



WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

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Middle East and North Africa Regional Consultation Scoping Paper

Introduction

In September 2013, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, called for the first ever World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) to be held in Istanbul in 2016. The summit aims to set out a future agenda to make humanitarian action more effective, inclusive, accountable and, overall, a better fit for a changing world.

To be a success, the World Humanitarian Summit must represent perspectives and experiences from around the world. Therefore, in the lead-up to the summit, eight regional consultations with a wide range of stakeholders (national governments, humanitarian organizations, community responders/affected populations, private sector and associated partners) are being held. The consultation of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region will take place on 3-5 March in Amman, Jordan.

The summit process is being guided by four overarching themes: 1) humanitarian effectiveness, 2) reducing vulnerability and managing risk, 3) transformation through innovation, and 4) serving the needs of people in conflict.

This scoping paper is an attempt to identify some of the main humanitarian-related challenges currently facing the MENA region.¹ These have been shaped by the guiding themes and are based on initial findings emerging from preparatory consultations with civil society organizations (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey [for Syria], Tunisia and Yemen), focus groups with crisis-affected communities, and a High-Level Roundtable in Kuwait to gain perspectives from the Gulf region on the themes of the WHS.²

The challenges identified will further guide planned preparatory consultations with civil society, governments, affected communities, private sector, youth, media, national societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and academia.

Middle East and North Africa: a changing humanitarian landscape

The MENA region is currently experiencing significant political, economic and social upheaval. This has generated a number of humanitarian crises and dramatically increased human suffering and vulnerability in the region. In November 2014, over 7.6 million people are internally displaced in Syria with over 3 million refugees fleeing to neighboring countries and

¹ For the purposes of the World Humanitarian Summit, the MENA region includes: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

² High-Level Roundtable on the World Humanitarian Summit: Perspectives from the Gulf Region, Summary Note, Kuwait, October 2014. <http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/node/465509>

also impacting millions of vulnerable host communities; in Iraq, an upsurge in violence has led to the displacement of 2 million people. Both crises have been declared L3 emergencies, which is the highest level of crisis declared by the UN and partner agencies. Renewed fighting in Gaza in July and August led to a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation with the whole population affected; there are over 15 million people in Yemen in need of humanitarian assistance and, in Libya, an escalation of fighting is creating a humanitarian situation with over 400,000 people internally displaced and an estimated 150,000 leaving the country.³

There is also a growing trend of migrants taking life-threatening risks to cross into Europe or the Arabian Peninsula via sea. Other countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, are undergoing fragile political transitions with intermittent violence. Furthermore, many countries in the region, such as Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine and Saudi Arabia, are prone or vulnerable to a range of hazards and disasters such as earthquakes, drought and flooding. Some of these countries experience multiple shocks at the same time (e.g. conflict, natural hazards and forced migration) leading to complex emergencies.

Responding to the upsurge in needs is a priority and extensive efforts have been made in the region to help and extend relief to those affected by crises. There is currently a vast array of humanitarian responders that are active in the region. However, the scale and complexity of these crises present profound challenges for humanitarian actors. Levels of needs are rising, crises are becoming protracted, host countries and communities are struggling to cope with hosting the large number of displaced, there is little respect for norms that protect civilians and there is less availability of resources with which to respond. Furthermore, the longer-term development losses of these crises will have a profound impact on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people for years to come, raising important questions for humanitarian and development actors on their role, focus and modalities of work.

Key humanitarian issues in the MENA region

1) Protection of Civilians

Protecting civilians is a central component of the principle of humanity, defined by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to include efforts to 'prevent and alleviate human suffering' and 'to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being'. Various legal and religious frameworks exist to promote the protection of civilians and previous WHS Regional Consultations (West and Central Africa, North and South-East Asia and Eastern and Southern Africa) and preparatory consultations in the MENA region have shown that people affected by conflicts often highlight security or protection as one of their main humanitarian needs. In practice, however, parties to conflict in the MENA region (e.g. Libya, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Yemen) often show little respect for these norms and civilians have been bearing the brunt of armed conflict in the region. Furthermore, there is little accountability for those that violate these protection frameworks. Thus, humanitarian actors in the region are calling for greater enforcement, in an objective manner, of International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugee Law.

³ Regional Humanitarian Snapshot: November - December 2014 (OCHA Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa; 2014).

Although the primary responsibility for protection lies with states and other political actors, humanitarian organizations often focus their efforts on providing life-saving material assistance rather than playing a role in tackling complex protection concerns. This deficit needs to be addressed and the role of humanitarian organizations in providing protection clarified and bolstered through the development and implementation of appropriate legal frameworks, policies and good practice.

Key questions to be explored are: what roles can actors from governments and Regional Organizations play in supporting and advocating for the protection of civilians, including by ensuring greater respect for International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugee Law? How can greater accountability be achieved in the face of clear violations of the law? How can humanitarian actors, including the UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), contribute to better protecting civilians and supporting affected communities' own protection mechanisms? What are the practical implications of trying to implement the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle in the region? Are calls for the establishment of safe havens or buffer zones in conflict areas feasible and useful in providing protection and assistance to civilians? What innovative protection practices are there by humanitarian organizations?

2) Humanitarian Access

Barriers to humanitarian access have become one of the most pervasive challenges in the region for humanitarian actors. Bureaucratic obstacles, such as delays in gaining visas for staff and security clearances, mean assistance and protection cannot always reach people in need or promote biases towards certain locations or groups in breach of the principle of impartiality. Humanitarian organizations face considerable risks, with 298 recorded security incidents against aid workers between January 2013 and August 2014 in the wider MENA region.⁴ The lack of access also hinders the ability to carry out adequate needs assessments, such as in Iraq and Libya, which means humanitarian actors are often unable to provide assistance and protection to those most affected.

Access of affected people to assistance and protection is also being strained, with some governments restricting movement or closing their borders to prevent people seeking safety and asylum in their territories. Parties to conflict sometimes also restrict people's movements as part of their political or military strategy, such as in besieged areas of Syria and in the occupied Palestinian territory.

There is concern that measures by donor governments to fight terrorism are imposing undue restrictions on humanitarian organizations, particularly when operating in areas in which there are proscribed groups. For example, in ISIL controlled areas of Syria and Iraq, local NGOs are unable or reluctant to operate due to funding restrictions for those areas or fears that they may be accused of providing material support to terrorism. In addition, restrictions have been placed on the transfer of funds for NGOs, particularly those that are Islamic faith-based or simply from

⁴ Until August 2014, 298 incidents were recorded against humanitarian workers, in which 286 were killed, 441 wounded and 402 kidnapped, including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan. (OCHA, 2014) <http://goo.gl/Zfbrmj> Note: Afghanistan and Pakistan fall under the South and Central Asia Regional Consultation in the WHS process.

the MENA region. The overall result is a distortion of priorities and choice of programs made not on the basis of need, but rather on donor regulations governing the use of resources in these areas, fear of prosecution and an inability to transfer funds.

It is also widely recognized that reaching people in need of assistance and advocating for their protection requires humanitarian organizations to talk and negotiate with all parties to a conflict, including militaries and non-state armed groups. Yet, in practice, humanitarian organizations lack the necessary information, guidance and capacity to effectively engage with these actors.

To overcome some of these access barriers, many humanitarian organizations have resorted to alternative methods of aid delivery, including 'remote management', where international agencies work from outside of the country through local implementing partners. This, however, creates additional challenges with regards to monitoring and accountability, the near impossibility to provide protection and the transfer of security risk to those partners, many of which do not have the capacity or resources to develop appropriate security protocols or acquire adequate insurance schemes. In fact, the brunt of abovementioned attacks against aid workers are faced by local staff or organizations.

Key questions to be explored are: how can affected people best have access to humanitarian assistance and protection? How can humanitarian actors improve people's access to assistance and protection? What practices and principles should they seek to strengthen and apply? What role can governments and/or non-state actors play in improving access for humanitarian organizations and enhancing the ability for people under threat to seek safety and assistance, including across borders? How can humanitarian organizations enhance the security of their staff and their partners without transferring risk and losing contact with affected people? How can the negative impact of international and national counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian action be mitigated? How can the ability of humanitarian actors to negotiate and engage with armed groups be improved? How can partnerships between international and national NGOs be strengthened to improve humanitarian access in an ethical manner? What innovative practices in improving humanitarian access in the region can be shared and scaled up?

3) Addressing Vulnerability through Emergency Preparedness, Disaster Risk Reduction and Building Resilience

The frequency and severity of humanitarian crises have increased significantly, with the average number of disasters in the MENA region tripling over the last 30 years, affecting more than 40 million people and costing estimated US\$20 billion.⁵ Vulnerability has become a dominant social feature in the region, with risks particularly high in urban areas as a result of rapid urbanization, population growth, unplanned urban development and economic growth, scarce water resources and arid climates. These risks will likely increase in the years to come due to the effects of global climate change⁶ as well as a lack of updated risk information and weakness or non-availability of early warning systems.

⁵ Natural Disasters in the Middle East and North Africa: A Regional Overview (World Bank, 2014).

⁶ Arab Environment: Future Challenges (Arab Forum for Environment and Development, 2008).

There are increasing political commitments to address these risks through emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction (DRR). In accordance with its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and in line with the role identified for Regional Organizations in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the League of Arab States (LAS) has taken the lead in supporting and promoting the integration of DRR measures in regional policies on sustainable development, climate change adaptation and environment and disaster management coordination mechanisms. Moreover, in 2012, Heads of Arab States adopted the Arab Strategy for DRR 2020 and, more recently, in 2013, the Gulf Cooperation Council called for strong regional commitment to strengthen the resilience of nations and individuals to natural hazards. The need to identify strategic approaches for promoting and enhancing coherence between the various internationally negotiated processes of the post-2015 agenda (the HFA Framework, Climate Change Agreement, Sustainable Development Goals) has been prominently stated in recent regional forums such as the 2nd Arab Conference on DRR held in September 2014.

However, funding for emergency preparedness and DRR is limited, often falling outside of donor priorities despite their potential in improving the speed, appropriateness and cost-efficiency of response. Local governments and communities are also not sufficiently informed or involved in the implementation of these initiatives, thus failing to take their needs and capacities into account. Empowering local authorities and communities and building their capacity to manage and reduce risks is essential for building a culture of safety and prevention so they can better withstand, adapt and quickly recover when shocks and stresses occur.

Key questions to be addressed are: how can risk analysis be improved, better coordinated and feed into preparedness, disaster risk reduction and resilience programming? How can the capacity of Regional Organizations, national authorities and local communities be supported to manage risks, prepare for emergencies and reduce vulnerabilities? How can the gap between early warning and response be closed? What is required to scale up government and donor investment in preparedness, DRR and building resilience? How should new and innovative partnerships, such as with the academia and the private sector, be formed to improve the understanding of risk and its management and to strengthen early warning systems in the region?

4) Responding to Protracted Crises

The increase in protracted armed conflict in the region and the combination of chronic poverty and threats of natural hazards and violence are pushing the humanitarian system far beyond the boundaries of what it was designed to manage. Thus, efforts are being directed to more sustainably respond to people's needs, including through addressing risks people face and strengthening their ability to cope with their impacts. This is particularly the case with regards to population displacement. For example, in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Yemen, governments and the aid community are seeking to implement comprehensive approaches that bring together humanitarian and development responses, which target both the displaced and host communities. A consensus is emerging that greater investment in building resilience will help to ensure that lives and livelihoods are not immediately destroyed and development gains are safeguarded.

Despite the region playing a leading role in developing a new strategy to promote resilience with regards to the Syria Crisis,⁷ there is still a weak understanding overall of how resilience can be effectively promoted in practice. There is a need to better understand how to overcome current institutional divides between humanitarian and development organizations and ensure an adequate policy environment that can facilitate support to affected people. The categorization of 'humanitarian' and 'development' projects in isolation are not fully adapted to respond to the realities on the ground, particularly when many crises in the region are of a protracted nature. Previous WHS Regional Consultations have also highlighted the need to ensure linkages with efforts at promoting peace-building.

Key questions to be explored are: how can humanitarian organizations more sustainably respond to people's needs in protracted crises? What kinds of partnerships are needed with development and peace-building actors? How can these partnerships be leveraged to enhance a more sustainable response to protracted crises? How can institutional divides between humanitarian and development actors be overcome? What innovative practices or lessons learned can be taken from the region on integrated approaches that align the humanitarian and development interventions? What is the role of humanitarian actors to address the 'underlying causes' of conflict or crises in order to prevent them from re-occurring? How can countries and communities more effectively be prepared for and manage conflict-induced displacement? How can an adequate policy environment and more equitable burden sharing both be promoted with regards to hosting displaced communities?

5) Principles of Humanitarian Action

The core principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence reflect longstanding humanitarian experience and are widely accepted by states and humanitarian actors as those that should guide humanitarian action. Yet, in practice, there is often a lack of respect for these principles by some humanitarian organizations, as well as questioning them by states, donors and armed groups. Additionally, the awareness and operationalization of these principles differ among humanitarian actors, and some organizations emphasize principles from religious traditions or ideological backgrounds, such as religious duty, solidarity, peace-building or social justice.⁸

Whilst some of these principles may differ from the core principles of humanitarian action, many are similar in meaning but with some arguing that framing them differently, for example by using Islamic terminology, can be more appropriate in gaining acceptance or negotiating access in certain contexts of the MENA region. Others, such as the notion of justice, tie in the need for more protection done by humanitarians, and not just delivery of material goods. Despite these differences, there seems to be consensus on the principle of impartiality, with most organizations emphasizing the importance of responding solely on the basis of need.

Key questions to be explored are: is there consensus on the core principles of humanitarian action and can this be enhanced by finding coherence with similar principles from other

⁷ 3RP Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in Response to the Syria Crisis (2015-2016)

⁸ Code of Conducts for Muslim Humanitarian Relief Organizations (IHH, 2009); principles of solidarity and social justice were emphasized by some NGOs in the Lebanon civil society consultation.

religious or ideological traditions and backgrounds? Are some principles more important than others, if so which ones and in what circumstances? What are the main challenges to the application of the principles in the region and how can these be overcome? What best practices are there on implementing and promoting principles? What other similar principles can be used that are more appropriate to facilitating humanitarian action in the region? Are the core principles of humanitarian action compatible with other principles, such as development or stabilization principles, especially in protracted crises where integrated approaches are being sought?

6) Relationship between International Humanitarian Actors and Regional and Domestic Institutions

International humanitarian actors should place greater emphasis on strengthening regional and domestic capacity by working with and through Regional Organizations, national and local governmental and civil society institutions. This support should be in line with regional and national disaster preparedness, response and development plans. Regional and domestic responders have knowledge of the context and are more likely to work through existing infrastructure and markets, which can improve the sustainability of response efforts.

While international humanitarian actors can bring much expertise and capacity, they can sometimes fail to acknowledge and build upon these regional and national responses. Participants from various preparatory consultations have highlighted that international actors sometimes prioritize their roles, visibility and continued engagement in crisis response at the detriment of local capacity. Governmental authorities and systems are often bypassed and national organizations used simply as implementing organizations. This is deemed to be spurred by organizational self-interest in what has become a competitive industry, or as described by civil society organizations in Lebanon, 'a humanitarian marketplace'.

Key questions to be explored are: what kinds of partnerships are needed between international actors and Regional Organizations, national authorities and local organizations to enhance regional and domestic preparedness and response capacities? What are the best practices or systemic changes needed to ensure stronger partnership with local actors and that international humanitarian assistance is better informed by local needs? How can the relationship between international humanitarian organizations and their implementing partners be made fair?

7) Humanitarian Coordination

A key principle of effective humanitarian action is adequate coordination between humanitarian actors in order to ensure that responses build on each other, avoid duplication and address the most pressing needs and gaps in assistance. Systems have thus been developed to promote humanitarian coordination, such as common needs assessments, strategic planning and coordination forums such as Humanitarian Country Teams and clusters or sectors. There have also been attempts to strengthen these with the agreement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on a Transformative Agenda in 2011.⁹

⁹ The IASC is an inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making involving the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners. In 2011, the IASC agreed on the Transformative Agenda, a

Yet, despite these efforts, many humanitarian actors from the region feel these coordination mechanisms are not sufficiently inclusive or representative of the breadth of humanitarian responders in the region. They sometimes bypass willing governments, are deemed to be time-consuming, mostly catering towards the needs of international organizations and held in non-local languages. At the same time, regional and local humanitarian actors are often reluctant to share information or promote coordination with international counterparts, impacting the overall effectiveness of responses.

Key questions to be explored are: how can coordination mechanisms be made more inclusive and cater for the needs of local and regional humanitarian actors? How can governments be better engaged, as appropriate, in humanitarian coordination? Should efforts to promote coordination between IASC affiliated organizations and other response actors and systems be focused more on enhancing coherence/inter-operability? What role should Regional Organizations play in humanitarian coordination and how can this be promoted? Should the approach towards coordinating closely with governments change in conflict zones where the government is a party to the conflict?

8) Engagement with Affected Communities

Orienting humanitarian efforts around the needs, capacities and views of affected people has long been recognized as a critical way to improve humanitarian action. Policies and guidance have been developed and the IASC has endorsed five commitments towards promoting accountability to affected populations - which is an important aspect of engagement with affected communities. The five commitments address improving organizational governance and leadership on integrating feedback and accountability mechanisms in all aspects of humanitarian programs; ensuring transparency in operations; actively seeking and integrating affected peoples' feedback and complaints to improve policy and practice; enabling participation in decision making processes; and improving design, monitoring, and evaluation of programs.¹⁰

In initial consultations with affected communities, however, many highlighted their lack of knowledge of humanitarian response systems, the role of different organizations in humanitarian action in the region and what affected people are entitled to in terms of their needs.¹¹ This highlights the importance of basic information as a primary need for affected communities. Furthermore, allowing people to choose what kind of goods and services they receive, for instance through cash-based approaches, is deemed central to putting people's needs at the center of humanitarian action.

Equally important for making humanitarian efforts more effective is reaching all segments of the affected population and catering for their specific needs. Women, girls, boys and men play different roles within their community, face different threats and have different needs and

set of actions to substantively improve the current humanitarian response model. For more information see: <http://goo.gl/j8bCp>

¹⁰ <http://goo.gl/quLyAO>

¹¹ To date, Focus Group Discussions have been held with affected communities in Lebanon and Egypt.

levels of access to power and resources. Women and children are often the most vulnerable and disproportionately affected. For instance, out of more than 1 million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 78% are women and children.¹² Understanding gender differences, vulnerabilities, and coping capacities and responding to them is thus crucial for promoting accountability to affected populations.

Overall, it is clear that in practice, more needs to be done to enhance the capacity of community responders and implement the various frameworks and policies that exist and ensure that all segments of the affected communities are consulted more meaningfully and their voices taken into account. Innovations in communication methods could be better utilized in this endeavor.

Key questions to be explored are: how can community responders be better supported in humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery? How can information flows and engagement with affected people be strengthened in preparedness, response and recovery interventions? How can there be more thorough consultations with all segments of affected communities on their priorities and the overall effectiveness of the humanitarian system? What lessons can be learned from the use of cash-based approaches in the region? What innovative practices can be shared and scaled up in the region? How can the humanitarian community better provide cater to the needs of different segments of the affected population (e.g.: women, children and elderly)? What innovative practices can be shared and documented in taking into account gender perspectives in humanitarian programming?

9) Migration

The MENA region continues to see large complex migration flows, mainly from Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the Horn of Africa towards the Gulf, North Africa and the Mediterranean region. In September 2014 alone, over 12,700 people reached Yemen from the Horn of Africa, an unprecedented number since 2002. In addition, over 200,000 refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean to Europe in 2014, compared to 60,000 in 2013, with a large majority of boats departing from Egypt, Libya and Turkey.¹³

Travelling in unsafe vessels and often at the mercy of smugglers and traffickers, it is estimated that over 3,000 people have perished at sea while attempting to reach Europe.¹⁴ These numbers are likely to be higher as there is a lack of detailed statistics on the mobility of migrants and refugees. The largest group of people attempting to cross the Mediterranean are refugees fleeing violence in Syria (representing about a quarter of all arrivals in Italy in 2014), followed by Eritreans, various sub-Saharan African nationalities, Somalis, Egyptians, Palestinians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Some refugees crossing these routes are further undertaking a second (or multiple) onward movement from their first country of refuge, often elsewhere in the MENA region.

While a few countries in the region are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, there is a general absence of national asylum systems, as well as inadequate implementation of the

¹² Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-16. (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations; 2014)

¹³ So Close Yet So Far from Safety. (UNHCR, 2014) <http://www.unhcr.org/542c07e39.html>

¹⁴ Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost During Migration. (IOM, 2014) <http://goo.gl/VZKaVR>

international human rights framework as it applies to migrants. Migrants' journeys are fraught with risks and vulnerabilities, including discrimination, violence and exploitation, and some may risk becoming victims of trafficking en route or at their destination. Addressing the needs of migrants is particularly challenging, as there is a general absence of national and regional strategies to manage the full complexities of mixed migration movements and limited scope for durable solutions to address the needs of the most vulnerable. Irregular migrants are all too often criminalized instead of more proactive measures to counter smuggling and trafficking.

An often overlooked aspect of crises is their impact on international migrants. The war in Syria and renewed instability in Libya have, for example, left migrant workers in those countries vulnerable and stranded, often in need of humanitarian assistance, including humanitarian evacuation. Their forced and unplanned return home can also have repercussions in their countries and communities of origin, for instance, due to a loss of remittances and also challenges related to their reintegration¹⁵.

Key questions to be explored are: What is the role of governments and humanitarian and development actors in facilitating protection and durable solutions for all migrants? How and through what modalities can humanitarian actors provide protection to highly mobile displaced persons including alternatives to irregular migration which may bring the risk of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation? What are the gaps between the broad international frameworks and its effective implementation that inhibit regional governments to fulfil their obligations towards all migrants under human rights law?

10) Humanitarian Financing

There is significant involvement of humanitarian donors in the region and, given the level of need, many countries from the region are also contributing significant amounts in humanitarian assistance. Some of these flows are captured in the Financial Tracking Service,¹⁶ whilst large amounts are not reported. This limits the ability to understand the whole picture of humanitarian financing flows and can hinder current response and prioritization efforts. There has been some progress towards addressing this gap, with a Top Donors Group established for the Syria response. The League of Arab States has also passed a resolution to establish an Arab humanitarian coordination mechanism, which will capture aid flows from Arab states in the region.¹⁷

Despite this involvement by a large array of donors, humanitarian financing is insufficient to meet the current scale of demand and there is a need to mobilize additional sources of funding, including through financial institutions and the private sector. In fact, Arab governments have called for the creation of a regional bank for reconstruction and development to help address

¹⁵ See, for example, Refugees at Home: A Livelihood Assessment of Lebanese Returnees from Syria (IOM 2014) <http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/IOM-Lebanon-LH-Assessment-November-2014.pdf>

¹⁶ The Financial Tracking Service is a global, real-time database that records all reported international humanitarian aid contributions (including NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, bilateral aid, in-kind aid, and private donations). For more information see: <http://fts.unocha.org/>

¹⁷ Establishment of a Humanitarian and Social Coordination Mechanism. League of Arab States, Resolution QQ572D.A (24) (2013) <http://goo.gl/vyRNZV>

crises such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Palestine.¹⁸ Donors must also improve their record of disbursing financial pledges as there are concerns that these are not always fulfilled.

During consultations, donors in the region have also appealed for greater recognition of the culture and traditions of giving in the MENA region, with governments rejecting the term ‘emerging’ or ‘non-traditional’ donors. Smaller donors, some from the private sector and NGOs, should also be better recognized since the sum of their efforts result in significant contributions to humanitarian action. They have also placed a strong emphasis on the need for the UN to become more transparent and credible in its utilization and disbursement of funds.

Key questions to be explored are: how can MENA countries and Regional Organizations work better with the international community to ensure that there are sufficient humanitarian resources and coordination amongst donors? Are regional donors willing to adopt Good Humanitarian Donorship principles or similar frameworks? How can financial institutions and the private sector be better mobilized to engage and support humanitarian action in the region? How can humanitarian funding more directly reach the actors that are best placed to deliver humanitarian services, and increasingly channel funds to national and local actors? What would help donors become less risk-averse to funding national or local organizations directly?

11) Enhancing the Role of the Media, Youth and Academia

The media has proven a powerful force in shaping the response of individuals, organizations and governments to humanitarian crises. Various preparatory consultations to date have raised the need to engage the media in a conversation about their role and the need to explore the dynamic interaction between the media and humanitarian organizations and its influence on perceptions, policymaking and humanitarian response.

Similar to the media, preparatory consultations have highlighted the importance of engaging youth in humanitarian action and strengthening volunteer networks, which are a key component of humanitarian action. There is a need to better understand their views and perspectives and develop recommendations for enhancing their engagement. Equally important to highlight is the role that academia plays in creating knowledge and shaping humanitarian policy and practice. There is a need to enhance this role by strengthening the interaction between academia and humanitarian practitioners with the aim of improving humanitarian effectiveness and fostering innovation to address humanitarian challenges.

Key questions to be explored are: how can humanitarian organizations promote an understanding of humanitarian values, principles and response? What role is there for the media in ensuring accountability and transparency in humanitarian response? Can they be a force in stimulating better policy and humanitarian responses? What constitutes ethical humanitarian reporting and how can this be promoted? What perceptions do youth have of humanitarian action? What are current challenges and opportunities for engaging youth in humanitarian work? How can volunteer networks and work opportunities for youth in humanitarian action be strengthened? How can humanitarian action be integrated in education curriculums? How can the role of youth and academia be enhanced to promote humanitarian

¹⁸ Humanitarian Action in the Arab Region. (The Humanitarian Forum; 2014) <http://goo.gl/W2nVhW>

innovation? How can the role of academia be strengthened in shaping humanitarian policy and practice in the MENA region?

12) Innovative Partnerships

There have been concerted efforts in the MENA region to promote partnerships among international, regional and national humanitarian organizations. This includes numerous memorandums of understanding, joint plans of action, policy discussion forums and an annual Conference for Effective Partnership and Information Sharing in Kuwait City.¹⁹ These efforts have helped build trust and understanding among humanitarian organizations; however, more needs to be done as there is still a dearth of collaboration at the regional and country level with scarce examples of joint programs and evaluations, consistent information exchange and a common understanding on humanitarian needs and priorities.

Thus, based on the premise that there should be more collaboration, there is a need to develop more innovative approaches that can build on progress to date and overcome current barriers to real partnerships between humanitarian organizations.

Key questions to be explored are: What are the main barriers to more effective partnerships in the MENA region? How can these be enhanced in a way that leads to more collaboration at the regional and country level? Which are the most strategic partnerships that should be given priority? Are there examples of innovative partnerships that can be shared and documented?

¹⁹ For more information on the Annual Conference for Effective Partnership and Information Sharing in Kuwait City, please see <http://event.arabhum.net/>