some risk concerns (such as corruption),[214] new technologies may expand "remote management" and localization approaches, which could empower local organizations and transfer more decision-making closer to crisis-affected populations. If this enables local organizations to gain the trust of donors, their access, contextual understanding, and local relationships may make them formidable competitors to international NGOs. However, if power and decision-making remain centralized within international organizations and staff, remote management may remain a mechanism that amounts to little more than sub-contracting of risk.[215]

The potential for new technologies to increase the influence of crisis-affected people on aid decision-making relies, to a considerable extent, on the political will of formal sector actors to use it in a transformative way. While it could be highly influential, its impact relative to other technological drivers, is much more uncertain.

5.1.3 Technological Empowerment

Key messages

- By further enabling financial and market inclusion, new technologies will empower many people with expanded coping strategies and resilience in the face of crises, providing more choices outside of the formal humanitarian sector.
- Blockchain has the potential to empower crisis-affected people with the means to safeguard and access proof of identity and other records.
- Technological advancements will likely precipitate a contraction in the number of international aid actors, as it becomes easier to engage local partners directly, without intermediaries.

ICT and financial technology are already empowering people in developing and crisis-affected countries, and these technological developments will expand many crisis-affected people's options outside of the formal humanitarian sector. With the support of technologies like mobile money, financial inclusion has expanded to cover over two-thirds of the world's adult population,[216] and it is theoretically within reach of the two-thirds of the remaining "unbanked" population who are estimated to have mobile phones.[217] People who have access to financial products and services are better able to invest in their own education, healthcare and business opportunities, as well as to save for emergencies or access the finances needed to deal with crises.[218] Financial inclusion also makes people more able to access insurance and credit to help manage risk.[219] Research indicates that digital financial services, including, but not limited to mobile money, can help reduce extreme poverty, increase savings, and make it easier to access financial support from family and friends in times of emergency.[220] Even in fragile and conflict situations, financial inclusion makes it easier for people to access assistance from friends and family, as well as from aid actors.[221]

Mobile Money

While most "banked" people have an account at a bank or other financial institution, many in developing countries rely on mobile money accounts which do not require a link to a financial institution or even a smartphone. Mobile money – services that enable electronic payment and money transfer via basic mobile devices – has been particularly successful in Sub-Saharan Africa since the 2007 launch of M-Pesa in Kenya.[222] The percent of adults in Sub-Saharan Africa who have a mobile money account has grown from 12% in 2014 to over 20% in 2017, and over 70% in Kenya as of 2017.[223] In Somalia, mobile money became prevalent a few years ago, and is now often used over physical cash and for members of the Somali diaspora to send financial support to their families.[224] In addition, mobile money is also growing financial inclusion in other parts of the world: 20% of adults in Bangladesh, Iran, Mongolia and Paraguay have mobile money accounts.[225] In 2017, with 690 million registered accounts in 90 countries, over $1 billion per day was being processed through mobile money.[226] Of the 1.7 billion "unbanked" population, an estimated 1.1 billion have mobile phones, theoretically placing financial inclusion within their reach.

214. Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 31
215. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 22
216. World Bank 2018 Findex, pg. 4
217. World Bank 2018 Findex, pg. 11
218. The World Bank, Financial Inclusion Overview
219. The World Bank, Gains in Financial Inclusion, Gains for a Sustainable World
220. World Bank 2018 Findex, pg. 1
221. The World Bank, Gains in Financial Inclusion, Gains for a Sustainable World
222. Vodaphone, M-Pesa: The world's most successful money transfer service.
223. World Bank 2018 Findex, pg. 20; GSMA 2018, pg. 8
224. Example provided by NEAR
225. World Bank 2018 Findex, pg. 2
226. GSMA 2018, pg. 6

Blockchain, and the cryptocurrency technologies that use it, are already showing their potential to expand financial and market inclusion. Cryptocurrency eco-systems have emerged in several African countries and the uptake is growing; some hypothesize that cryptocurrency may "help Africa leapfrog financial service infrastructure, just as happened with landlines."[227] Mobile money has already opened up new models for micro-insurance[228] and cryptocurrency platforms may broaden this further with, for example, peer-to-peer insurance products.[229] Blockchain-based systems can make small farmers and businesses more visible in supply chains and help them to establish clear track records for their production. Smart contracts that use the blockchain to create "if this, then that" rules for auto-execution of payments, can potentially increase profit and market access for businesses in developing countries by reducing the need for middle men, or trust brokers.[230] Even in fragile contexts as restricted as Gaza, access to electricity and the internet can open doors to global job-finding and freelancing platforms that can provide paid remote work for people with the right skill sets;[231] blockchain and cryptocurrencies may make getting paid easier. All of this is beyond the expanding access to internet marketplaces and platform businesses that is already occurring.

The empowering potential of blockchain technology for crisis-affected people is not limited to financial inclusion.[232] Any kind of data can be stored on a blockchain. Digitized identity documents and other records are already being used to expand political and financial inclusion. However, centralized records – including those held by governments – can be lost, destroyed, manipulated or hacked. In the aftermath of conflicts, disasters or forced displacement, accurately re-establishing these records can be a monumental task that has huge impacts on the lives of crisis-affected people. Because there is no central version of a blockchain database, there is thus no single point at which the data can be hacked or destroyed, and no one actor can change or manipulate the data without the entire system knowing. If records were stored on a blockchain that was legally recognized by the relevant authorities, they would not need to be recreated and – even more importantly – citizens could easily access their own records during and after a crisis. This could provide crisis-affected people with the means to prove their identity (through biometric data), marriage, parentage, land ownership, business registration, educational credentials and health records – without intermediaries – regardless of where they are, or what has happened to their documents. For refugees and migrants, access to such proof could dramatically improve their ability to support their claims and start new lives in their countries of asylum or migration. Blockchain is already being planned and/or piloted for digital identity programs, land ownership records and other public sector uses. However, there are considerable political, legal and bureaucratic hurdles to governments shifting to blockchain platforms that would enable people to benefit in times of crisis, and thus this aspect of technological empowerment is not likely to be widespread during the outlook.[233]

Disruptive Potential: **For many people, technological empowerment could provide more choices outside of the formal humanitarian sector.** Financial and market inclusion have the potential to expand coping strategies and make many more people resilient in the face of crisis. There will always be people who require external support during and in the aftermath of crisis. However, people with access to insurance may need less recovery support from aid actors, and as people become more financially connected, they may be better able to access independent support (which is already considerable) from friends, family, and others not impacted by the crisis.

Technological empowerment will likely precipitate a contraction in the number of international aid actors. Growing financial inclusion will very likely increase the use and decrease the administrative burdens of cash-based assistance, making it easier to program this assistance through government social support systems (where such systems exist), through the private sector, and/or through local organizations. In addition, as noted above, blockchain technology reduces the need for intermediaries and trust brokers, and in many cases international aid actors serve as such intermediaries between donors and local/community organizations. Blockchain-based smart contracts could further reduce the need for intermediaries by lessening the burden on donors of administering multiple smaller grants. While some donors may continue to be risk averse with respect to cash-based assistance, and with respect to working directly with local actors, others are already more open to these modalities, especially given the considerable cost efficiencies (value for money) that can result from reducing intermediaries. Put together, this means that donors would need to partner with fewer international aid actors. This could result in a significant disruption in the current structure of the formal humanitarian sector. If this disruption supports greater subsidiarity and genuine localization, it would enhance crisis-affected people's influence over aid decisions. However, if this disruption is limited to a concentration of power at the top within even fewer "super agencies," it would likely further diminish the influence of crisis-affected people.

227. Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 15
228. ITU 2018, pg. 5
229. Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 15
230. Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 24, 31-32
231. Holmes 2018
232. World Bank 2018 Findex, pg. 4
233. Kshetri 2017; Oprunenco and Akmeemana 2018; Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 22-27

5.1.4 Tech Risks and Uncertainties for People Affected by Crisis

Key messages

- Access to technology is not equal: gender, age and poverty are key factors in access. Even as technology creates many opportunities to expand voices and choices, many people will also be left behind in the "digital divide." Person-to-person outreach remains necessary.
- The nature of social media and crowd-sourced information makes it an avenue for dangerous misuse and abuse, and crisis-affected people will also face increased risk with respect to their personal data being collected and used for purposes to which they did not agree.
- As the use of digital IDs expands, and ties together more of an individuals' various personal information, a "right to be hidden" is critical, especially for vulnerable populations who may be subject to persecution or exploitation.

How new technologies will evolve and what their political and socio-economic implications will be is highly uncertain, and not without risks to the voices and choices of crisis-affected people. Technology does not, in any case, present a magic solution to core, underlying problems such as access to rights, education, work permission/availability and healthcare; indeed, the ability to harness the benefits of new technologies is in many ways dependent on some of these key underlying factors. Access to technology is not equal. Poverty, age, education level, displacement status and gender are all factors in internet access, and LDCs are lagging behind with respect to internet connectivity, presenting an obstacle to universally realizing the benefits of new technologies. Both the offline and the unbanked population are disproportionately poor and female. Globally, 11.6% fewer women are internet users and 7% fewer women have financial accounts, as compared to men.[235] Due to such inequalities, **even as technology creates many opportunities to expand the voices and choices of crisis-affected people, many people will also be left behind in the "digital divide," and will be less able to benefit from new technologies.** As new technologies[224] are employed in the delivery of aid, it will be critical that aid actors do not eliminate "low tech" methods for engaging with crisis-affected populations. Person-to-person outreach is necessary to engage people who are excluded from technology (such as the elderly, people with special needs and groups with less mobile connectivity), to understand complex community contexts, and to build essential relationships between aid actors and those they aim to serve.[236]

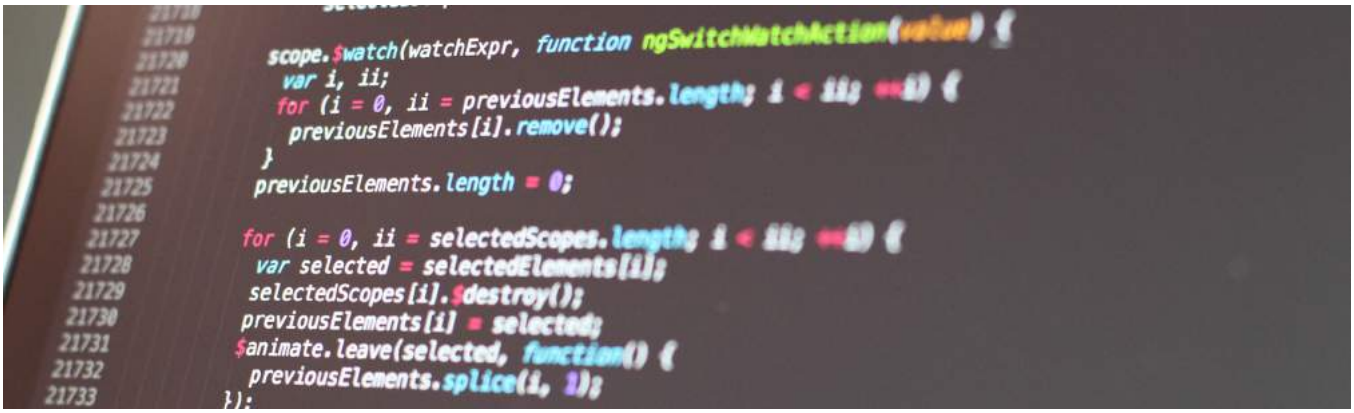
Financial and blockchain technologies, alongside their host of potential benefits, also present risks. Blockchain may empower individuals to have greater control and access over their identities and records in the future. On the other hand, if blockchain develops to provide primarily private-sector solutions without adequate levels of (multi-national) government engagement or regulation, real concerns may emerge with respect to equal access and participation on platforms which become important for exercising rights (like, e.g. property ownership).[237] Cryptocurrencies, while potentially making it cheaper and easier for local organizations and crisis-affected people to receive funding from other countries, have also been shown to be very volatile, and may experience rapid drops in value, which could mean that those on the receiving end receive much less.[238]

Another major source of technological uncertainty and risk is found in the nature of social media and other crowd-sourced information: it can be incomplete, rife with intentional or unintentional inaccuracies and abused for malicious intent.[239] The huge flow of this information from disparate sources makes it challenging to monitor, manage and verify, even by the companies that own the platforms themselves (like Facebook). **Social media has been used to lure people into human trafficking, manipulate democratic processes, commit financial fraud and incite violence through false accusations and rumor.**[240] It has been used by armed groups to mobilize support and by violent ethnically prejudiced groups to target minorities. These present real risks for all users, and the risks are magnified for vulnerable users who are more in need of the information or less savvy to the risks. Misinformation can precipitate local emergencies and increase risks in major emergencies.

234. ITU 2018, pg. 6-7, Currion 2018, pgs. 15-16
235. ITU 2018, pg. 14; World Bank 2018 Findex, pg. xii
236. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 74; UN WHS MENA 2015, pg. 16
237. Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 29-30
238. Sustainia et al 2017, pg. 21
239. Sancton 2016
240. Maron 2013

Governments and formal humanitarian sector actors are already employing digital IDs and biometrics as a means for confirming that the intended individual is the person accessing services or assistance. However, as digital identities and big data become increasingly important globally, some have argued that a balance is needed between "the right to be visible (i.e., in gaining benefits from the analysis performed on their mobile data) and right to be hidden (i.e., where there is minimum risk of the people's privacy and freedom being compromised)."[241] **A right to be hidden is particularly important for vulnerable populations who may, for example, be subject to persecution or sanction due to their statuses** (e.g. gender identity, sexual orientation, refugee, HIV positive, former child solider, Ebola survivor, GBV survivor, etc.). Technology experts and rights advocates have also raised serious concerns about the potential misuse and abuse of such IDs that tie together so much of an individual's various personal information and behaviors: by governments to surveil citizens, by the private-sector for commercial advantage, and by criminals. The more that is digitized and linked together, the greater concern that security breaches present.

One of the most critical risks of technology with respect to the agency of crisis-affected people centers around their personal data being collected, stored, and used for purposes they did not know or agree, or that their personal data is not adequately protected from data-mining and malicious intent. The formal humanitarian sector needs to take greater consideration of the privacy rights of crisis-affected people,[242] and the degree to which "informed consent" to use or share data is (or is not) actually being freely given. For example, if eligibility for humanitarian food aid requires that a crisis-affected person sign a consent for their biometric information to be shared (e.g., with other aid agencies, with the government, with private-sector vendors), can that consent be considered as "freely given"? Does the humanitarian community have an obligation to offer aid options that do not require the digital collection and/or sharing of data? Does the humanitarian community have an obligation to develop digital platforms that guard against government or private sector mining of big data from crisis-affected populations? Aid actors already collect and store considerable amounts of personal and identifying information about their "beneficiaries," and increased use of digital technology is increasing the amounts and types of data being collected and stored. Some have noted that the formal humanitarian sector has, to date, failed "to consider the legal and technical safeguards required in order to uphold the rights of individuals living in the developing world."[243]



241. Qadir et at 2016; Newman 2017
242. The Future Red Cross and Red Crescent, Emerging Technology
243. Privacy International as quoted in Currion 2018, pg. 16

CASH-BASED ASSISTANCE

Cash-based assistance provides an example of the challenges that choice-enabling approaches face in producing systemic change. The transformative potential of cash is considerable. At its core, it provides people with the choice of how to best use aid funds to meet their unique needs, supporting their individual agency in responding to and coping with crisis.[244] However, transformation is uncomfortable, and cash-based assistance runs headlong into the internal inertias of the formal humanitarian sector. This is illustrated by one of the key debates around it: the use of unrestricted cash transfers vs. restricted cash modalities (e.g., vouchers).

Restricted modalities enable aid actors to control what people buy and are argued to thus enable aid actors to better achieve and track specific sector-based outcomes (e.g., food consumption). Unrestricted cash transcends sector silos because cash is fungible: an aid actor can give a family cash to buy food, but that family may use the cash to pay their rent, buy school supplies, go to the doctor, etc. Unrestricted cash enables people to use cash-based assistance for whatever purpose they determine best meets their priority needs.[245] With respect to the aid worldview, the debate between restricted and unrestricted modalities puts the question of crisis-affected people's decision-making around aid in sharp relief: What is more important, crisis-affected people's self-assessed priorities, or the priorities that aid actors have assessed for them? Sector-specific outcomes, or holistic outcomes for the lives of crisis-affected people?

One of the biggest obstacles to unrestricted cash is that in challenging the siloed humanitarian power structure, it challenges powerful organizations' mandates and interests.[246] If unrestricted cash in the hands of crisis-affected people is the best way to support them in meeting their unique baskets of needs (that is, those needs that can reasonably be met with a cash transfer), then it would be more efficient to provide them with a single transfer, rather than for each actor to provide a separate transfer. But one transfer implies one conduit for the funding. And this implies shifting large operational budgets that used to be divided among powerful actors to manage in-kind or voucher-based provision of sector-specific goods and services to far fewer (and potentially different) actors who have the skills and capacity to manage the financial aspects of cash transfers. This potential reduction in organizational budgets and the corresponding loss of market share is hugely threatening. Further complicating this is that – as an aid modality that does not fit into the silos – unrestricted cash also runs right into bureaucratic inertias by necessitating new, non-sector-specific ways of planning, coordinating, monitoring, reporting and evaluating assistance. In addition to being challenging to implement within an entrenched system, such changes would also shift the power dynamics of existing humanitarian management and coordination structures.[247] These interrelated power struggles have slowed efforts to collaborate on addressing other obstacles, concerns and risks with respect to cash-based assistance, despite general agreement that it is a critical approach with respect to putting people at the center of aid.

The fact that unrestricted cash has begun to present a real challenge to some internal inertias is in large part due to (1) its alignment with donor interest in value for money, and (2) external trends such as technology. As ICT and financial technologies have increased the accessibility, affordability and security of cash transfers, the value for money potential has catalyzed some top donors to push for increased use of unrestricted cash. Value for money is a powerful incentive to drive unrestricted cash and its transformative potential forward. This incentive will only increase as new technologies enable risks to be mitigated[248] and intermediaries to be streamlined, and other external trends compound needs vs. resource pressures and response complexity.

Formal sector actors will continue to be forced to change with respect to cash-based assistance, in ways that they may not have done voluntarily. However, actors also have choices to make about how this change happens and the degree to which it increases crisis-affected people's influence. Unrestricted cash provides considerable decision-making power for crisis-affected people with respect to "last mile" use of aid funds. This is a vast improvement, but crisis-affected people continue to have very limited influence over higher-level decisions around cash-based assistance, such as targeting/selection criteria, delivery modality and personal data sharing requirements. Cost considerations may incentivize technocratic approaches that move such decisions further away from crisis-affected people, even as more "last mile" decision-making is placed in their hands. Moves towards unrestricted cash are likely to result in streamlined operational capacity, which risks being used as a mechanism to further centralize power and decision-making around cash-based assistance (and aid more broadly) with fewer, even larger organizations than the current structure. [249]

However, there are other possibilities with respect to how this change plays out. While fewer actors are required to execute the financial aspects of cash transfers, cash-based assistance cannot be done well through a single global template. Unrestricted cash does not remove the need for contextual understanding; in fact, it may enhance it. Contextual understanding and knowledge of local markets and socio-cultural structures are critical to determining and delivering on: accurate targeting and vulnerability criteria; appropriate transfer amounts and modalities to maximize efficiency and minimize risks; what assistance crisis-affected people require alongside cash (e.g. support in accessing property and other legal rights); and what needs cannot be reasonably met with a cash transfer (e.g. healthcare, sufficient quantities of clean water).[250] Actors with local knowledge and who situate decision-making closer to communities are better placed to manage these complexities and mitigate risks. Local actors may thus have a competitive advantage to challenge centralization with more efficient and effective programming in increasingly difficult contexts.

244. CALP 2018, pgs. 3, 11
245. CALP 2018, pgs. 9, 33; Uekermann et al 2017
246. CALP 2018, pg. 3
247. Konyndyk 2018, pg. 9-10; ODI/CGD 2015, pg. 8; CALP 2018, pgs. 70, 139
248. ODI/CDG 2018, pgs. 20-22
249. CALP 2018, pg. 29
250. CALP 2018, pgs. 9-10, 36; ODI/CDG 2018, pgs. 21-22

5.2 Urbanization

Key messages

- Cities can expand people's access to education and amplify trends with respect to interconnectivity and new technologies, but they also generate new vulnerabilities and risks, and are increasingly the loci of crises.
- Effective response within the complexity of urban areas necessitates a strong understanding of the interconnected local context. Aid that lacks contextual understanding and fails to build on existing systems may be rejected, irrelevant or have unintended consequences. This provides greater incentive for subsidiarity and transformative participation.
- High-capacity local actors will have a growing competitive advantage given their existing local knowledge and understanding of the context.

The rapid pace of urbanization in middle- and low-income countries is changing public policy, development and humanitarian response. According to the New Urban Agenda adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2016, "Populations, economic activities, social and cultural interactions, as well as environmental and humanitarian impacts, are increasingly concentrated in cities, and this poses massive sustainability challenges in terms of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources, among others."[251] As of 2018, more than half of the world's population (55%) lives in urban areas, a percentage that is projected to rise to 68% by 2050.[252] The most rapid urbanization during this period is expected to be in lower-income and lower middle-income countries. Asia and Africa are currently the least urbanized regions of the world, but nearly 90% of the projected growth in the world's urban population by 2050 will be in these two regions.[253] Despite being one of the least urbanized regions, Asia is already home to 54% of the world's total urban population because of its absolute population size. Internal migration from rural areas to cities is already considerable,[254] fueled in large part by the concentration of economic opportunities and potential for social mobility. Some major cities, such as Mexico City and Nairobi, will see even greater internal migration as the effects of climate change make living in other areas of their respective countries untenable.[255]

Cities are engines of economic growth, job creation and innovation. They can also expand people's access to education and technology, notably mobile and internet connectivity. Urban crisis-affected people are often more educated and more technologically literate, which can increase the choices available to them with the spread of new technologies (such as those as outlined above).[256] Cities are also frequently home to a greater number and concentration of high capacity individuals and organizations – fueling local markets, providing much-needed services and contributing to policy, including disaster response and resilience.[257]

However, urban contexts can also generate new vulnerabilities, exacerbating inequalities in wealth, and access to basic services. Rapid, unplanned urban growth has resulted in the enlargement of existing and the formation of new slums and informal settlements. There are more than one billion people living in precarious conditions in urban contexts, and by 2030 it is estimated that 1.8 billion people will be living in slums or informal urban settlements, accounting for one in three city dwellers (and one in five people globally).[258] These settlements face serious economic, social, infrastructure and environmental challenges, have poor access to services and strain local systems under normal circumstances. They are also particularly vulnerable to a wide variety of disaster risks such as flooding, earthquakes, armed violence, epidemics and toxic pollution, and present complex challenges for crisis response and recovery. The diverse and transient nature of urban populations can mean that social cohesion is weaker, that vulnerable populations are more "hidden" or exploited, and that key aspects of local power end up in corrupt or criminal hands.[259]

Urban areas are increasingly the loci of crises, both "natural" (such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake) and "man-made" (such as the Syrian war and refugee crisis). Armed conflict and other forms of violence are becoming more focused in urban areas, as is forced displacement. Over half of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are estimated to live in cities[260], negotiating housing in urban spaces (rented apartments, construction sites, disused buildings, garages, etc.), access to services, decent work and relations with the host community. Urbanization is largely concentrated in coastal areas, many of which are extremely sensitive to the impacts of environmental change such as rising sea levels, intense storms and salinization of fresh water sources.[261] The impacts of crises are magnified in cities, given population density, the complexity of interlinked systems and infrastructure, and the often-precarious living conditions of the most vulnerable populations.[262]

251. UNGA 2017, paragraph 2
252. UN DESA 2018 WUP
253. UN DESA 2018 WUP
254. IOM 2017, pg. 61
255. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. xxii
256. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 31
257. D'Onofrio 2018
258. IARAN 2016, pg. 62
259. Groupe URD 2009, pg. 65; Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 31
260. UNHCR 2018, pg. 60
261. IARAN 2016, pg. 62
262. Bennet et al. 2016, pg. 34

Disruptive Potential: Urban populations cultivate, and depend, on complex and interrelated networks for their survival, and understanding these interlinkages is critical to effective humanitarian action in and after crises. People who live in cities are often more mobile and in many cases have greater access to tools and resources that expand the range of choices available to them in coping with crises and demanding greater participation.[263] Research has shown that effective crisis response in urban contexts necessitates a much stronger and more holistic understanding of what already is existing, how things work, and how things are interconnected spatially, politically, economically, legally, socially and technologically.[264] This understanding is particularly essential for enabling support to the most vulnerable urban populations, such as the elderly, "hidden" populations, and individuals in difficult to access areas of informal settlements. Without contextual understanding, urban response risks irrelevance, increasing the incentive for subsidiarity and more transformative forms of participation that place decisions in the hands of those who know the context. This may prove a growing point of competitive advantage, in particular for high-capacity local urban organizations over international actors.

Urban contexts may push formal sector actors to adopt more transformative and localized approaches, not only to provide more effective responses and ensure their own relevance, but also to manage security and reputational risk. As formal sector actors have undertaken more responses in urban contexts, there has been a slow recognition that humanitarian business-as-usual doesn't work. Certain weaknesses that aid actors have been able to "get away with" in rural or camp-based settings, such as lack of contextual understanding and adaptation, a tendency to create new or parallel systems rather than to work with what is already existing, a disinclination to collaborate with (or trust) local authorities, a preference for external expertise, and expectations of having considerable leverage at the community level, are directly challenged by the complexity, density, capacity and diversity of urban environments. Physical and social infrastructure may be multi-layered, local authorities and civil society organizations may be of much higher capacity, targeted groups may be living in extremely close proximity to untargeted groups, and there may be less community cohesion.[265]

Some recent suggestions from within the formal sector for how to be more effective in urban contexts include proposals that would lend themselves to greater local decision-making power. For example, investing in and utilizing more holistic context analysis that engages a diversity of local and international expertise[266]; working more closely with local government and local urban partners;[267] adopting multi-sector community-city-based approaches;[268] and being more open to ongoing adaptation.[269] While (voluntary) efforts of the formal humanitarian sector to improve action in urban areas face internal inertias (as discussed in Section D above), reality may overcome rhetoric as urban crises increase in scale and intensity. Given the complex and inter-related systems of a city, aid business-as-usual may result in serious unintended consequences for aid actors, their staff and partners, and the communities they serve.[270]

Aid that fails to build on existing systems and complement local urban policy and development efforts may be rejected or simply be irrelevant. Decentralization policies that shift power from central governments to city and municipal governance structures are key to urban planning and development, moving decision-making closer to local communities in line with the principle of subsidiarity.[271] Formal humanitarian sector actors could and should do much more to support city-level structures and actors, but these actors will move forward with or without the formal humanitarian sector. Cities are already sharing experiences and creating networks to challenge national governments and international institutions to adopt policies that will help city governments better manage the challenges they face.[272]

"this is also about an attitude or mindset that is both more humble and more adaptive than the application of off-the-shelf humanitarian interventions"
– Alyoscia D'Onofrio, Different, but how? Better aid in the city

263. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 66
264. Campbell 2018
265. Campbell 2018, pgs. 17-18, 20-21, 24-25; D'Onofrio 2018; ODI 2016, pg. 23; Ramalingam and Mitchell 2014, pg. 11
266. Campbell 2018
267. IASC 2015, pg. 3
268. IASC 2015, pg. 1
269. D'Onofrio 2018
270. D'Onofrio 2018
271. IARAN, pg. 61
272. IARAN, pg. 61-62

5.3 Youth and Education

Key messages

- Youth are a driver of change, and as a more technologically capable generation comes of age, they will magnify trends with respect to interconnectivity, new technologies, urbanization and migration.
- Much of the coming generation will be equipped with the know-how and networks to amplify their own voices, expand their choices, and demand more from formal humanitarian sector actors: greater subsidiarity, bottom-up approaches, and more transformative participation.
- However, based on current trends, inequalities will also be exacerbated as many young people are left behind, unable to access the educational foundations necessary to develop the skillsets required by technology and the changing nature of work.

By 2050, the global population is projected to increase from the current figure of nearly 7.5 billion to 9.8 billion.[273] Approximately half of all people on earth are currently under 30 years old, and one quarter are under 15 years old.[274] Although by 2050 the number of older people will outnumber younger people overall,[275] the population will remain relatively young in regions of the world that continue to have high fertility rates.[276] Children and youth currently represent a large proportion of people affected by crisis: for example, 52% of the global refugee population is under 18 years of age.[277] This proportion will remain high given the demographics of crisis-affected and vulnerable regions: Africa, where 41% of the population was under 15 in 2017,[278] Asia, with 24% under the age of 15, and Latin America and the Caribbean, with 25% under 15, all have youthful populations. [279]

273. US Census Bureau, U.S and World Population Clock; UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 2
274. UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 1
275. UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 13; ILO 2017 pg. 2
276. UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 13
277. UNHCR 2018, pg. 3
278. UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 4
279. UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 10-11
280. UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 10-11
281. ILO 2017, pg. 6
282. UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 11
283. See for example: Dhillon 2008; Schwartz 2011; Lin 2012; The Future Red Cross and Red Crescent, Future of Work
284. ILO 2017, pg. 2
285. World Bank 2019 Work, pg. 7
286. ILO 2017, pg. 5
287. ITU, ICT Facts and Figures 2017
288. ILO 2017, pg. 5
289. World Bank 2019 Work, pg. 3
290. ILO 2017, pg. 5

The proportion of working-age people (25-59) is projected to peak in Asia in 2020, in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2030, and in Africa as late as 2090. Ensuring quality education and decent work for this growing population will be a key development challenge over the coming decades.[280] According to ILO, "it remains uncertain if there will be enough decent employment opportunities for the 25.6 million more young persons in the labor market between 2017 and 2030."[281] Having more working-age people than dependent people (children and elderly) can be an economic boon. However, if sufficient opportunities are not available, large numbers of young working-age people who cannot find work, or cannot earn enough to live, may contribute to instability (as well as to urbanization and international migration).[282] There are risks of frustrated unemployed young people joining violent movements and armed groups, but these same young people can also catalyze non-violent activism to push for better governance and access to rights.[283] In addition, youth are more globally interconnected today than ever before, and 70% of international migrants are people under 30.[284] Interconnectivity increases opportunities and mobility, and also increases exposure to the lifestyle in high-income countries and the wealthy in one's own country. This can further encourage migration, instability and/or movements pushing for change.[285]

Younger people, especially those with access to education, are more likely to be able to leverage the benefits of the spread of ICT and other new technologies. Young workers are, on average, better educated than their forbearers and have a comparative advantage with respect to computer use.[286] Globally, 71% of 15-24 year old's are online (compared to 48% of the overall population): 94% in developed countries, 67% in developing countries, and 30% in LDCs.[287] Many developing countries are still reliant on low-skilled labor at present and will remain so for the immediate future,[288] with many workers in the informal sector and with little access to technology.[289] However, technology will impact employment going forward (as it already has in developed countries): it will replace some jobs, while changing others and also creating new ones.[290] Internet-related employment, for example, has the potential to increase the job opportunities available for young people.[291] Education is critical to improving employability, especially as technology changes the skills needed.[292] Technology-related jobs require basic core skills like literacy and numeracy, and also increasingly require cognitive and socio-behavioral skills, like adaptation, problem-solving and teamwork, the foundations of which are developed in early childhood.[293] Developing countries, notably in East Asia, that have invested in human capital (including education and healthcare) and fostered highly skilled young workers, have seen positive outcomes.[294] According to ILO, recent trends suggest a polarization of need for high-skilled and low-skilled workers, with an eventual decrease in the need for semi-skilled workers.[295] Given this polarization, inadequate investment in education and human capital more broadly are likely to exacerbate inequalities between, and within, countries.[296]

Young people who lack key skills may be at even greater disadvantage in the future. Given this, current data about educational outcomes supports the need to refocus investments on education. Global rates of primary school enrollment rose from 72% in 1970 to 81-82% in the early to mid-1990s, and the decade from 1997 to 2007 saw an increase from 81% to 88%. However, since 2007 increases have stagnated, growing only to 89% as of 2016.[297] Literacy rates improved between 2000 and 2015: 4% for adults and 27% for youth.[298] As of 2015, the global adult literacy rate was 86%, but it was under 60% in low-income countries. Additionally, 56% of primary school age children globally, and 87% in Sub-Saharan Africa, do not meet minimum proficiency levels in literacy,[299] and only 14% of primary school students in low-income countries achieve proficiency in basic mathematical skills (compared to 37% in LMICs and 61% in UMICs).[300] Many countries are making little, to no year-on-year progress on learning outcomes, and for LICs and MICs who are making progress, at current rates it will take decades to catch up to HICs. There are also considerable inequalities in access to quality education within countries. Children and youth from marginalized groups (gender, ethnicity, caste, etc.) are more likely to be out of school, with poverty being the biggest predictor. Assessments across LICs, MICs and HICs have found that students from the poorest quintile of households were learning much less than students from the richest quintile, with some richer countries having larger gaps than their poorer counterparts.[301]

In addition, crises impact family and social structures that are essential for early childhood development and disrupt formal and non-formal education. For example, Syria had achieved universal enrollment in primary school by 2000, but after 4 years of war an estimated 1.8 million children were out of school.[302] Globally, conflict and state fragility double the chance that children will be out of school, and even more-so for adolescents, and for girls in general. Girls are 90% more likely to not be in secondary school if they live in a country affected by conflict, subsequently reducing their future access to the opportunities that education enables.[303] Forced displacement also disrupts education, presenting challenges for children to access education, and to integrate into new educational systems, as well as stressing educational systems in host countries.

291. ILO 2017, pg. 6. LICs and LMICs are already seeing a shift to more young women and men in casual wage employment, while UMICs are seeing more people in temporary and gig employment. Harnessing the gains of new forms of employment will require these jobs to be supplemented with programs that provide benefits and social protections that these jobs may not. Protecting decent work and ensuring social protections for young people will be key to stability and maintaining development gains.
292. World Bank 2018 Learning pgs. 3, 9; Global Partnership for Education, Education Data; World Bank 2019 Work, pg. 5
293. World Bank 2019 Work, pg. 2
294. World Bank 2019 Work, pg. 6
295. ILO 2017, pg. 5-6
296. World Bank 2019 Work, pg. 8
297. The World Bank/UNESCO, School enrolment primary data; UNESCO 2017, Target 4.1
298. UNESCO 2017, Target 4.6
299. UNESCO 2017, Target 4.1. Note: There is no global standard for measuring proficiency in literacy and numeracy; these estimates are based on available data.
300. World Bank 2018 Learning, pg. 8
301. World Bank 2018 Learning, pg. 6-8
302. World Bank 2018 Learning, pg. 8
303. Global Partnership for Education, Education Data

Disruptive Potential: Youth are a driver of change. Much of the coming generation will be equipped with greater technological know-how, and larger networks, to amplify their own voices and expand the choices available to them for coping with crisis, both in relation to the formal humanitarian sector, and outside of it. Youth participating in the consultations in advance of the World Humanitarian Summit, which engaged 300 crisis-affected young people from 89 countries,[304] emphasized that young people are critical to achieving and sustaining peace, and play key roles in crisis response, reconciliation and recovery. They highlighted that youth have stronger capabilities with respect to social technology, and emphasized their ability to adapt, to innovate and to mobilize via social media platforms.[305] Young people will magnify trends with respect to interconnectivity, the use of new technologies, urbanization and migration. However, based on current trends, inequalities will also be exacerbated as many young people are left behind, unable to access the educational foundations necessary to develop the skillsets required by technology, and the changing nature of work. For youth at risk of being left behind, and especially those in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, investment in early childhood development and educational approaches that produce learning outcomes will be essential.

As a new, more technologically capable and interconnected generation comes of age, they will have the information, tools and resources to demand more from formal humanitarian sector actors, pushing the sector to move beyond nominal and instrumental engagement, to more transformative participation. The young people participating in the WHS consultations called for greater subsidiarity and bottom-up approaches to humanitarian action, with programs assessed and validated by local communities.[306] They recommended using mobile, remote and financial technologies to improve information dissemination, enable greater voice for crisis-affected people, and foster collaboration with different humanitarian actors. [307] While pro-actively striving to engage youth at risk of being left behind, it will also be in the formal humanitarian sector's interest to work with empowered youth populations, as they will increasingly have the skillsets to engage with alternative actors, and pursue other options, if aid actors fail to engage them.

304. UN WHS 2015 Youth, pg. 1
305. UN WHS 2015 Youth, pg. 4-5
306. UN WHS 2015 Youth, pg. 3-4
307. UN WHS 2015 Youth, pg. 5
308. IARAN 2016, pg. 71
309. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. xix: 143 million just from Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America.
310. Geography, infrastructure, population density, and authorities' anticipation and adaptability capacities are critical factors with respect to vulnerability to environmental change. IARAN 2016, pg. 10; World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. xix
311. IARAN 2016, pg. 71, 73.

5.4 Environmental Change

Key messages

- Climate change and environmental degradation will devastate livelihoods and exacerbate trends with respect to urban crises, conflict and migration. The poor will be disproportionately impacted, facing diminishing choices as recurrent shocks compound vulnerabilities over time.
- Local knowledge and contextual understanding will be essential to effective short- and long-term adaptation, increasing the incentive for more transformative participation and greater subsidiarity. Local actors will be key to the development and success of complex strategies.
- As the needs vs. resources gap grows, governments and donors will be less tolerant of parallel structures. Formal sector actors will be pushed to invest more in local actors and crisis-affected people, in order to increase effectiveness and grow overall capacities to respond.

Climate change will pose one of, if not the greatest, threat in this century. Combined with environmental degradation and over-consumption of natural resources, the effects of warming temperatures will devastate livelihoods, threaten food security and exacerbate state and regional fragility.[308] The impacts will be felt particularly strongly by poor people, many of whom will face diminishing choices with respect to their livelihoods, food security, access to water, and options for coping with extreme weather events and other crises. The World Bank estimates that as a result of the interrelated impacts of climate change there will be millions more people in poverty by 2030 and 143 million people could be forced to leave their homes by 2050.[309] The impacts of environmental change will be felt globally, but not equally. Developing countries face greater levels of risk, as a combination of hazard, exposure, vulnerability and insufficient capacity. Although many poor communities and countries are already taking risk mitigation measures, many low- and middle-income countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America will not be able to invest sufficiently in natural resources management, risk mitigation and other resilience-building measures to cope with the environmental degradation, and climate-related threats they face.[310] Risks will be highest in countries with weak governance, or other compounding challenges such as conflict, rapid urbanization and high levels of population growth. Recurrent environmental shocks will compound vulnerabilities over time, overwhelming the coping capacities of the poorest, and also potentially wiping out hard-won gains, and driving people living on the margins back into poverty.[311]

The effects of environmental change are already being felt.[312] By 2050, average global temperatures are expected to increase by as much as 2.5°C.[313] At a 2°C increase, wet and storm-prone areas will likely experience more intense storms that drop more rain, increasing the risk of flooding, landslides and other destruction.[314] Rising sea levels will increase risks to coastal areas from inundation, erosion, storm surges and salt water intrusion. Increased warming will also increase ocean temperatures and acidity, exacerbating the degradation of marine ecosystems and collapse of fisheries. Changing precipitation patterns, increasing evaporation, diminishing glaciers and snowpack, and freshwater salinization will increase water scarcity, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.[315] Water scarcity will be exacerbated by population growth, urbanization and over-exploitation of resources (e.g. irrigation), and it is projected that two-thirds of the global population will live in water-stressed areas by 2025.[316] Dry regions will become drier with more frequent and intense droughts and extreme heat events, increasing the risk of crop failure. Climate change is already impacting crop yields, and a 2°C increase would see major crop yield decreases in some areas.[317]

Changing weather patterns and sea level rises will exacerbate existing natural hazard risks and create new ones, especially in dense coastal cities, like Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and water stressed regions. Weather-related natural hazards are already the cause of massive losses in lives and livelihoods every year.[318] In 2017, 18 million people were newly displaced as a result of weather events (compared to less than 1 million by other natural hazard events): 8.6 million by floods, 7.5 million by storms, 1.3 million by drought, over 500,000 by wildfires, and additional thousands by landslides and extreme heat. The countries topping the list for disaster-related displacement show a diversity in regions and national income levels: China, the Philippines, Cuba, the U.S., India, Bangladesh, Somalia, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Nepal and Indonesia.[319] However, overall, low- and middle-income countries account for the majority of disaster-related displacement (97% between 2008 and 2013), with SIDS showing among the highest proportionate levels.[320] In rapid onset natural disasters, most people tend to be displaced for a relatively short period of time, before returning to their homes.[321] However, the World Bank has projected that the slower moving impacts of climate change will push tens of millions of people to leave their homes permanently, by 2050. The vast majority of this migration is expected to be internal, as people move to less affected and more resilient areas of their countries, where livelihoods are more feasible. Vulnerable populations will have fewer opportunities to plan migration as an adaptation mechanism, especially as successive or slow moving environmental shocks erode their coping capacity. Many people will be forced to move under duress and many others may be unable to move out of unsustainable conditions. Many people will also be unwilling to leave their homes due to attachment or incentives that induce them to stay, despite the risk. Planned and assisted relocation will be necessary for some groups.[322] Tensions around competition for resources will be exacerbated by environmental migration in some areas, increasing risks of conflict and instability.[323]

312. See for example: NOAA 2017; World Bank 2018 Groundswell
313. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 25-26: Average global temperatures are expected to increase by between 0.3°C (lower boundary) and 2.5°C (upper boundary) by 2050.
314. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 25-26; GFDL, Global Warming and Hurricanes - An Overview of Current Research Results
315. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 25-26; IARAN 2016, pg. 73-74
316. UN FAO/Water 2007, pg. 9-10
317. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 25-26
318. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 25-26
319. NRC/IDMC 2018, pg. 5-7
320. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 6, 21
321. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 21
322. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. xxi-xxii
323. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 19

Disruptive Potential: **Climate change will change everything.** It will increasingly alter the priorities and strategies of governments, businesses, NGOs, communities and crisis-affected people. It will change livelihoods, it will cause people to move and change population distributions, and it will change the face of cities and countries. Its impacts will be political, from the local to the global level. The need for governments and multilateral institutions to put in place adequate policies, plans and financing to mitigate and manage these changes, is already long overdue. To date, initiatives to support countries and communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change have been slowed by internal inertia, for example: silos between "humanitarian" and "development," a lack of committed long-term funding from national or donor governments, and low levels of "voter constituency appeal" necessary to increase donor interest.[324] However, as the need becomes increasingly urgent and impacts (such as mass migration) increasingly cross borders, more governments may step up in earnest.[325] Some will be unable. Others may be unwilling (or unwilling to do so in a way that focuses on the most vulnerable populations). Many will require technical and financial assistance.

Local knowledge and contextual understanding will be critical to effective short- and long-term adaptation, increasing the incentive for both more transformative participation and greater subsidiarity. In many places, environmental change will not be about crisis response and recovery where people "build back better" in their own communities. It will be about developing systems for meeting anticipated and recurrent immediate needs, in concert with long-term planned responses to permanent environmental changes and population movements. Strategies will be needed to manage and support migration (and associated urbanization and shifts in livelihoods), and to support adaptation and response for communities that will need to stay put within risky circumstances (e.g., infrastructure, early warning, social protection systems).[326] The structure of short-term and piecemeal responses that make up the bulk of formal humanitarian sector response will not cut it. Local authorities, local civil society, notably women's groups, and local private sector actors will be key to the development and management of these strategies, and to supporting the most vulnerable populations.[327]

As the impacts of environmental change are increasingly felt, parallel structures and duplication may be something the formal humanitarian sector cannot afford, and that governments and donors will not tolerate. The formal humanitarian sector is already overwhelmed.[328] Despite the World Humanitarian Summit's aspiration to reduce need, environmental changes foreshadow a world with more people in need and more people migrating permanently from environmentally stressed areas to (largely urban) areas where they have a greater range of choices and opportunities. Growing the formal humanitarian sector to meet these growing and evolving needs is unrealistic, and the WHS core commitment "to reinforce national and local leadership and capacities in managing disaster and climate-related risks" had more aligned commitments from Member States than any other.[329] The increasing gap between crisis resources and needs is already forcing the formal humanitarian sector to make changes (notably to improve cost-efficiency). As the gap continues to grow it may push formal sector actors to increase investment in, and relinquish more control to local actors and crisis-affected people, in the interest of increasing effectiveness, and growing overall capacities to respond.

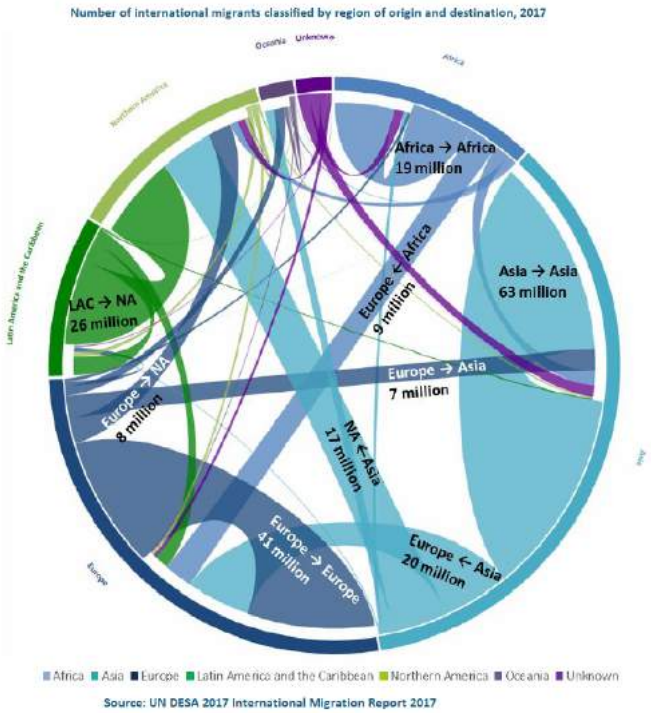
324. GPP 2017
325. UN WHS 2016 Commitments, pg. 23-24
326. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. xxii
327. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. xxv
328. See for example UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 2: "Today, more people are affected by conflict and disaster, more frequently, and for longer than in previous decades. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection has nearly doubled in the past decade, from an average of 30 to 40 million people per year to an average of 50 to 70 million people per year...This trend shows no sign of stopping...At the same time, the gap between the scale of needs and the resources available to meet them is growing."
329. UNGA 2016, para 45, 46

5.5 International Migration

Key messages

- With growing interconnectivity, diasporas have become "transnational communities," more connected with their countries of origin and increasingly critical and influential actors when crises hit. Their expanding engagement as alternatives to and partners with the formal humanitarian sector may help to shift the aid worldview and foster greater subsidiarity.
- Migrants and refugees will face increased drivers to move across borders but more limited safe choices to do so. There is a real risk that even more people will be stuck in dangerous situations. Failing to engage refugees and migrants will result in ongoing flawed policy that is not fit for a future where large numbers of people will choose or be forced to move.
- The combined effect of engagement with transnational communities, donor and policy decisions that are mismatched to the context, and increasing needs could lead more formal sector actors to pursue more solidarity-based approaches with migrant and refugee actors.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) defines an international migrant as "a person who is living in a country other than his or her country of birth." This is a highly complex category which can include, (but is not limited to): permanent immigrants; people moving temporarily for work opportunities; students; and people seeking international protection (such as refugees and asylum-seekers). **Movement across international borders is a means through which people have, and will continue to exercise agency in meeting their immediate and long-term needs. In some cases, the decision to move is voluntary, and in many cases, it is not.** International migrants have a wide variety of different legal and immigration statuses, which impact their range of choices with respect to the decision to move, options for transit, the target destination and life in the destination country. The concept of "mixed migration" recognizes (1) that people who have made voluntary choices to move (e.g., for work) and people who have been forced to move and are eligible for international protection (e.g., refugees) are often part of the same, often irregular, migration flows, and (2) that many people have a combination of reasons for moving (e.g., safety/protection and education).[330] It is also important to note that even individuals who voluntarily choose to move may find themselves in a non-voluntary situation in transit, or in the destination country, such as in cases of trafficking and/or forced labor.



The number of international migrants has grown from 173 million worldwide in 2000, to 258 million in 2017. [331] The number is expected to continue to grow. In 2010 it was projected that the number of people living outside their country of birth would climb to 405 million by 2050.[332] However, international migration is a factor with considerable uncertainty due to its relationship with major economic and political events, and difficulties in obtaining comprehensive data, in particular about more vulnerable groups. As of 2017, there were 25.4 million refugees registered with either the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) and 3.1 million asylum seekers.[333] However, there are no comprehensive, publicly available figures on the number of individuals who are in need of international protection, but remain unregistered or have obtained temporary protected status. In addition, there is no reliable global data on "irregular" migration. Gathering data on irregular migration presents particular challenges, not least that people may enter a country regularly and then become irregular (or vice versa) and that people without required migration documentation are often highly vulnerable and may seek to remain hidden and/or avoid authorities. The information that is available on irregular migration indicates that it is affecting every region of the world and that it opens people up to serious risks and exploitation, both in transit and in the destination country. [334]

330. The Migration Observatory at University of Oxford via the Mixed Migration Hub, What is Mixed Migration?; IOM 2017, pg. 13
331. UN DESA 2017 IMR, highlights. DESA estimates the number and disaggregation of international migrants based on national statistics from population censuses, population registers and representative surveys.
332. IOM 2017, pg. 2
333. UNHCR 2018, pg. 2. Asylum seekers are individuals who have applied for international protection but have not yet had their claim adjudicated.
334. IOM 2017, pgs. 20, 24-26. According to IOM, irregular migration involves "movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving country."

Migrants and refugees weigh benefits and risks in making decisions to move. These decisions are influenced by a wide variety of factors such as conflict and violence, persecution, perceptions of safety, disaster and environmental change, employment and education opportunities, inequality, and logistical concerns (e.g., distance, cost, visa requirements and information availability). Decisions to move are also influenced by personal factors such as age, gender, wealth, ethnicity and citizenship. In addition, family and social networks in transit and destination countries influence movement decisions and pathways, and decisions may also be influenced by a family's collective strategy to maximize opportunities and minimize risks (as can be seen through the flow of remittances or when some members of a family move and others stay).[335] In cases of forced displacement, these are often life-or-death decisions taken quickly, under stress and with highly imperfect information in order to avoid extreme suffering, persecution or death. According to the World Bank, "Violence is the strongest correlate of decisions to flee".[336]

There are considerable variations in migration numbers and patterns by region,[337] and migration corridors between certain countries and/or regions have developed over time based on geographical, historical, economic, cultural and personal ties.[338] Although South-North migration receives considerable political and media attention, there is a greater amount of South–South migration,[339] and approximately half of all international migrants remain in the same region of the world as their country of origin (including North-North migration).[340] Migration is aided by the fact that international mobility and communication have become easier with cheap air travel and advancements in ICT. Over the past 20 years, not only has migration continued to grow, but immigrants have been able to remain much more connected with their countries of origin and in closer contact with family and friends "back home." Some have described this new reality as diaspora populations now constituting "transnational communities."[341]

Economic inequality is likely to remain a driver of international migration for the foreseeable future as people move from poorer, to richer countries. Migration can be a powerful tool for development, accelerating the movement of technology and wealth across borders.[342] International migrants sent over $400 billion in remittances back to family and relatives in developing countries in 2016 alone.[343] Remittances not only make up a key portion of household income, they also make up considerable amounts of GDP in some developing countries: on average in 2017, 5.3% in LICs and 4.1% in LMICs. In 2017, personal remittances comprised 29% of the GDP of Haiti, 28% in Nepal, and 27% in Liberia.[344] However, migration also has negative impacts on countries of origin. With considerable economic, political and social barriers,[345] it can be much more difficult for poorer people to migrate via regular means (given cost and other barriers) or to migrate to situations of decent work (many migrants – especially irregular and urban migrants – may find themselves working in exploitative conditions),[346] which can exacerbate inequalities.[347] In addition, migration can result in "brain drain," with the best and brightest leaving to find opportunities elsewhere.[348]

Forced migration will also remain a key feature of international migration patterns for the foreseeable future. Conflict and violence is one of the primary drivers of movement, and there are more forcibly displaced people today than ever before.[349] Most refugees are hosted in neighboring middle- and lower-income countries, including LDCs, where they often have limited right to work and inadequate access to basic services.[350] Two-thirds of all refugees are in protracted displacement situations of 5 years or more.[351] In some cases, refugees' rights to organize may also be limited by the host government, which can present a particular challenge for their collective engagement on aid initiatives. Although there is currently no international legal or protected status for "climate refugees" or "environmental refugees," environmental changes will exacerbate mixed migration challenges and force an increasing number of people to migrate across international borders in coming decades.[352]

Disruptive Potential: **As technology has made international mobility and communication easier, migrant and refugee diaspora populations from Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have remained much more interconnected with their countries of origin and proven to be critical and increasingly influential actors when crises hit.** These transnational communities mobilize funding and provide support for affected people, and local organizations,+ outside of the formal humanitarian sector. For example: Syrian diaspora organizations have provided assistance in locations inside Syria where formal sector actors lacked access;[353] the Somali diaspora has long been engaged in response and reconstruction from drought and armed conflict;[354] and members of the Haitian, Nepalese and Mexican diasporas mobilized new technologies to respond to the respective earthquakes in their home countries.[355] In addition to providing alternative avenues for support, diaspora groups also influence media visibility and public opinion with respect to the crisis, and lobby donor government capitals (and the governments of their countries of origin) on policy positions and funding allocations. [356]

335. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 19-21
336. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 21
337. IOM 2017, pg. 92
338. IOM 2017, pg. 3
339. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 19
340. UN DESA 2017
341. IOM 2017, pg. 20; World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 19; Kumar and Steenkamp 2013
342. UN DESA 2017 WPP, pg. 9
343. UN DESA 2017 IMR, pg. 1, IOM 2017, pg. 56
344. World Bank, Personal remittances, received % of GDP
345. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 19-21
346. ODI 2017, pg. 3.
347. ODI 2017, pg. 7.
348. IOM 2017, pgs. 141-142
349. In addition to 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum seekers, there are an additional 40 million internally displaced people (IDPs), many of whom may be forced to cross international borders in the future. Source: UNHCR 2018, pg. 2.
350. UNHCR 2017, pg. 21; Zetter and Heloise 2016
351. UNHCR 2017, pg. 22
352. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 17, 24; IOM, Migration, Climate Change and the Environment
Wall 2016
353. DRC 2015
354. BBC Media Action 2012, pg. 5; Sinha 2015; Phillips 2016
355. Wall and Hedlund 2016, pg. 37; Uzelac 2018. Diaspora populations provide considerable economic inflows to their countries of origin, through remittances and investment. In part as a result of this monetary support, diaspora populations can exert considerable political influence in their countries of origin, either indirectly through the individuals, communities and businesses they support, or directly if they retain the right to vote. This political influence has the potential to impact government policy decisions around aid and relationships with donor and migration destination countries.

Diaspora organizations may also be able to secure more equal terms of partnership with formal humanitarian sector actors and may be in a position to effectively challenge some aspects of the prevailing aid worldview. This may help to promote subsidiarity, more representative participation of people affected by crisis in aid decisions, and perhaps even more transformative participation. Diaspora populations have supported formal humanitarian sector actors in some instances: facilitating connections with local actors, transmitting information about unmet needs, translating information into local dialects, and fielding staff and volunteers with local knowledge and languages.[357] Although the knowledge and resources of diaspora populations have largely gone untapped by the formal humanitarian sector to-date, this is changing as interconnectivity and new technologies continue to expand the ability of transnational communities to be engaged – as partners of or, notably, as alternatives to the formal humanitarian sector. However, it is important to note that diaspora groups take many forms and have their own politics. Some may be working for or against certain parties to conflict, and their efforts may or may not be welcome by people in their country of origin.[358]

The situation for migrants and refugees is likely to become much more difficult over the next 20 years, with increased drivers to move – such as conflict and environmental change – but a more limited range of safe choices for moving across international borders. The potential for international and receiving country legal frameworks to expand and provide for a greater range of safe choices to migrants and refugees over the next 20 years appears to be receding. The new Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, although a breakthrough achievement in many ways, is non-binding and does not resolve core issues with respect to irregular migration or environmental migration.[359] The final draft text of the Global Compact on Refugees has many positive elements, but it is also non-binding, and a lack of political will on responsibility sharing may result in many refugees and asylum-seekers being stuck in middle- and lower-income countries that are unable or unwilling to ensure their full access to rights.[360] In addition, despite a lack of evidence that aid affects migration patterns,[361] some donor countries are attempting to use aid to deter migration[362] through both positive (carrot) and negative (stick) approaches. For example of carrots: aid funds being disproportionately (from the perspective of need) directed towards addressing "root causes of migration" in countries that are key origin countries of migrants to the donor country, or aid coming with conditionalities to try to force key transit and origin countries to control migration[363] For example of sticks: threats to stop providing aid to origin countries if they do not stem migration flows.[364]

However, "policy options adopted by OECD countries in the past decade – building walls, externalizing control at high political and financial costs – will neither prevent people leaving their country, nor will it impact the determinants of migration in the long run."[365] People will continue to choose and to be forced to move. There is a real risk that more people will be pushed into dangerous irregular routes and/or stuck in horrific conditions in transit countries, expanding an already complex area of humanitarian need. Failing to listen to and empower the voices of refugees and migrants will result in ongoing flawed policy that is not fit for the future of inevitable population movements, as migrants and refugees continue to cross borders.[366] The formal humanitarian sector is already outmatched by displacement and migration needs. The political environment of harshening frameworks, donor-funding decisions that are mismatched to actual needs and an increasing severity of needs among refugee and migrant populations may precipitate change. **These changes could provoke formal sector actors to pursue stronger solidarity approaches with migrant and refugee populations, better engaging migrants and refugees in how they want to spend the limited resources that are available to complement their coping strategies most effectively and providing avenues for people affected by crisis to influence strategic decisions around policy and advocacy.**

356. Wall and Hedlund 2016, pg. 37; Uzelac 2018. Diaspora populations provide considerable economic inflows to their countries of origin, through remittances and investment. In part as a result of this monetary support, diaspora populations can exert considerable political influence in their countries of origin, either indirectly through the individuals, communities and businesses they support, or directly if they retain the right to vote. This political influence has the potential to impact government policy decisions around aid and relationships with donor and migration destination countries.
357. Philipps 2016; DRC 2015; BBC Media Action 2012, pg. 5; Sinha 2015
358. Wall and Hedlund 2016, pg. 39

359. Foresti 2018
360. Amnesty International 2018
361. ODI 2017, pg. 5; Foresti 2018
362. ODI 2017, pg. 5.
363. CONCORD 2018, pg.2.
364. Vazquez 2018
365. The Guardian 2018 (letter published from more than 500 academics).
366. ODI 2017, pg. 7.

5.6 Changing Nature of Conflict and Violence

Key messages

- Most conflicts are now intra-state and protracted, there are more situations of generalized violence, and both are increasingly urban. The confluence of state fragility and environmental change will exacerbate conflict, violence and poverty, further limiting people's voices and decreasing their choices.

- The imperative to meet needs in complex high-risk, low-access contexts has compelled international actors to cede responsibilities to local actors who have access and are willing to accept the risks.

- Remote approaches *could* serve to increase people's influence over aid and better address compounding vulnerabilities. This would require transformation away from creating more layers between people and aid decision-makers and towards more decision-making power in the hands of local partners. New technologies may help support such moves.

Conflict is an agency limiter that will increase as a driver global inequality, with people in conflict-affected countries having far fewer choices for coping with compounding crises and shocks. Although interstate conflicts have declined since the middle of the 20th century, intrastate conflicts involving non-state actors have increased, and are likely to remain the predominant form of conflict through to 2030. Conflicts have become protracted and concentrated in fragile states, and some intrastate conflicts have highly internationalized involvement from state and non-state actors. Alongside their positive benefits, new technologies and global interconnectivity also enable transnational support to non-state armed actors, both financially and ideologically. Terrorism has accelerated over the past 2 decades. It has become a key feature of armed conflict and is likely to continue, with a concentration of attacks in fragile areas of the Middle East and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and more events in HICs (which may further impact donor funding amounts and conditions, as well as international migration policy). Criminal and gang violence, such as that seen in Central America, is producing impacts of comparable severity to "armed conflict" in some countries.[367]

An estimated 2 billion people live in countries suffering from conflict, violence or fragility,[368] and conflict was the primary driver of humanitarian crisis in 2017.[369] While conflict, fragility and instability can, and do, affect countries at all levels of development and national income, according to the Fragile State Index, nearly all the group of least developed countries face concerning levels of fragility. In addition, 20% of LDCs are facing alert levels of conflict or instability.[370] Conflict, violence and state fragility have a compounding effect on development challenges and resilience. Of the 2 billion people in the world who live in poverty, 47% live in fragile countries,[371] and if current trends continue nearly half of the world's poor are expected to be living in fragile or conflict-affected states by 2030.[372]Conflict decimates livelihoods, assets and markets. It debilitates socio-economic systems and fractures political, social and family structures that are essential to early childhood development and access to quality education (especially for girls),[373]which are critical to future development outcomes and to enabling access to the opportunities presented by new technologies. Conflict and violence are primary drivers of protracted forced displacement, both within countries and across borders,[374] and greatly increase risks for women and girls of sexual and gender-based violence, early marriage and trafficking. Conflict and violence are also becoming more focused in urban areas as well as driving displaced people to migrate to unaffected or less affected cities, exacerbating the challenges of urbanization and making response to the impacts of conflict and displacement more complex.

Conflict, fragility and environmental change can be closely inter-related. In systemic crises, such as that seen in the Lake Chad Basin, environmental, political, demographic and economic factors converge and compound on each other, resulting in over-exploitation of natural resources, loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, poor health and education outcomes, conflict and displacement.[375]It is likely that environmental changes over the coming decades will increase competition over energy and natural resources, as well as produce migration patterns that may aggravate inter-ethnic or inter-group tensions.[376] State fragility and conflict also serve to increase vulnerability to the impacts of disasters (including those related to climate change): 58% of disaster-related deaths and 34% of disaster-affected people between 2004 and 2014 were found in the top 30 most fragile states.[377] The confluence of state fragility, environmental fragility and conflict serve to significantly limit the spectrum of choices open to people affected by crisis and increase their dependency on external support.

367. IARAN 2016, pg. 134.
368. World Bank, Fragility, Conflict and Violence Overview
369. DI 2018, pg. 17
370. UN list of LDCs as of March 2018; The Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index
371. DI 2018, pg. 15
372. World Bank, Fragility, Conflict and Violence Overview
373. Global Partnership for Education, Education Data; UN WHS 2015 Youth, pg. 2
374. UNHCR 2018, pg. 2
375. IARAN 2016, pg. 47; World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 27; IOM 2017
376. World Bank 2018 Groundswell, pg. 19
377. ODI 2018, pg. 8

Disruptive Potential: The changing nature of conflict has already disrupted the management and delivery of aid. Development actors, such as the World Bank, have increasingly recognized that to fight poverty they need to deal with fragility and conflict. With respect to humanitarian actors, as risks of aid work in conflicts zones have increased, aid programs are increasingly managed "remotely," i.e. implemented by local staff and partners with management oversight from often international staff, and organizations in another location. Remote management has been driven by the humanitarian imperative to meet needs while managing security risk and other access issues (generally to/for international staff), thus compelling international aid actors to cede responsibilities to local staff and/or organizations who are able to access the population of concern.[378]

By moving decision-making closer to crisis-affected people, remote management could serve to increase the influence of crisis-affected people over aid.[379] However, in its current formulation remote management often amounts to little more than a transfer of security risk from international actors to local actors, without a corresponding transfer of power.[380] Conflict contexts amplify risks with respect to both "upward" accountability to donors and "downward" accountability to crisis-affected people, e.g.: ensuring funds and assistance are going to support civilians in need and not being diverted to or by parties to the conflict, compliance with anti-terrorism legislation, inclusion and protection of marginalized populations, etc. In the interest of controlling such risks, many key decisions are often taken by internationals who are removed from the context, although how effective this approach is in actually mitigating these risks is less clear.

Remote management (and the "bunkerization" of international aid actors more generally) has served in many ways to create more layers between people affected by crisis and aid decision-making. Delivery is delegated to local intermediaries, but responsibility and decision-making around priorities, planning, strategy, coordination, and even accountability remains with internationals who have little, if any, interaction with crisis affected people, or the context in which they live. Technology (e.g., mobile connectivity, remote mapping) has increasingly been used as a tool in remote management, but it has largely been used as a tool to improve the information with which people removed from the context make decisions about the context.[381] However, technology cannot replace face-to-face contact with people or replace the nuance of local knowledge. There is the opportunity for technology to be used as a tool to augment mutual trust and responsibility between international and local actors in order to facilitate greater transfer of decision-making power and accountability to local organizations and conflict-affected people. This could produce considerable change, but it relies on formal sector actors having the interest, political will and more open worldview to use technology in a way that facilitates transformative participation and genuine partnerships.

378. Donini and Maxwell 2013, pgs. 385-386
379. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 53
380. Gingerich and Cohen 2105, pg. 19-20, 22
381. Donini and Maxwell 2013, pgs. 411-412

5.7 Resurgence of Sovereignty and Nationalism

Key messages

- Nationalist and protectionist agendas threaten to reduce the choices available to crisis-affected people, both within and outside the formal humanitarian sector. They will change the international legal, political and financial resources on which the formal sector relies.
- In some countries civil society organizations are facing ever-greater levels of restriction. This presents a long-term threat to crisis-affected people's ability to take action in their own countries and may inspire more solidarity-based approaches from international aid actors.
- Governments in some crisis-affected countries may reject or place strong restrictions on international aid. This will increase the necessity of genuine local partnerships but will also overstretch capacities and compound challenges with respect to restrictions on civil society.

The humanitarian ecosystem is highly influenced by the prevailing world order and approach to multilateral governance, as well as the political context of both donor countries and crisis-affected states. In many countries, nationalist groups have become more mainstream and are wielding greater influence over the tone of political discourse: attacking civil liberties, advancing protectionism and anti-immigrant sentiment, and undermining multilateral initiatives to address transnational issues. Nationalistic discourse has gained power in the United States, Hungary, Turkey, India, and the Philippines, among others.

Civil liberties have significant implications for how much and in what ways people can make choices about their own lives, especially in times of crises. An active civil society and engaged citizens are essential to defending civil liberties, ensuring functioning democratic institutions and holding governments accountable to their people. However, in some countries, national and local civil society, in particular organizations and individuals advocating for the respect of rights, is facing evergreater levels of restriction. These restrictions come in the form of government regulations and interference with programming, legal and judicial harassment, and as a result of threats from extremist groups and criminals.[382]

The legal, political and financial resources on which the formal humanitarian sector relies are changing. Some powerful, rich nations have already sought to reassert their sovereignty by withdrawing from international agreements (e.g., the UK with Brexit and the U.S. with the Paris Climate Agreement). In the coming decades, these trends may precipitate changes in multilateral governance, international legal frameworks and the post-World War Two international system, compounding the transnational challenges with respect to environmental change, international migration, epidemics, terrorism, growing inequality and protection of rights in a new technological landscape, among others.

Disruptive Potential: The resurgence of nationalist and protectionist agendas threatens to reduce the choices available to crisis-affected people, both within and outside of the formal humanitarian sector. Degradation of civil society and democratic accountability mechanisms present a long-term threat to crisis-affected people's ability to express their agency and take action in their own countries, independently and/or through the work of local organizations. In addition, donor governments in countries with growing nationalist discourse may reduce their foreign aid budgets or reallocate them along more extreme political lines (as is already being seen in the U.S. with the de-funding of UNRWA), resulting in even greater resource shortages to respond to crises.

The possibility of nationalist governments rejecting international aid in order to re-enforce their sovereign power is of great concern when many people in the country are dependent on external assistance. From 1984 to 2012, international humanitarian aid (all aid or aid from specific sources) for major natural disasters was rejected sixteen times, with rejections increasing notably after 2005.[383] The government of Myanmar's rejection of international aid after Cyclone Nargis in 2008, because of "fears of foreign intervention aiming at regime change," remains perhaps the most significant recent case. Since then, there have been other high-profile cases of aid rejection, not limited to natural disasters, including Venezuela's rejection of international assistance despite its ongoing, and unacknowledged, humanitarian crisis. Even where international aid is accepted, delivery of international assistance will become more difficult. Some governments will become more reluctant to allow international organizations to intercede in crises or operate independently within their borders. Increasing restrictions may be placed on international organizations, programs and staff, increasing the necessity of strong local partnerships, but overstretching national resources and capacities, and compounding challenges with respect to restrictions on national civil society.

382. NEAR 2018, pg. 11-12
383. IARAN 2016, pg. 116

6. Agents of change

The analysis for this report found two sets of actors external to the formal humanitarian sector that are less independent than the external trends discussed above, but that also have high influence on the ecosystem in which the formal humanitarian sector operates. These "agents of change" will have more space and power as the ecosystem changes, disrupt humanitarian business-as-usual, and in some ways provide opportunities for crisis-affected people to have greater influence over the assistance they receive.

6.1 Crisis-Affected Middle-Income Country (MIC) Governments

Key messages

- More MIC governments are willing and able to take the lead in crisis response. As capacities and South-South support develop, response will increasingly be through national systems and there will be less tolerance for many of the formal humanitarian sector's practices.
- Government restrictions and shifts towards national systems will incentivize international actors to change by increasing the necessity of genuine partnerships with local actors and the importance of national staff having greater decision-making authority.
- In some contexts, people have well-founded concerns about government-led response. Managing these concerns through parallel systems will be increasingly untenable, prompting international actor alliances with local actors who are working to enable protection and influence for crisis-affected people.

A growing willingness and ability of some MIC governments to respond to crises without formal humanitarian sector assistance, or to assert their leadership with respect to international assistance received, is already being seen[384]. In addition, rising non-DAC donors (like China) and enhanced regional and South-South cooperation provides space and resources for MICs to be less beholden to Western donor governments and potentially less apt to accept Western demands around crisis response arrangements.[385]

The same UN resolution (46/182 of 1991) that established the current leadership and coordination architecture of the formal humanitarian sector, also states that "Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory." MIC governments have greatly varying disaster risk management and response capacities to fulfill this responsibility, but many have been and are investing in improving these capacities under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (and its predecessor the Hyogo Framework) and other initiatives.[386] Many MICs will require international or regional support over the coming decades to respond to crises that overwhelm capacities, notably fragile MICs (which are less likely to have disaster risk management systems in place).[387] However, **as capacities develop, response will increasingly be through national organizations, systems and structures**, such as social protection systems and disaster management agencies.[388]

Government-run response can be a mechanism to improve accountability and increase the weight of citizen voices in crisis management (in comparison to formal humanitarian sector decision-making that has no direct democratic accountability link to crisis-affected people). The role of a citizen and the way they engage with institutional decision-making is different from those of an aid "beneficiary." The scope for influencing decisions about assistance and support can be greater as a citizen, depending on the level of inclusion and freedom in each state. Under corrupt or repressive regimes (and for marginalized groups more generally), it can result in less voice and less support than if the response was internationally-run, regardless the wealth and capacity of the country in question.

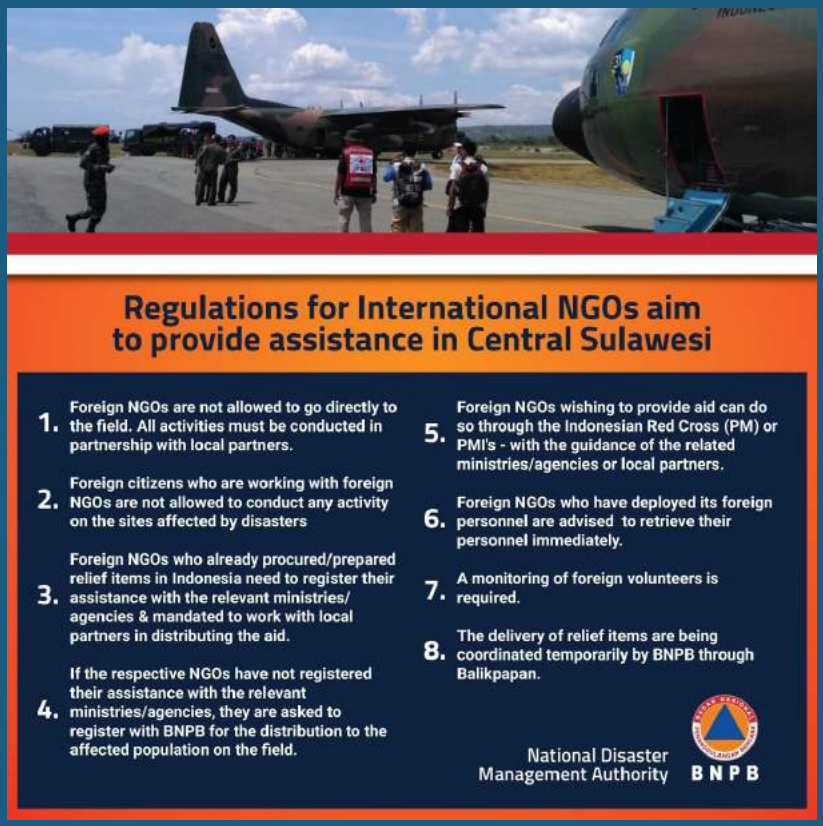
384. Ramalingam and Mitchell 2014, pg. 8; Loy 2018
385. ODI 2016, pgs. 22, 36-39, 53; Ramalingam and Mitchell 2014, pg. 8, 15
386. The Sendai Framework (2015-2030) is a non-binding agreement focused on increasing national capacities to reduce and manage disaster risk. Other initiatives, e.g. the "Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF)" partnership of vulnerable countries providing a platform for South-South cooperation.
387. ODI 2018, pg. 25
388. OECD 2018, pg. 8; Ramalingam and Mitchell 2014, pg. 8

International response to crisis has always relied on consent or acceptance from the government of the affected state (and has been both difficult and dangerous on the rare occasions where it has proceeded without).[389] **As MIC government capacities increase, tolerance of the formal humanitarian sector's practice of setting up parallel systems is already decreasing.**[390] This does not mean that there will be no role for formal sector actors. There will be crises that overwhelm even the most capacitated systems. There will also be inequities in service delivery and marginalized populations even in states that have strong social contracts with, and accountability to, their citizens.

What it will mean is international aid actors having less control and adapting to roles within government and locally led structures. For example, becoming powerful advocates for and supporters of women's groups and other civil society organizations that are seeking to address respect for rights, assistance gaps and inequalities;[391] seeking ways to support vulnerable population groups to obtain digital inclusion and access to other coping strategies; and facilitating citizen or diaspora-led response efforts.[392]

Indonesia Asserts Control Over International Aid Actors

Following the powerful earthquake and tsunami that hit the island of Sulawesi in September 2018, the government of Indonesia directed international NGOs to work through local partners, and restricted the presence international aid workers on the ground in the disaster zone. Government officials asserted that this was necessary to ensure coordination among the many responding organizations and prevent disruptions to rescue and recovery work. Some international aid actors expressed surprise that the government of Indonesia would welcome international support, but not international actors. Others have highlighted that the formal humanitarian sector "will be forced to rethink the way help is funded and delivered."[393]



Source: Excerpt from Twitter post of Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, head of public relations for the Indonesian National Board for Disaster Management (BNPB)

389. Harvey 2009, pg. 1-2
390. ODI 2016, pg. 38; See Indonesia example in text box
391. Harvey 2009, pg. 4; Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 41; McGoldrick 2016
392. Ramalingam and Mitchell 2014, pg. 26
393. Loy 2018

The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan Response found that "international response and surge mechanisms in particular did not adapt sufficiently to play a complementary role in a middle income country with strong disaster management capacity."[394] Government authorities in the Philippines felt that international aid actors continued parallel emergency response programs beyond what the government considered the emergency phase.[395] National civil society did not feel trusted or treated as equal partners by international aid actors, and opted to largely operate outside of the formal humanitarian sector's coordination structures.[396] Working effectively with and within national systems requires knowledge of those systems, understanding of the socio-political context and the ability to work in the local language.[397] Coordination between international actors and national authorities and civil society notably improved during the Typhoon Haiyan response as the ratio of national staff within international organizations increased.[398]

Government restrictions, and shifts towards government-led systems, will incentivize international aid actors to change internally, by increasing both the necessity of genuine partnerships with local actors and the importance of national staff having greater management and decision-making authority. Shifts towards government-led systems will also shift the dominant accountability framework within the formal humanitarian sector, pushing international aid actors to be more accountable to and engage more meaningfully with national and local authorities.

Government-led response (regardless of national income level) can also create risks for crisis-affected people. Domestic politics influence government preparedness, response and recovery decisions, from what populations receive assistance, to what types of approaches are used, to how much is invested. Marginalized groups are treated differently from privileged groups, and in some cases directly persecuted. Non-citizens, such as refugees, are treated differently from citizens, and in many cases have their rights considerably restricted. Political expediency and feasibility, and in some cases reputation, may be prioritized over effective and efficient response.[399] Citizens may have good reasons not to trust their government and well-founded concerns about government-managed response.[400] However, as MIC government capacities increase, continuing to manage this tension through parallel international systems will be increasingly untenable, and international aid actors will need to build genuine local partnerships and find themselves as natural allies with local actors who are working to enable greater voice, protection and influence for crisis affected people.[401]

"In spite of the difficulties with donor/government partnerships, people both within and outside of government feel that aid providers have a responsibility to connect with existing governance structures. And, even though people name a number of problems they see when donor funds come through local NGOs and CBOs, they nonetheless urge donors to continue partnering with civil society groups. People in aid-receiving societies clearly want international assistance efforts to connect to, and reinforce, strengthen, or improve, their existing collective institutional capacities"
– The Listening Project

394. OCHA 2014, pg. 38
395. OCHA 2014, pg. 46
396. OCHA 2014, pg. 47
397. Harvey 209
398. OCHA 2014, pg. 43, 47
399. CALP 2018, pg. 76
400. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pgs. 84-89
401. OCHA 2014, pg. 46; Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 45-56

6.2 Alternative Actors

Key messages

- The formal humanitarian sector has been remiss in establishing genuine partnerships with the range of other actors who have long been critical to crisis response. These actors have different ways of thinking and working and will increasingly challenge the formal sector.
- Local, national and Southern international NGOs will have increasing opportunities to demonstrate their competitive advantages and may be better placed than formal sector actors to harness crowd-funding, new private sector partnerships and Islamic social financing.
- Private sector engagement in the aid ecosystem is not new but is ramping up in new ways. Many private companies understand disaster resilience as an investment in their own future, as well as that of the affected populations who also comprise their market. They may grow as both donors to local actors and competitors to formal sector actors.

The formal humanitarian sector has long needed better partnerships – genuine, mutual partnerships – with the range of actors who respond to crises, but not necessarily (or entirely) through the formal humanitarian sector's systems: Southern, national and local organizations (including community-based organizations), the private sector, diaspora groups, faith-based organizations and religious institutions, citizens' initiatives, and more.[402] Many of these actors have found it hard to work with the opaque, rigid, bureaucratic and Western-oriented systems of the formal humanitarian sector, and may not be interested in jumping through the formal sector's hoops if funding and partners are available elsewhere.[403] These actors have different ways of thinking and working, access to alternative and emerging funding sources, and a greater focus on the local. It is likely they will continue and expand their work, whether the formal humanitarian sector chooses to engage them as genuine partners or not.

Local, national and Southern international NGOs, including faith-based organizations and community-based organizations, are essential to crisis response and recovery, the defense of human and civil rights (including, notably, women's rights), addressing inequality and building resilience in their countries and regions – working with and outside of the formal humanitarian sector.[404] As Oxfam has found, "Because local actors are assisting their families, friends, and fellow citizens, and because they remain in the community when the international humanitarian response ends, they tend to be more accountable to affected populations."[405] Local and national organizations, which are in many cases run and staffed by people who are themselves from communities affected by crisis, are better placed to ensure that aid interventions are engaging, influenced by and providing a greater range of choices for people affected by crisis.

These organizations are claiming greater space and voice within the humanitarian ecosystem. Based on tracked funding, of the 35% of international humanitarian funding that went directly to NGOs in 2017, only 0.3% went directly to local NGOs, 2.4% went to national NGOs and 1.9% went to Southern INGOs.[406] These percentages are tiny when compared to the share of humanitarian work that these organizations do on the ground with funding passed through from UN agencies and northern INGO intermediaries, often in contracting arrangements that are considered "instrumental."[407] Despite financial marginalization, alliances of national and southern international NGOs have secured a voice within the formal humanitarian sector, and commitments from donors, UN agencies and Northern INGOs to increase their share of funding (such as The Grand Bargain and the Charter4Change). These commitments, while welcome, may prove to be lip-service. But the power of local, national and Southern international NGOs will grow within the humanitarian ecosystem regardless. **Northern INGOs will be increasingly politically challenged by States and communities in their areas of operation, and local and national NGOs will have increasing opportunities to demonstrate their competitive advantage** with respect to contextual understanding, access, risk tolerance, cost-effectiveness and programming as the external trends discussed above progress.[408] Some emerging donors (e.g., in the private sector) and funding sources (e.g. crowd-funding) may also view local and national organizations as more legitimate avenues for assistance.[409]

403. ODI 2016, pg. 64
404. NEAR 2018, pg. 10; ODI 2016, pg. 56
405. Gingerich and Cohen 2015, pg. 5
406. DI 2018, pg. 50
407. NEAR 2018, pg. 10
408. IARAN 2016, pg. 148-151; NEAR 2018, pg. 10-11
409. ODI 2016, pg. 64

Alongside advocacy for greater and fairer direct funding from formal sector actors, local and national NGOs are also seeking out new funders and funding models that may change power dynamics vis-à-vis the formal humanitarian sector. Research conducted by NEAR (Network for Empowered Aid Response), a movement of local and national organizations working towards a locally driven and owned humanitarian and development system, noted that "donor dependence consigns CSOs to constantly shifting to accommodate donor priorities and to prioritizing upwards accountability rather than accountability to communities, undermining the legitimacy and acceptance of CSOs within their own societies." This research also found that "an overemphasis on donor-directed approaches and blue-prints has generally resulted in failure."[410] Some financing strategies that local and national NGOs have successfully used to begin to break away from international donor dependence include social enterprise models that incorporate cost-recovery and profit-making services[411] and community foundation models that build locally-based assets and revenues.[412] Many national and local organizations in Muslim-majority countries already receive considerable amounts of zakat, and – given its complexities – **local, national and southern NGOs in and from Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries may be better-placed than the formal humanitarian sector to harness the considerable potential of Islamic social financing for humanitarian and development work.**[413] The different funding models that local and national NGOs harness can be used to overcome or to skirt key inertias to change in the formal humanitarian sector which have kept them marginalized to-date.

In 2015, private sector companies contributed an estimated $388 million to humanitarian action.[414] Private sector engagement in the humanitarian ecosystem is not new, however this engagement is ramping up in new ways which are likely to catalyze change. Development banks are introducing mechanisms like blended financing, which leverages public development funding to attract private sector investment for development initiatives in crisis-affected countries.[415] In addition, technology and platform companies are being engaged as partners by formal humanitarian sector actors and are also pursuing their own independent initiatives or working with smaller NGOs to find ways to harness new technologies for crisis response and resilience-building (as noted in Section 5 above, local actors may have a competitive advantage in attracting such partnerships).[416] Private sector actors, notably in MICs, have played an increasing role in "natural" disaster response and disaster risk reduction.[417] For example, in Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, Filipino companies were some of the first responders, going beyond donating goods to also donate critical services and support (such as transportation and communications). Many private companies understand disaster resilience and preparedness as an investment in their own future, as well as that of affected populations – who also comprise their market. They are also often well-placed, with established relationships in both national and international networks that they can leverage for disaster response and risk management.[418] **Private sector actors may grow as competitors to formal humanitarian actors, not least because many government officials may prefer them as partners.**[419]

The formal humanitarian sector has been remiss in establishing genuine partnerships with the range of non-governmental actors who have long been critical to crisis response and recovery, although often working tangentially to the systems of the formal humanitarian sector. These alternative actors will increasingly challenge the aid power structure and provide alternatives avenues of support for people affected by crisis.

410. NEAR 2018, pg. 27
411. NEAR 2018, pg. 22
412. NEAR 2018, pg. 27
413. NEAR 2018, pgs. 40-42. A study conducted for NEAR highlighted that in 2015 estimated zakat giving amounted to between $232 and $560 billion. The Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and others have highlighted the potential of Islamic social financing as an organized and sustainable source of funding for humanitarian needs in the future. There are different types of Islamic giving, such as zakat, which is an obligatory contribution for all Muslims above a certain level of wealth to support the poor, and waqf, which is a "voluntary endowment of assets or funds to a trust…earmarked for purposes specified by the founder," among others. Zakat is administered by the state in some countries, and is also paid to local mosques, charities or directly to individual beneficiaries. Waqf is already used "to finance education, health and social welfare provision to promote social development." NEAR has also highlighted that Islamic microfinance institutions, which have different rules about interest, may be more supportive mechanisms for poor households to avoid unsustainable debt. (Sources: OIC 2017, pg. 1; Soyan Financial Consultancy 2017, pgs. 7, 9-10, 13; NEAR 2018, pgs. 40-42)
414. DI 2017, pg. 51
415. DI 2017, pg. 54
416. Currion 2018, pg. 12
417. ODI 2016, pg. 39
418. Brown 2015
419. ODI 2016, pgs. 39-40

7. Conclusion

The formal humanitarian sector knows what it "should" do. It knows that meaningful participation of crisis-affected people in aid decision-making is essential to ensuring the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability, of aid interventions and to respecting people's individual dignity and right to determine their own lives. It knows that crisis-affected people are the central agents in their own response and recovery, that local knowledge and contextual understanding are essential for making good aid decisions and avoiding bad ones, and that aid actors have a role to play in promoting an enabling environment for individuals to make decisions themselves. It knows that disregarding the agency of crisis-affected people can undermine the short- and long-term goals that aid aims to achieve. It knows all this from its own work and from the voices of people affected by crisis. The formal humanitarian sector also knows that despite decades of commitments, tools, standards and guidelines, people affected by crisis still have little (if any) influence over the aid decisions that affect them. Participation in aid decision making has remained largely instrumental, serving as a means to inform aid decisions or support outcomes decided by aid actors. There has been limited representative participation through which people influence aid decisions, and even less transformative space in which formal humanitarian sector actors follow the lead of, and co-design strategies and interventions together with, crisis-affected people and local actors.

The internal factors with the most influence over the formal humanitarian sector are themselves inertias to transformative change. Within this system, self-regulating efforts to improve participation and "downward" accountability have had limited impact. Donor interests and the power and incentive structure of the formal humanitarian sector, supported by its bureaucracy, strongly focuses organizations and aid workers on "upward" accountability. Crisis-affected people and local actors find themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy, and there are few incentives, and even fewer sanctions, to push formal sector actors to increase local influence over aid decisions. The worldview that underpins much of humanitarian action serves to re-enforce these inertias. A charity-based model continues to dominate in the formal humanitarian sector, which consistently values technical expertise and Western management practices, over contextual understanding, local knowledge and lived experience. It also bestows a greater amount of inherent trust, faith, and acceptance for missteps on international actors than it provides for local actors – thus raising the barrier for entry by local actors and hindering moves towards subsidiarity.

However, the formal humanitarian sector operates within a broader ecosystem that is being changed by major global trends. These external trends are disrupting business-as-usual within the formal humanitarian sector, and over the coming two decades have the potential to shift incentives and challenge the worldview. Trends with respect to new technologies, interconnectivity, urbanization, youth and education, environmental change, international migration, the changing nature of conflict and violence, and the resurgence of sovereignty and nationalism are already changing humanitarian action, and the lives of those it intends to serve. Some aspects of these trends will come together to expand subsidiarity, the support choices available to crisis-affected people and their influence over the assistance they receive. Other aspects will result in significantly increased risks, needs and hardships for people affected by crisis, expanding the challenge and complexity of delivering aid while further squeezing already over-stretched resources. The formal humanitarian sector will face more scrutiny, more operational limitations and more competition, which will mean that change is required to remain relevant.

Growing interconnectivity between people and communities globally, supported by the spread of technology, transnational communities, urbanization and the coming of age of today's youth, will provide **more choices for people to organize their own response**, expand avenues for people to connect with formal and non-formal aid providers who are willing to meet their priorities (rather than relying on "who shows up"), and enable people to demand more from formal humanitarian sector actors. People will have **greater ability to amplify their own voices** and narratives to influence formal humanitarian sector decisions, both in crisis-affected countries and internationally. Broader interconnectivity and new technologies will also provide more avenues and competitive advantages for local actors to grow and harness alternative funding opportunities and partnerships.

Urbanization, environmental change and protracted conflict will further increase the complexity of response, magnifying the importance of contextual understanding and local expertise. The tolerance of parallel systems and the need for intermediaries will decline, especially as technology enables systems to be streamlined, crisis-affected MIC governments increase their role in response management, and needs vs. resource pressures demand efficiency. As MIC government roles in response management and leadership increase, a move to local and national systems will not be optional and the importance of protecting civil society space and government-citizen accountability mechanisms will be essential. Local actors will have greater power in partnerships as governments demand nationalized response. Their power in partnerships will also expand with the growing necessity of local expertise in accessing communities, managing risk, meeting increasing needs vs. resource pressures, and responding effectively to the complexity of response amidst urbanization, environmental change and protracted conflict. Local actors will increasingly have a competitive advantage. This will shift incentives within the formal sector to support **real moves towards subsidiarity and genuine partnerships**, supported by new technologies that help expand trust and a harshening political environment that inspires solidarity.

These global trends also portend a future with new patterns of need and concentrated vulnerability. Inequalities in access to technology and education will leave many people behind, and technology will also create new, unpredictable risks and vulnerabilities for many. Urbanization, environmental change and conflict will exacerbate both needs and inequalities, leaving many people with fewer choices for managing greater risks. People will continue to move across borders, but international migration frameworks will likely harden, trapping crisis-affected people in dangerous and in some cases unfree circumstances in countries of origin, transit and destination. The resurgence of sovereignty and nationalism may result in both increased resource pressures as funds are reduced or more politically apportioned, and more access constraints as governments seek greater control over local civil society and international assistance. Large numbers of people will be left behind and will continue to need support from the formal humanitarian sector. Their influence over the aid choices available to them will depend in large part on **formal sector actors pursuing and practicing more transformative participation.** The odds of this may improve if cracks that have already appeared in the aid worldview widen as a result of crisis-affected people increasingly being able to present their own narratives to aid power-holders and the general public, and as formal sector actors work in greater genuine partnership with local actors. If these cracks widen, transformative participation and new technologies will amplify the effectiveness of choice-enabling approaches (such as cash transfers).

Implications for the Formal Humanitarian Sector

Humanitarian business-as-usual is changing. Changes in the broader ecosystem in which the formal humanitarian sector operates will precipitate fundamental changes in how the sector works. Some of these changes, such as a reduction of parallel systems, fewer intermediary roles for international aid actors, and working with and through national and local systems, will happen regardless of what formal sector actors chose to do. Other changes lend themselves to encouraging formal sector actors to make choices that shift more influence and decision-making towards crisis-affected people and local actors, in order to remain relevant, present and effective.

Formal sector actors will have choices to make about whether they adapt in ways that support greater subsidiarity and a genuine move towards more people-centered aid, or if they will attempt to further centralize power among fewer, larger organizations. International aid actors, such as many international NGOs who currently play intermediary roles have reason to be concerned, both that they will be squeezed out and, about the impact that attempts to further centralize power will have on the voices and choices of crisis-affected people. Disregarding the capacity of formal sector actors to be agents of change would be a disservice to the multitude of committed humanitarians that make up such organizations and are willing to challenge the dominant worldview and power structure. Formal humanitarian sector actors who dramatically increase the value they place on local knowledge and contextual understanding, pursue genuine power-sharing partnerships with local actors, and support transformative participation, will be more likely to drive change and to remain relevant, present and effective in the future. Actions that would support this include, for example:

- **Redefining growth away from bigger organizations and towards bigger networks:** Invest in power-sharing South-North partnerships and consortia (notably with organizations run by women and other marginalized groups) that are based on solidarity and put independent local/national NGOs at the forefront of decision-making alongside Southern and Northern INGOs. Such strategic partnerships could capitalize on the respective competitive advantages of local, national and international partners to leverage the widest range of expertise, capacity and emerging funding opportunities, amplify local voices across wider advocacy networks both domestically and internationally, co-design approaches to better manage existing and emerging risks and improve access to communities in need within increasingly complex crisis contexts and government-led responses.

- **Flipping the human resources paradigm:** Take pro-active steps to eliminate pro-Western hiring bias for management positions and incentivize the recruitment and promotion of people with lived experience of crisis and humanitarian staff from crisis-affected countries, in particular for senior decision-making positions. Place greater value on skill sets that lend themselves to transformation of both practices and worldviews, such as local languages, knowledge and understanding of local contexts, facilitation and conflict resolution, and collaborative decision-making and problem-solving. Encourage an organizational culture that acknowledges underlying power dynamics and expects those who have power to step back and create space for other voices, knowledge and analysis.

- **Co-producing choice-enabling solutions:** Build expertise in working with and supporting local actors to develop alternative funding streams that do not rely on donor governments; in supporting expanded interconnectivity for crisis-affected people through technology, education and engagement with transnational communities; and in co-designing cash-based assistance and other choice-enabling program approaches together with crisis-affected people and local actors to best amplify the benefits and manage the risks.

- **Leading:** Think long-term and embrace responsibility for challenging and changing the power structure and worldview that perpetuates the dominance of international actors in aid decision-making. Insist that the benefit of the doubt accorded to international actors be extended to local actors. Advocate for transparency on what potential failures are accepted and what potential failures are deemed to be too high a risk. Recognize the cost that transformative change would have for formal sector actors in terms of their own control and have the courage to pursue change regardless.

Crisis-affected people are the central agents of their own futures and will continue to prepare for, respond to, cope with, and recover from crisis creatively and with the capacities and resources available to them. Many people will have more pathways to exercise this agency going forward, but others will be left behind. The outlook for the most vulnerable people affected by crisis is bleak. The space for international aid actors will shrink in many places. Business-as-usual is changing. Formal humanitarian sector actors can choose to change as well, and use this moment to focus on supporting crisis-affected people who are being left behind to have stronger voices, more choices and greater influence over the assistance they receive.

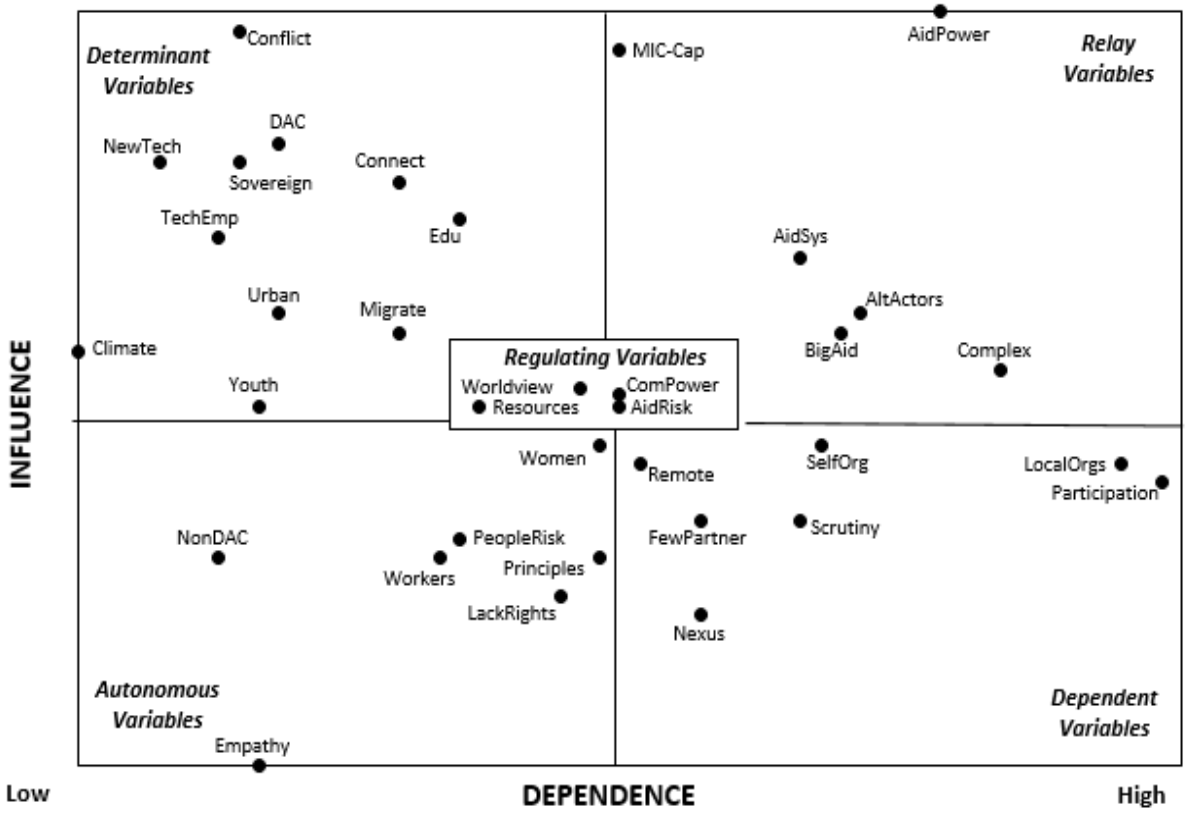
Annex 1: Methodology

The inertias, trends and agents of change addressed in this report were identified using IARAN's analytic toolkit. The methodology is used to understand the network of interactions that shape complex issues, and which are the leading ones driving future evolution. The analysis used a three-stage process. The first step is referenced to as the architecture. It is a preliminary outline of the system being studied. It is used to identify the factors to be included in the analysis. These factors were identified and explored through a literature review. These factors were then classified by their scale and by a PESTLE framework (political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental) to mitigate cognitive bias and ensure as comprehensive a list as possible. These factors then serve as the basic elements of the subsequent analysis.

The second stage of analysis involved refining this list of factors to a manageable size. This was achieved through two workshops with the IARAN analysts and fellows. An Importance-Preparedness Matrix was conducted in person. It involves ranking factors by their importance to the issue and by how prepared the formal humanitarian sector is to address them. Of particular interest were the factors with higher levels of importance and lower levels of preparedness, as these would have the greatest disruptive potential. An Impact-Uncertainty matrix was also conducted remotely. This technique ranks the factors on how strong their effect is on the topic and by how (un) predictable their future course is through 2040. Of particular interest were the factors with higher levels of impact and uncertainty, as these shape the future uncertainty surrounding the issue. These processes also considered which factors were serving as inertias to people having greater influence and power of aid decisions that affect them. Guided by the findings of these two workshops, the IARAN analysts consolidated the 114 factors in the Architecture down to the 36 most critical ones.

The third stage was based on a structural analysis technique known as a MICMAC. The 36 factors were entered into an adjacency matrix where they were listed along both the x- and y-axes. The degree of influence each factor had on every other was then ranked (from 0-3). The resulting table of values were then used to classify each factor based on its net influence (the sum of its influence on all other factors) and dependence (the sum of all other factors' influence on it). The influence and dependence scores of the factors were then graphed to create a "map" of the system. The four quadrants in which the factors fall can be broadly used to categorize them and describe their behavior in the system. Additionally, the location of the factors on this graph can be indicative of the stability of the system. If they are concentrated in the upper left, lower left, and lower right quadrants the system is likely to be stable. While if they are distributed along the axis from the lower left to upper right then the system is more like unstable. This is because of the characteristics of the factors that fall into these different quadrants.

The results of the MICMAC are discussed in detail on the next page. The most influential of these factors were explored in the report as they are the most determinant in shaping the network of interactions that define the issue. These factors were categorized in the report as being: internal inertias, external trends, or agents of change. The results show a stable system with some factors that are internal to the formal humanitarian sector and inertias to change presenting as having considerable influence. This helps to explain why voluntary and self-regulating efforts by formal sector actors have failed to produce systemic change. However, there are also several powerful external trends which are driving change in the broader humanitarian ecosystem regardless of the actions of the formal humanitarian sector. Some of these external trends have the potential to disrupt the internal inertia and/or drive transformative change with respect to crisis-affected people's influence over the assistance they receive.



Determinant Variables: *Factors that are very influential over the system, but also very independent.*

These factors are moving ahead and will drive changes within the ecosystem regardless of the actions of aid actors. The only factor in this group that is internal to the formal humanitarian sector is DAC donor government politics, which is primarily an inertia with respect to greater decision-making power over aid by crisis-affected people. The remaining factors will precipitate changes in the formal humanitarian sector and present both new opportunities and some serious threats with respect to crisis-affected people making their voices heard and expanding their choices. The technology factors (interconnectivity, new technological solutions and tech empowerment) are assessed as having a high impact with respect to greater decision-making power by crisis-affected people.

Factors classified as determinant variables:

- DAC donor government interests
- Interconnectivity
- New technological solutions for aid
- Technological empowerment
- Urbanization
- Education and literacy
- Youth empowerment
- Environmental change
- International migration
- Changing nature of conflict/violence
- Resurgence of sovereignty and nationalism

Relay Variables: *Factors that are very influential within the system but can also be influenced themselves.*

These factors may be influenced to change, and their changes would have an impact on the overall ecosystem. The key question here is if these factors are likely to change in a direction that enables greater decision-making power about aid for crisis-affected people. The higher influence relay variables along the top of this quadrant have the power to affect more change but will also be more difficult to shift. Historically, change towards greater decision-making power for crisis-affected people has not been forthcoming from the formal humanitarian power structure (an internal inertia), but changes in the ecosystem may create pressure to shift "business as usual" in directions that may increase agency for crisis-affected people with respect to aid. External to the formal humanitarian sector, there may be opportunities for crisis-affected people in MICs to have a greater influence on aid decision-making as government capacity increases. Both of these factors are considered to have a high impact on crisis-affected people's decision-making power with respect to aid.

The variables towards the bottom of the relay quadrant are generally less influential overall but easier target variables for leveraging change in the system. The internal inertias of aid bureaucracy and big aid agencies' concerns about turf will be difficult (although not impossible) to change in the direction of greater decision-making power for crisis-affected people. Similarly, the time, cost and complexity that aid actors face in meaningfully engaging with crisis-affected people, while being assessed as having a high impact on decision-making power, may also prove difficult to shift in the midst of internal sector inertias. Therefore, alternative actors, which are external to the formal humanitarian sector, present the best opportunity for targeting positive change.

Factors classified as relay variables:

- Formal humanitarian power/incentive structure
- Aid system/bureaucracy
- Big aid agencies' turf
- Increasing Middle-Income Country (MIC) government capacity
- Alternative actors
- Time, cost, and complexity of engagement

Regulating Variables: *Factors that sit at the center of the system, in the middle on influence and dependence.*

We cannot draw clear conclusions about this group of factors. They may behave like determinant variables, relay variables, dependent variables or autonomous variables. It is therefore important to pay attention to their influence on specific determinant and relay variables with respect to promoting or blocking change in the direction of greater decision-making power about aid by crisis-affected people.

Regulating Variables: *Factors that sit at the center of the system, in the middle on influence and dependence.*

We cannot draw clear conclusions about this group of factors. They may behave like determinant variables, relay variables, dependent variables or autonomous variables. It is therefore important to pay attention to their influence on specific determinant and relay variables with respect to promoting or blocking change in the direction of greater decision-making power about aid by crisis-affected people.

Factors classified as regulating variables:

- Aid worldview
- Risk aversion by formal sector actors
- Needs vs. resource pressure
- Community power structures

Dependent Variables: *Factors that have limited influence over the system and are sensitive to changes in the determinant and relay variables.*

These factors are where we would like to see change manifest in the ecosystem, but just changing them on their own would not result in systemic change. With respect to seeing change manifest for crisis-affected people's decision-making power, self-organizing, the increasing influence on L/NGOs and choice enabling programs are all rated as having a high impact on decision-making power by crisis-affected people about aid.

Factors classified as dependent variables:

- Few true partnerships
- Self-organizing by crisis-affected people
- Remote/local management
- Choice-enabling programs
- Increasing influence of L/NGOs (localization agenda)
- Participation "revolution"
- Community scrutiny
- Humanitarian-Development Nexus

Autonomous Variables: *Factors that are independent, neither influencing nor leveraging major evolutions among the other factors.*

These factors may be quite important in their own right, but function independently from the other factors in this system. They are therefore not very sensitive to change based on changes in the other factors. Rising non-DAC donor governments presents as autonomous variable that is more influential than dependent, however, and thus may be considered as a secondary lever that is important to watch for its influence on specific determinant and relay variables.

Factors classified as autonomous variables:

- Aid workers
- Rising non-DAC donor governments
- Women's empowerment
- Normative Frameworks
- Empathy
- Risks to crisis-affected people in engaging with formal sector actors
- Lack of access to rights

Annex 2 Summary of participation commitments and practice

Over the past 25 years, international aid actors have made many commitments and launched many initiatives to improve participation of and accountability to people affected by crisis with respect to programmatic decisions around assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and, more broadly, "the decisions that affect them."

Timeline of key collective commitments to engage people affected by crisis:[420]

- **1994: Code of Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.** Commitment 7: Effective relief and lasting rehabilitation can best be achieved where the intended beneficiaries are involved in the design, management and implementation of the assistance program. We will strive to achieve full community participation in our relief and rehabilitation programs. Commitment 9: We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources. 2000-2003: Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) established[421] to "make humanitarian action accountable to intended beneficiaries through self-regulation and compliance verification," under the belief that "humanitarian accountability is the exercise of 'giving intended beneficiaries a proper say' in humanitarian action."[422] Principle 4: Members involve beneficiaries in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and report to them on progress, subject only to serious operational constraints.
- **2003: Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.** Principle 7: Request implementing humanitarian organizations to ensure to the greatest possible extend, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.
- **2004: SPHERE Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Relief.** Common Standard 1: The disaster-affected population actively participates in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the assistance program.
- **2007: HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management.** Benchmark 3: The agency shall enable beneficiaries and their representatives to participate in program decisions and seek their informed consent.[423] Including as a requirement: The agency shall enable intended beneficiaries and their representatives to participate in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- **2010: Updated HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management**. Benchmark 4: The organization listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in program decisions. Including as a requirement: The organization shall develop and put in place processes appropriate to the context so that the people it aims to assist and other crisis-affected people provide feedback and influence.
- **2011: Updated SPHERE Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Relief. Core Standard 1:** People's capacity and strategies to survive with dignity are integral to the design and approach of humanitarian response. Including as key actions: progressively increase disaster-affected people's decision-making power and ownership of programs during the course of a response; and establish systematic and transparent mechanisms through which people affected by disaster or conflict can provide regular feedback and influence programs.
- **2011: Inter-Agency Standing Committee Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations. Commitment 4:** Enable affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalized and affected are represented and have influence.
- **2014: Core Humanitarian Standard.** Commitment 4: Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them. In the CHS Guidance Notes, each commitment includes indicators based on what affected people think.
- **2015: World Humanitarian Summit** saw many individual aid actors commit to "putting people at the center of humanitarian action and to ensure their rightful place in decision-making"[424] as well as a core commitment to empower women and girls to participate meaningfully in humanitarian action.
- **2016: The Grand Bargain**. Goal 6: A participation revolution – include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives. Subsequent 2017 recommendation for this work stream: Effective "participation" of people affected by humanitarian crises puts the needs and interests of those people at the core of humanitarian decision making, by actively engaging them throughout decision-making processes.

However, reports and consultations conducted within the formal humanitarian sector have confirmed the feedback received from crisis-affected people: aid actors are not achieving their targets with respect to meaningfully engaging crisis-affected people in decision making.

420. Note: In addition to these collective commitments, many individual donors and aid agencies have adopted their own individual codes and commitments on participation and accountability.
421. Following exploration of an ombudsman approach in the late 1990s/early 2000s it was determined that a self-regulatory approach would be more effective and realistic in humanitarian contexts.
422. HAP 2005, pg.5
423. Informed Consent: Ensuring that the intended beneficiaries, or their representatives, understand and agree with the proposed humanitarian action and its implications.
424. UN WHS 2016 Commitments, pg.6
425. CHS 2015, pg. 32; Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 39, 51
426. CHS 2015, pg. 32
427. ALNAP 2015, pg. 12
428. GTS 2018, pg. 4
429. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 110

People affected by crisis generally do not have influence over strategic decisions by aid organizations or donors, such as organizational policies or how to prioritize and allocate resources across different geographic areas, sectors and people.[425] Although affected-people's views, expressed needs and priorities may inform strategic decisions via assessments, feedback mechanisms and evaluations, it is unclear how and to what extent feedback collected and evidence gathered is being assessed and translated into decision-making.[426] The 2015 State of the Humanitarian System study found that from 2012 to 2015, "more feedback mechanisms were developed, but there is little evidence of affected populations' input to project design or approach."[427] GTS found that "analysis and consideration of inputs from affected communities remains shallow, and doesn't influence humanitarian response plans and their monitoring in a systematic way."[428] Consultations in advance of the WHS found that strategic decision-making is often highly centralized and made at the headquarters level, leaving few opportunities for local influence and engagement.[429] The consultations "resoundingly called for humanitarian decision and policy-making structures to be more inclusive of diverse actors," including communities.[430]

Crisis-affected people and communities are often consulted about their needs, and in many cases priorities and preferences, notably during the assessment phase,[431] and they certainly make choices about what information to provide (which may be influenced by who is asking the questions). However, these assessments may be restricted to certain types or sectors of needs (as opposed to the full picture) and fail to capture contextually relevant challenges, capacities, coping mechanisms and resources.[432] Assessment and other information gathering processes have often been extractive.[433] Some assessments are also limited to the "target group" or "intended beneficiaries", without consulting others who do not fall into these pre-determined categories. Crisis affected people have generally been less engaged in decision-making around methods and interpretation (or even informed of results), about the use (or protection) of the data, or about what information is considered "relevant" and how is different information/feedback weighted. Assistance also largely continues to be based more on what goods and services aid agencies are in a position to provide, rather than the priority needs of crisis-affected people.[434] However, the formal humanitarian sector has been making considerable investments into improving two-way and real-time communications systems and feedback mechanisms,[435] which are aimed at developing better dialogue with people and communities, facilitating crisis-affected people's access to key information needed to take their own decisions, and better understanding of community needs and concerns over time. Some aid agencies have also begun to track crisis-affected people perceptions of and satisfaction with their performance.[436] With respect to communication, it is important to note that part of treating people with respect and dignity ("empowerment") entails transparency about which decisions they can/will influence and which are out of the scope of power-sharing.[437] This will differ across organizations and interventions, and may be a criterion on which people make choices regarding their own engagement of time and effort.[438]

Crisis-affected people have shown particular concern about decisions around eligibility for assistance, and their lack of information about why and how some people/groups are selected and not others (targeting). These decisions are often interpreted as unfair and in some cases as favoritism or the imposition of an outside agenda; in many cases they have disrupted social cohesion or aggravated tensions.[439] Pre-existing ideas of "vulnerability" are embedded within the structures and processes of the formal humanitarian system, and there are few processes in place through which crisis-affected people can challenge them.[440] While the formal humanitarian sector is making efforts to improve communication and information provision, including on issues such as eligibility, aid agencies still retain control over what and how much information to share.

Crisis-affected people are less often engaged in program design decisions,[441] even though the decisions taken at this stage are some of the most critical: what problems/needs will be addressed, what approaches will be most relevant and impactful, what geographic areas will be targeted, how is vulnerability defined and who will be eligible, will assistance be broad and shallow (less across more people) or narrow and deep (more to fewer people), which partners (if any) will be engaged, will existing community structures be used or will new ones be established, etc. Many of these decisions must be taken at the proposal stage, before the implementing agency even has funding or staff on the ground. Some aid approaches are designed to give some programmatic decision-making power to affected populations. However, a World Bank literature review on "Participatory Approaches to Local Development for an Evaluation of the Effectiveness of World Bank Support for Community-Based and -Driven Development Approaches" conducted in 2005 and highlighting studies from the late 1990s and early 2000s, found that "participation during preparation results in some tinkering around the edges of an already defined project, when it is too late for primary stakeholder views and concerns to be factored into project design," "grassroots participants are usually not empowered to criticize or evaluate key decisions such as project objectives, staffing or finance," and "decisions regarding technology, design and level of service, as well as the selection of beneficiaries villages continued to be made by non-users." More recent humanitarian reviews have had similar findings[442] and the consultations in advance of the WHS reiterated this message in a call for "more engagement with affected communities and emphasis on user-centered design, bottom up or indigenous innovation, and participatory methods."[443]

430. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 100
431.Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 40
432. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pgs. 38, 71
433. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 40
434 ODI 2016, pg. 60
435. See for example the work of the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network
436. See for example the work of Ground Truth Solutions
437. Cornwall 2008, pg. 280; British Red Cross, Co-production Principles
438. Cornwall 2008, pg. 280
439. Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012, pgs. 76, 25; GTS 2017, pgs. 5-6
440. ALNAP 2015, pg. 74; UN OCHA 2016, pg. 36; Donini 2012, pg. 188
441. Brown and Donini 2014, pg. 40
442. See for example: Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012; Donini 2012
443. UN WHS 2015 Consultations, pg. 116

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