

European Humanitarian Roundtable – North Uppsala, 16-17 February, 2016

N.1. Working group on access and subsidiarity

The group reiterated its support for the EHR South working group's findings and the focus on and support for people-centred aid and local humanitarian actors. The EHR North working group added the following:

N.1.1. Gender as a cross-cutting issue: Gender as a cross-cutting issue should be given meaningful attention in all discussions on humanitarian access and subsidiarity. Women, men, girls and boys should have equal access to humanitarian aid as well as equal protection and participation in all humanitarian response.

N.1.2. For European Union actors: The working group reiterated the need for political commitment from the EC/EU and for accountability on EU-post-WHS-Action-Plan and endorsed recommendations S.1.3 and S.1.4, while emphasising the need for streamlining and simplifying administrative requirements.

N.1.3. Increased support for local and/or national actors: The working group supported recommendation S.1.7 and added that there is a need to track the level of funding to local and national partners through the implementing organisations in accordance with IATI standards. Furthermore, increasing the support for local and national actors should come through a commitment to a measurable and proportional increase in funding for local actors. Examples of measures to ensure such increases were provided as follows:

- Exploring further expansion of pooled funding outside the UN as a mean to ensure that funding reaches a more diverse set of actors.
- Reiterating the Commission's push for opening up IASC and UN country teams for further diversification and to ensure UN leadership accountability to this.
- Re/Committing to the Principles of Partnership (POP) and investing in local capacity in preparation and response.
- Exploring implementing similar agreement models between local partners and aid organisations as between aid organisations and donors, with an emphasis on overheads and business models.
- Highlighting that the development of the 'Grand Bargain' should not come at the cost of diversity in the humanitarian system.
- Reiterating that accountability is broader than effectiveness, referring to relevant quality and accountability standards.

N.1.4. Ensuring access and protection for aid workers, especially local and national actors: It was underscored that there should be equal political and diplomatic attention given to targeted attacks against all aid workers, be they local, national or international. Beyond this, the working group supported recommendation S.1.5 and added that donors and member states should review their counter terrorism provisions and legal political frameworks so that humanitarian efforts of impartial, local, national and international NGOs are supported. It was also emphasised that donors need to prioritise their commitment to the humanitarian imperative, support and encourage local actors' action in hard to reach areas, including when that might conflict with national sovereignty. In line with recommendation 4, the working group suggested that there is a need for decreased bureaucratic obstacles in having access, i.e. visa regulations, customs.

N.1.5 Ensuring impartial and needs-based aid: The working group expanded upon recommendation S.1.1 by adding that donors need to accept that there can be higher implicit costs in ensuring marginalised populations access to aid. Likewise, actors should reaffirm their commitment to impartial and needs-based aid in the face of higher costs.

These recommendations were based upon input from and agreed to by the following group members:

Celia Cranfield, VOICE

Kristin Bergtora Sandvik, Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies

Nils Carstensen, DanChurchAid & Local to Global Protection

Arne Naess-Holm, Norwegian Church Aid

Will Wright, NOHA, Facilitator

N.2. Working group on maintaining public support for humanitarian action

The working group considered ways to maintain or strengthen public support for humanitarian action in a time of retrenchment, “compassion fatigue,” and hardened attitudes toward refugees in many parts of Europe by pondering the possible contributions of NGOs, churches, activist groups, state agencies and media organisations.

N.2.1: Transformative and inspired leadership by individuals and social movements can create, strengthen or crystallise public sentiments of empathy and generosity. Journalists, including photographers, may sometimes achieve the same effect. EU leaders at all levels should be ready to recognise and support such humanising leadership where it appears.

N.2.2: Several enduring issues undermine the EU’s credibility as a humanitarian actor: arms sales, the militarisation of external European borders, unethical profit-seeking, and the attempt to get Turkey and North African countries to do the dirty work of stopping potential asylum-claimants before they come anywhere near Europe’s borders. EU leaders at all levels should openly acknowledge these ethical contradictions.

N.2.3: Governments should realise and proactively commit to supporting humanitarian ideals and humanitarian actors. Beyond the cross-cutting issue of committing their political will to help alleviate suffering, governments have a crucial role to play in supporting continued dialogue on humanitarian issues inside Europe. Awareness raising of what humanitarian action is and the importance of humanitarian principles, should be supported through government action.

N.2.4: Non-traditional humanitarian stakeholders, like European civil society organisations, especially Diaspora organisations and academic institutions, should be supported in their role in maintaining public awareness and support for humanitarian actors and action. These actors on the margin of what is traditionally considered the humanitarian sector have an important role to play in fundraising, public support, public awareness of humanitarianism and its ideals as well as combatting misinformation around humanitarian action abroad and in Europe. Such actors should be encouraged to continue their work and be financially supported, especially in the region of Central and Eastern Europe where humanitarian action is not broadly supported or well known.

These recommendations were based upon input from and agreed to by the following group members:

Zaida Catalan, Gender Expert

Caroline Edelstam, Harald Edelstam Foundation

Maria Gabrielsen-Jumbert, Peace Research Institute Oslo

Joost Herman, NOHA and University of Groningen

Brian Palmer, University of Uppsala, Facilitator

Jwa Said, Syrian Diaspora Member and Student

Andreas Zetterlund, International Aid Services

Karolis Žibas, Diversity Development Group

