Managing Humanitarian Action:
An Introduction

Pat Gibbons

Global Humanitarian Assistance reached record levels in 2014 at $24.4 billion; however, that same year, the highest level of global humanitarian need was also evidenced with an excess of 200 million people affected by disasters.[1] The trend of humanitarian need outstripping supply is a persistent and growing problem over recent years. The extent of the problem was manifest in 2015, when the shortfall in the UN's humanitarian appeal reached 40%.[2] Many and varied theories are being offered on how to address this deficit; however, the need for improved *management* (planning, organising, controlling and coordinating global humanitarian resources[3]) in pursuit of the global humanitarian goal (to save lives, alleviate suffering and support life with dignity for all disaster-affected peoples[4]) has consistently featured high on the humanitarian agenda.

Humanitarian management is a varied and complex process that is complicated by many factors, not least the global humanitarian context—the range of disasters in terms of typology and geographic spread, together with the dynamism that typifies the new generation of disasters; the diversity of humanitarian actors in terms of values, policies and ways of working; and the complexity of the working environments typified by breakdown in societal institutions and where humanitarian action is constantly evolving to its complex, dangerous and/or stressful milieu.

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[1]Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) (2015).

[2]World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat (2015).

[3]These functions are well documented as the '*classical functions of management*', which were established by Fayol in 1949 and continue to shape management textbooks and management education.

[4]'*Saving lives, alleviating suffering and supporting/ maintaining life with dignity for disaster affected people*' is a well-established goal of humanitarian action.

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This introductory chapter to the management section describes the contemporary humanitarian management context and posits some of the future challenges for the *humanitarian system*.

1   The Global Humanitarian Context

Despite tremendous advances in science to improve both quality and quantity of life, all evidence suggests that human suffering from the impacts of armed conflicts and other types of disasters has reached unprecedented levels. Over 60 million people are currently displaced from their homes due to conflict and violence, while in excess of 200 million people affected by disasters annually require humanitarian assistance. The economic costs of disasters and natural hazards have grown year on year and now exceed $300 billion per annum.[5] The humanitarian challenge to meet the needs of people affected by or vulnerable to crises is likely to grow in scale and complexity. The causal factors for current and predicted humanitarian need include poverty, hunger, disease, water shortages, climate change, population growth, unplanned rapid urbanisation, mass migration and food insecurity.[6]

There is little doubt that data suggesting large increases in the level of humanitarian need is partially explained by improved data collection methodologies. However, one should not be surprised by these worrying statistics given that almost a fifth of the world's population survive on less than a $1 a day, a similar percentage of the global population is living in fragile States that are prone to repeated violent conflicts[7] and approximately half of the world's population is living in urban settings, and this is projected to grow to two-thirds by 2050—an increasing percentage of this population are slum dwellers.[8] Furthermore, it is important to consider that more than 85% of UN humanitarian appeals over the past decade were in support of people affected by armed conflict. While the number of active conflicts in the world has stabilised, the impact and protracted nature of conflicts have worsened.[9]

The recognised failure of the international community to reach out to disaster-affected populations prompted the UN Secretary General to organise a World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) to address the magnitude of current and future global humanitarian challenges. The results of this 2016 Summit are calling for a new and coherent approach to address root causes of disasters, increasing political diplomacy for prevention and conflict resolution and bringing humanitarian,

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[5]UNISDR, Global Assessment Report 2015.

[6]World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat (2015).

[7]OECD (2014).

[8]World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat (2015).

[9]OCHA (2013).

development and peacebuilding efforts together.[10] The core responsibilities and commitments made by various stakeholders at the WHS highlight the need for collective response towards a new 'Agenda for Humanity'.

2 Diversity of Humanitarian Actors and Management Challenges

The proliferation of humanitarian actors in terms of size and scope of operations over the past 25 years is well documented.[11] Significant efforts have been made to enhance global management among these diverse actors by initiatives such as the UN's Humanitarian Reform Programme in 2005 and the Transformative Agenda in 2011. These early initiatives have consistently sought to improve partnerships, coordination, coherence, financial accountability and leadership in a bid to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian action.

In more recent years, greater efforts have been made to view core humanitarian actors as part of a *humanitarian system*.[12] The State of the Humanitarian System Report 2015 defines this humanitarian system as 'the network of interconnected institutional and operational entities through which humanitarian assistance is provided when local and national resources are insufficient to meet the needs of the affected population'.[13] It goes on to identify the institutional and operational entities as follows:

- local, national and international NGOs;
- UN humanitarian agencies;
- the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;
- recipient government agencies with responsibility for crisis response;
- humanitarian arms of regional intergovernmental organisations;
- donor government agencies and offices that provide humanitarian funding and coordination.

In addition, this *humanitarian system* frequently works with non-core actors that also participate in humanitarian response, but unlike the above-listed core humanitarian actors, humanitarian action is not their core function. Such non-core actors include military forces, religious institutions, private sector entities and diaspora groups.[14]

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[10]World Humanitarian Summit – Chair's Summary (2016).

[11]Gibbons (2010), pp. 11–27; Taylor et al. (2012), ALNAP (2015).

[12]"*System*" – *a group or combination of interrelated, interdependent or interacting elements forming a collective entity*' (Collins Dictionaries 2015).

[13]ALNAP (2015), p. 18.

[14]*Id.*, p. 19.

While all humanitarian core actors purport to be governed by a common set of fundamental humanitarian principles, namely humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence,[15] the challenges to coordinate this diverse group should not be underestimated. One might argue that the key to understanding the complexities of managing this stakeholder mix is to appreciate the different governance and management characteristics that are particular to *groupings* within this mix.

At the risk of oversimplifying this issue, three groupings can be discerned in line with three broad sectors (public, private and voluntary sectors). These different sectors view core organisational values concerned with governance, management and accountability quite differently. Local, national and international NGOs are characteristically voluntary in character, while the UN, recipient governments, regional intergovernmental organisations and donor governments are bound by public sector values. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, while not identified as an NGO, combines elements of public sector provision, given its role as custodian of international humanitarian law, and also employs typically voluntary sector characteristics in the delivery of humanitarian action through the Federation and the National Societies. The private sector is not governed by the humanitarian principles and has quite different governance and management values to both the public and voluntary sectors, yet it is an increasingly active stakeholder in the provision of humanitarian action. Figure 1 presents the relationship between governance, management and the customer for each of the three sectors.

The private sector is governed by paid officials whose primary responsibility is to their shareholders, to ensure that they get a return on their investment. In the case of the public sector, the government is ultimately responsible to their voters, who they seek to satisfy in order to get re-elected. In contrast, the voluntary sector, by definition, is governed by a voluntary board that gives their time and expertise in the interest of the common good.

The management function also varies considerably between sectors. The company, in the case of the private sector, is charged with the production of goods and services that meet customers' needs and wants. The success of the company largely hinges on its ability to provide the customer with the right product at the right price, and company management is frequently rewarded with bonuses and other incentives when they meet agreed targets. The company's health is largely dependent on satisfied customers who buy the product and/or services. In the event that the company does not meet the needs and/or wants of the customer, the products and/or services will not be bought, and the company will be forced to close in a relatively short time period. Management in the public sector is charged with providing a range of services to the public, who show their satisfaction by using the services. Customers are legally obliged to pay for public services through various taxation policies.

Public sector organisations are typically bureaucratic and highly hierarchical with staff enjoying secure jobs. Workers in the public sector, while not in a position

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[15]OCHA (2013).

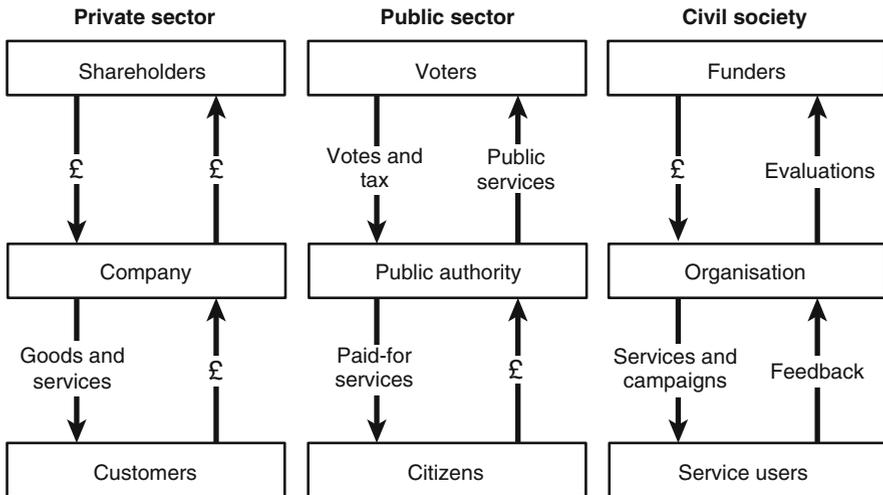## The nature of transactions in different sectors

Fig. 1 The nature of transaction in different sectors. Reproduced from Managing Without Profit—Leadership, governance and management of civil society organisations (2017) by Mike Hudson and by kind permission of the publishers, The Directory of Social Change, 352 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA www.dsc.org.uk from whom copies may be purchased

to receive bonuses in the same way as the private sector, enjoy job security, and rewards for productivity come in the form of better working conditions and/or promotion. In theory, satisfied customers demonstrate their satisfaction by returning elected representatives to power. Dissatisfied public service customers may opt in the short term to use alternative services from the private sector if affordable and eventually register their dissatisfaction by voting in a new public representative over time.

The voluntary sector is largely associated with providing services to people *in need*, especially in those areas where the public sector is unable or unwilling to meet the needs of its constituents. Voluntary sector organisations are usually dependent on healthy public and private sectors for funding and donations to provide their services. Funding is typically provided on the basis of short-term contracts of between 1 and 5 years, which in turn complicates management and continuity of service provision. Given the dependence on donors for funding, the relationship between management and the customer is fundamentally different. The customers of voluntary sector services rarely have the financial or political powers afforded to customers of private companies and/or public sector customers. They seldom enjoy the same choices available to those in other sectors either because of the lack of alternative service providers or their poor spending power, to the extent that in some cases they are referred to as beneficiaries rather than customers. Instead, the power rests with the donors and funders of voluntary sector service

suppliers. Frequently, voluntary sector organisations are accused of being more concerned with satisfying the donor rather than the customer, and therefore accountability tends to be to the donor and funders rather than the customer whom they purport to serve.

If one were to apply this broad organisational conceptual framework to analyse the humanitarian action enterprise, the private sector has a limited but growing influence on global humanitarian action. Private sector companies are generally recognised as non-core humanitarian actors given that, while they contribute significantly to humanitarian action, provision of products and services on the basis of humanitarian need can never be their primary function. In 2014, the private sector contributed approximately one-quarter of global humanitarian assistance,[16] provided by individuals, companies, corporations, trusts and foundations. Traditionally, the vast majority of private sector engagement in humanitarian action concerned funding voluntary sector organisations to provide much-needed goods and services by way of corporate social responsibility (CSR). However, humanitarian CSR engagement by private sector entities, which is typically evidenced as philanthropic and financial donations, is evolving to a *shared value* approach in which businesses aim to make economic as well as social gains. This shared value approach is regarded as necessary to capitalise on existing private sector expertise and also to advance private sector engagement in the humanitarian enterprise.

Many mainstream humanitarian agencies have developed operational partnerships with private sector entities; examples of private sector engagement in recent years include a private mobile telephone company erecting a cellular tower inside a refugee camp in Liberia, an outdoor sporting company designing a new solar-powered lamp and phone charger that is now distributed in natural disasters but also marketed commercially as sporting goods, a credit card company foundation collaborating with WFP to create an *e-food* system (cash and voucher transfer system).[17] It is envisaged that private sector engagement in humanitarian action will grow in terms of scale and scope of action. The report from the high-level panel on finance, convened as part of the WHS consultative process, concluded:

> Beyond governments, the humanitarian community must harness the power of business to deliver its key skills and capabilities. Business is still a modest factor in humanitarian activities, yet has the creativity and capacity at scale to provide new solutions to risk management, support aid delivery, create jobs, and modernise transparency and accountability. Involving staff in humanitarian action is also motivational, and companies need to be encouraged – from insurance and digital cash to logistics and telecommunications – to get involved in providing their relevant skills and capacity for delivering life-saving assistance.[18]

The public sector has dominated humanitarian funding over the past 25 years. In the post-Cold War period and following the UN's decision to take a more proactive

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[16]Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) (2015), p. 4.

[17]Gibbons et al. (2014).

[18]UN's High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing (2016), p. vi.

role to support disaster-affected people globally by establishing the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in 1991, humanitarian aid grew in significance among the political donor aid community from comprising approximately 5% of the total ODA budget in 1989 to 8% between 1994 and 1998 and 10.5% in 2000.[19] It then hit a *glass ceiling* throughout the 2000s when, while continuing to rise in absolute terms, it remained at approximately 11% of ODA. The global humanitarian budget has increased over this period, and in 2014 it reached approximately $24.5 billion, of which about three-quarters are provided by donor governments.[20]

The vast majority of humanitarian assistance, approximately 90%, comes from the OECD DAC countries. Approximately 70% of donor funding is directed through UN agencies and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, while most of the remainder is delivered through the NGO community.[21] Governments are continuously challenged to justify increases in overseas aid budgets to their customers/voters, especially when the economy is going through stressful periods and when there are increased welfare demands at home. Governments have increasingly justified the increases in ODA on the basis of its potential to enhance overseas trade; however, this juxtaposition contravenes the very notion of humanitarian aid, which by its very definition should be driven by the needs of disaster-affected people and not the political or security interests of donors/funders. Similarly, some might contend that the increased funds available to humanitarian action served to fuel a huge increase in aid providers, who themselves are constituents of these donor governments. This in turn places added pressures on governments that are frequently challenged to ensure that resources are used to the best possible effect in the interest of affected people and not the interests of their own national NGOs. It is estimated that less than 3% of humanitarian assistance is channelled directly to disaster-affected countries.[22]

At the WHS, donors and humanitarian partners announced agreement on a Grand Bargain that incorporates a cost-saving measure that will result in up to $1 billion saving to humanitarian action over the next 5 years. Included was a commitment to channel 25% of financing to national and local responders as directly as possible by 2020.[23] The jury is out on how this will be achieved in the future.

There were approximately 4840 aid providers in 2014,[24] the vast majority of which are NGOs. The majority of these are national and local NGOs that operate within their own national boarders, whereas the lion's share of humanitarian

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[19]HPG Report 11 (2002).

[20]Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) (2015).

[21]ALNAP (2015).

[22]Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) (2015).

[23]WHS – Chair's Summary (2016), p. 7.

[24]ALNAP (2015).

funding goes to UN agencies, international NGOs (INGOs)[25] and the Red Cross Movement. The recent State of the Humanitarian System Report estimated that the top five INGOs receive over 30% of all funds channelled through the NGO sector. The make-up of the NGO sector varies considerably from INGOs with thousands of employees that operate across countries similar to a multinational (for example, Save the Children has an estimated 14,000 staff working in 120 countries) to small organisations with a handful of staff. They also vary considerably in their mandate and expertise. The vast majority of NGOs enjoy a dual mandate, delivering both development aid and humanitarian aid. This is especially true for national and local organisations in lesser-developed countries that rarely recognise the development–humanitarian divide. NGOs are constantly challenged to address the ever-increasing humanitarian demands globally. The rapid growth in the number and range of voluntary sector organisations has posed many well-documented challenges, the more common of which include the following:

- It is difficult to establish and maintain the motivation of a voluntary board, which is invariably comprised of busy people with limited opportunity to provide financial incentives.
- There is increased competition between NGOs that vie for funding from a limited number of sources.
- Given this limited funding, some would argue that NGO policy and strategy are too frequently driven by donor demands rather that customer needs.
- The voluntary sector is frequently criticised for its lack of professionalism, especially when one applies public and/or private sector indicators of good management practice.
- The big message coming from the extensive consultations in the run up to the WHS was that more needs to be done to place affected people at the centre of the humanitarian effort. This would suggest that the aid community is either unwilling or unable to engage meaningfully with affected people.

3 The Complexity of the Operating Environment

Humanitarian action, by definition, operates in chaotic and dangerous environments where organisations seek to save lives, alleviate suffering and support life with dignity for disaster-affected people. While international human rights law suggests that all disaster-affected populations have a right to humanitarian assistance, access

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[25]INGO – International Non-Governmental Organisation – The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines an INGO as '*any organization which is not established by inter-governmental agreement*' (Resolution 288 (X) 27 February 1950), '*including organizations which accept members designated by government authorities, provided that such membership does not interfere with the free expression of views of the organizations*' (Resolution 1296 (XLV) of 25 June 1968).

for humanitarian actors is not given and needs to be negotiated with national authorities.[26]

Humanitarian actors frequently find themselves in a compromised position. On the one hand, they are largely dependent on donors whose priorities may rest with political interests rather than the interests of the neediest affected populations, while, on the other hand, they also have to negotiate access to affected populations with authorities and warring parties that may have little respect for international law. While these challenges are not new, all evidence suggests that the operating environment is becoming more insecure, and aid workers are increasingly being targeted in their efforts to deliver aid. A recent Aid Security Report found that in 2014, 329 aid workers were victims of serious attacks.[27]

Humanitarian organisations are continuously challenged to develop ever more sophisticated strategies to retain a presence alongside disaster-affected people in a bid to provide humanitarian protection and assistance. Unlike other stakeholders such as military or political officials who share this space, humanitarian actors have few means available to them other than humanitarian principles that serve to guide humanitarian action and provide and maintain humanitarian space. While much of the debate surrounding humanitarian space focuses on legal and geopolitical arguments, management too has its part to play. All core actors in the humanitarian system are defined by their core function, namely to save lives, alleviate suffering and support life with dignity for disaster-affected people. The fundamental principles of this system were established in UN General Assembly Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.[28] These fundamental principles have been further interrogated and reaffirmed by the global humanitarian community as recently as 2014–2015, during the extensive consultation process in preparation for the WHS.[29]

While the humanitarian principles are not management tools per se, they give guidance to humanitarian operations that serve to provide humanitarian actors with a distinct identity recognised in international humanitarian law (through the substantive principles namely humanity and impartiality) and to maintain the confidence of all through their actions (through the derived principles namely neutrality and independence). Such is the importance of the humanitarian principles that the humanitarian community has, on several occasions, established structures, codes of conduct and standards to operationalise humanitarian action in line with the principles. Most notable among these are the following.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 1991 It was established as a global humanitarian forum by UN General Assembly Resolution 46/ 182 as the primary mechanism for inter-agency humanitarian coordination.[30] In line with Article 38 of

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[26]Gillard (2013), pp. 351–382; Wagner (2005), pp. 24–27.

[27]Humanitarian Outcomes (2015).

[28]OCHA (2013).

[29]World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat (2015).

[30]Inter-Agency Standing Committee, http://interagencystandingcommittee.org/.

Resolution 46/182, it comprises the main operational relief agencies from the United Nations with standing invitation to the international components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It can also invite relevant international non-governmental organisations on an ad hoc basis. The IASC currently comprises nine members (FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, WFP and WHO) and nine standing invitees (ICRC, ICVA, InterAction, IFRC, IOM, Office of the RSG on the rights of IDPs, OHCHR, SCHR and the World Bank).[31] The IASC has evolved considerably since its establishment in 1992 to become the main global humanitarian coordination mechanism, and this evolution was in no small way facilitated by the introduction of the Humanitarian Reform Programme 2005 and the Transformative Agenda 2010. The IASC engages with a plethora of working groups and subsidiary bodies. These working groups and their associated task teams convene to shape policy, proffer guidelines and strategies on contemporary humanitarian challenges. Current issues under consideration include humanitarian financing, accountability to affected people, the relief- development nexus and protection priority.[32]

The Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, 1994 This Code of Conduct was prompted by the proliferation of organisations engaging in humanitarian assistance with limited experience or knowledge of the challenges to deliver humanitarian aid. The RCRC Movement, together with eight of the world's biggest humanitarian organisations, established the Code to safeguard humanitarian standards and behaviour in times of disasters—especially in conflicts. This Code comprises 10 points of principle, which all humanitarian actors should adhere to in their disaster-response work, and goes on to describe the relationships that agencies working in disasters should seek with donor governments, host governments and the UN system. The first four principles refer directly, in varying degrees, to the four humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality[33] and independence. The other six points of principle relate to knowledge and years of experience in the field. Most of the later six points of principles build on the idea of respect for affected populations, their culture and capacities, and they too identify with the need for accountability to those they assist,

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[31]*Ibid.*

[32]*Ibid.*

[33]There is no direct reference to neutrality in point of principle 3—especially when compared with the other three principles. Those responsible for drafting it have been very clear on their reasons for this. Dorothea Hilhorst in her 2004 review of the Code—A Living Document?—which is cited in the text—was clear on this point: Reference to neutrality was left out to accommodate the principles of justice and human rights that are cherished by many organisations. The article does not explicitly call upon agencies to be neutral in the sense of 'refraining from taking sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature', but it is hard to see how taking sides in hostilities could be separated from using aid to further political standpoints. Principle 3 thus appears to be ambiguous, and gives little guidance to NGOs working in conflict situations.

as well as to those from whom they accept resources. However, these points of principle are not reflected in the fundamental humanitarian principles.[34] The value of the Code of Conduct was (re)assessed in 2004 and was found to be '... still of great potential value in articulating a set of shared principles for humanitarian organisations'.[35]

The Sphere Standards, 1997 The Sphere Standards are the result of an initiative of the humanitarian community (in particular, NGOs and the RCRC Movement) that, in the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide, sought to promote and develop a set of universal standards for humanitarian relief. In essence, the Sphere Standards attempt to lay down a set of minimum standards for what victims of disasters need to survive with dignity across a range of basic needs, including water and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter and site planning, and health services.[36] Driven by a resolve similar to the Code of Conduct, the Sphere Standards are prefaced by a Humanitarian Charter, which creates the all-important link between victims' needs and rights as laid down in international human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law. The Sphere Standards are also similar to the Code of Conduct in that it served to bring together a diverse group of humanitarian actors, which were growing exponentially at the time both in numbers and scale of operations, to agree to universal standards that were largely accepted and used by donors, UN agencies, host governments and NGOs alike.[37] The Sphere Standards are further credited with the beginnings of efforts to improve professionalism in the delivery of aid and a new focus on the need for humanitarian action to be accountable to their customers. The Sphere Standards continue to be used as a main reference point of minimum standards for all operational organisations and have been revised and updated in 2003 and 2009/10 to include sections on protection.[38]

People in Aid, 1997 This was also an initiative borne out of the Rwandan genocide on the part of the growing humanitarian NGO community aimed at promoting best practices in human resource management.[39] To achieve this, People in Aid established a code with seven principles, governed by the main principle that 'people are central to the achievement of our mission'.[40] It served to spark a debate on providing necessary infrastructure to enhance professionalism in the delivery of aid by putting in place a code of good practice in the management and support of personnel who work in dangerous environments, often with limited job security.

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[34]International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Cresent Societies (IFRC) (2015), Code of Conduct, http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct/.

[35]Hilhorst (2005), pp. 351−369.

[36]Walker and Maxwell (2009).

[37]*Ibid.*

[38]The Sphere Project (2011).

[39]Walker and Maxwell (2009).

[40]People in Aid (2003) http://www.dochas.ie/sites/default/files/People_In_Aid_Code.pdf.

This initiative was frequently seen as the beginning of humanitarian organisations establishing systems on internal accountability that facilitate adherence to standards, accountability and financial propriety.[41] In 2014, People in Aid merged with the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International to form the Core Humanitarian Standards Alliance, discussed below.

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), 1997 ALNAP is generally regarded to be a product of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (JEEAR)—an evaluation commissioned by Western governments and universally recognised for its professionalism and rigour that aimed to learn from the experiences of the Rwanda genocide in 1994. Based on the premise that evaluations of this nature could go on to significantly enhance competence in the delivery of aid and coherence in the *system*, a group of academics, consultants, UN agencies and NGOs went on to establish ALNAP in 1997. It continues to provide a space for academics, practitioners and policymakers to review and influence the state of the humanitarian system and has since broadened its governance base to include representatives from all major humanitarian actor groupings.[42]

Good Humanitarian Donorship, 2003 This initiative aims to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of donor actions, as well as their accountability to beneficiaries, implementing organisations and domestic constituencies, with regard to the funding, coordination, follow-up and evaluation of such actions. The number of donor governments that have subscribed to GHD has grown from 17 in 2003 to 40 in 2014. Among the 23 principles that comprise the GHD principles of good practice is an affirmation of donors' commitment to the four humanitarian principles, to strengthen humanitarian systems and to build on local capacities and to respect accountability to affected population, as well as their own constituencies.[43] While all efforts to engage in principled humanitarian action have to be welcomed, there is an ever-increasing call for improved standards to monitor commitment to these principles—something that has been repeated in all the aforementioned professional joint evaluations; there is no reason to believe that GHD should be any different. One might assume that the creation of *institutional space*—or providing a space for departments/units within their respective political institutions with the required level of independence to prioritise humanitarian principles over the goals of the institution—would be central to political engagement in humanitarian action. This has been one of the very positive outcomes of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005) as many governments have demonstrated their

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[41] Walker and Maxwell (2009).

[42] ALNAP (2016).

[43] Good Humanitarian Donorship (2013) Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, http://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/principles-good-practice-of-ghd/principles-good-practice-ghd.html.

commitment to disaster risk reduction and institutional support for disaster risk management. This in turn has facilitated efficient and effective engagement with the authorities at all levels for internal as well as external actors.

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP), 2003 HAP was established to strengthen accountability of humanitarian organisations towards those affected by crisis situations and to facilitate improved performance within the humanitarian sector. The ultimate goal of HAP was to uphold the rights and dignity of disaster-affected people by making humanitarian organisations more accountable. Central to HAP's strategy was the establishment of principles to guide humanitarian actors to be more accountable to their intended beneficiaries through self-regulation, compliance verification and quality assurance certification.[44] Later in 2014, HAP merged with People in Aid to the Core Humanitarian Standards Alliance, which is discussed below.

Humanitarian Reform, 2005 OCHA and the IASC took a very significant step towards consolidating a *humanitarian system* with the Humanitarian Reform Initiative.[45] The process took place at a time when there was growing frustration on the part of UN and non-UN humanitarian actors to deal in a timely, appropriate or effective way with the crises in Darfur and South Sudan. The humanitarian reform agenda aimed to strengthen humanitarian response by introducing new measures to enhance response capacity, accountability, predictability and partnership. It provided an ambitious effort by the international humanitarian community to reach more beneficiaries, with more comprehensive, needs-based relief and protection, in a more effective and timely manner. It specifically sought to enhance coordination through a cluster system. At the core of the cluster system is the drive to strengthen in-country coordination, to sharpen advocacy on key humanitarian issues and principles and to increase and strengthen partnerships for humanitarian action.

Transformative Agenda, 2010 Following 5 years of the Humanitarian Reform Initiative and with the accumulated knowledge and experience gleaned from the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods, OCHA and the IASC adopted the Transformative Agenda (TA). It focuses on three key areas—leadership, coordination and accountability—while retaining a commitment to the four humanitarian principles. The areas of leadership and coordination build on and reinforce the commitment to the cluster approach. The TA advocates greater empowered leadership and the active participation of host authorities in local communities. This value of accountability to vulnerable locals, while not new, is poorly developed in comparison to agencies' well-established commitment of accountability to donors with frameworks such as results-based management. The existing principles of humanity and impartiality promote values such as respect and cooperation, but nowhere in the

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[44]Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (2016).
[45]International Council of Voluntary Agencies (2016).

foundational principles is there an explicit reminder that humanitarian actors be accountable to the population they purport to serve.

Core Humanitarian Standards, 2014 In 2014, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International, People in Aid and the Sphere Project formed the Joint Forces Initiative and published the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.[46] This document was the result of a yearlong consultative process that targeted more than 2000 humanitarian workers worldwide and involved a diverse range of humanitarian stakeholders, including NGOs, governments, the UN, donor agencies and academia. The Core Humanitarian Standard proposes a set of nine commitments[47] that can be voluntarily adopted by organisations and individuals to guide or even evaluate their work.[48] The CHS advocates for a principled approach to accountable high-quality humanitarian action that places respect for the fundamental rights of affected people at the centre. From a management perspective, the CHS offers the additional utility of analysing each of the nine commitments proffering action and envisaged organisational responsibilities to guide action. Humanitarian actors have constantly adapted to the changing demands of the global disaster context.

The common denominator among all the codes, standards and reforms has been a commitment to the fundamental humanitarian principles. This commitment has been reaffirmed and reinforced in the consultative process leading up to the WHS,[49] as well as the WHS itself.[50] Some would argue that humanitarian initiatives tend to be reactionary in nature in that they continuously adapt to changed contexts and argue for greater forward thinking towards a more transformative approach to deal with existing risks and threats to accommodate preventative action. The humanitarian principle will continue to shape humanitarian action into the future and will remain the foundation to guide policy and practice.

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[46]Groupe URD, HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project, Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, 2014.

[47]The Nine Commitments of the CHS are (1) Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant, (2) Humanitarian response is effective and timely, (3) Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects, (4) humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback (5)complaints are welcomed and addressed, (6) humanitarian response is coordinated and complimentary (7) humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve (8) staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably (9) resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

[48]Groupe URD, HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project, Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, 2014.

[49]World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat (2015), p. xii.

[50]WHS – Chair's Summary (2016).

4   Managing Humanitarian Action in the Future

The UN Secretary General urged the humanitarian community to 'commit to taking forward this Agenda for Humanity and use it as a framework for action, change and mutual accountability'[51] to shape the WHS discussions. This document was informed by an extensive global consultative process that included 8 regional consultations; 151 national stakeholder consultations; 400 plus written submissions; 23,000 plus people consulted; 5500 comments received online; and 19 consultations with the private sector.[52] The results of this humanitarian consultative process, together with the results of other global aid summits, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (March 2015), the Sustainable Development Goals (New York, September 2015) and the UN Climate Change Conference COP21 (Paris, December 2015), all contributed to the Agenda for Humanity.

The consultative process for the WHS, which engaged the global humanitarian community in particular, is still one of the best barometers of future trends in humanitarian action management. It identified five major areas for action in the future. These five major action areas were established as the foundation on which stakeholders would build *commitments, partnerships and transformative actions*[53] to deliver change in the future. They comprise the following.

Dignity   Dignity means to empower disaster-affected people to cope and recover by enabling them to be the primary agents of their own response and ensuring aid is appropriate and relevant to all. National and international actors will be encouraged to build on local coping mechanisms and protection strategies. Humanitarian actors should look for innovative ways to engage meaningfully with affected people, adopt aid mechanisms that support greater choice and increase accountability to the people they serve. While respecting cultural difference, humanitarian actors will support greater gender equality in their response, recognise and address the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and promote gender balance in leadership roles. All efforts will be made to limit the effects of disasters on the livelihoods of marginalised groups, especially children of school-going age, the disabled, elderly and all those with special needs.

Safety   Protection and the rights of all individuals will be placed at the centre of humanitarian response. All efforts will be made to prevent and end conflicts by increasing political engagement, putting an end to violations of international law and encouraging the principled delivery of humanitarian aid. Protection strategies should adopt a coordinated approach that builds on local efforts that affected people have established to protect themselves and the agreed mandates of other

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[51]UN (2016), Annex to the Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit, http://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/5a7c81df22c7e91c35d456a1574aa6881bb044e4?vid=569102&disposition=inline&op=view.

[52]World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat (2015), p. 8.

[53]*Id.*, page 9.

stakeholders. Humanitarian action can never be employed as a substitute/alternative to political inertia to prevent, respond to or end conflict. Humanitarian action will be principled, and those with leadership responsibilities will be held accountable for their actions. All efforts are and will be made to ensure the safety and security of staff, with the required competences to apply security management systems, and maintain proximity to the customer/affected people.

Resilience There must be investments in preparedness, managing and mitigating risk, reducing vulnerability, finding durable solutions for protracted displacement and adapting to new threats. New and improved mechanisms are being sought to (re)position the principled delivery of humanitarian action alongside other aid sectors, including development, climate change and peacebuilding. The challenge is to develop a framework that allows humanitarian actors to address immediate life-saving needs alongside engaging in issues that impact the causes and consequences of disasters. Humanitarian actors are now being asked to engage more actively to address the root causes of disasters and also to enhance the connectedness and sustainability of their actions. There are many who challenge this notion of 'mission creep' on the premise that previous experiences such as integrated missions and comprehensive approaches, which sought to bring diverse stakeholders together to improve coherence in the delivery of aid, frequently resulted in the politicisation and instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid. The challenge will be for this new framework to facilitate humanitarian actors to retain humanitarian agency space that allows them to deliver principled humanitarian action. Governments are being asked to shift their thinking from managing crises to managing risk. It is envisaged that more attention will be committed to disaster risk reduction and preparedness mechanism, both by way of long-term agreements and financial resources. In the same vein, more attention will be given to preventing predictable disasters, not only those associated with climate change but also demographic challenges, displacement and urbanisation.

Partnerships The preferred means of engagement for humanitarian actors are diverse and inclusive of partnerships that place the needs of vulnerable people at the centre while respecting both the humanitarian principles and applicable international and national laws. These partnerships will promote the sharing of information and stronger relations with local actors to enhance the relevance and appropriateness of humanitarian action. It is envisaged that improved partnerships will also facilitate improved monitoring and develop a culture of continuous learning and adaptation, which in turn will promote the application of innovation to keep pace with the dynamic nature of the humanitarian context.

Finance Financial means are necessary to bridge the existing resource deficit and enhance the efficient utilisation of resources to preserve life, dignity and the resilience of disaster-affected people. This is planned to be achieved by not only increasing the aid budget but also improving efficiency, accountability and transparency of aid financing. New ways are being sought to enhance greater coherence and collective bargaining among aid donors in what is being muted as the 'Grand

Bargain'. It is hoped that this approach will also serve to put affected people at the centre of humanitarian action and address some of the existing bottlenecks that impede efficacy in humanitarian action, including expanding unearmarked and multi-annual funding, expanding direct funding to local organisations and increasing direct funding to affected governments for risk financing.

5   Conclusion

Management in humanitarian action has evolved considerably in response to many factors, not least the ever-challenging responsibility to reach out to the growing numbers of disaster-affected people globally. One might view the evolutionary path of the humanitarian system through a similar lens as Tuckman's model, which suggests that groups go through several stages in arriving at team-like characteristics with everyone working towards a common goal.

The first of these periods, also referred to as the forming phase, was prompted by the UN's engagement in humanitarian action in 1991 with the establishing of the IASC and adopting the system's foundational principles. It continued right up until 1998 with the establishment of OCHA.

The second period, or the storming phase, was complicated by many factors, including the changing disaster context, the proliferation of agencies and organisation with disparate mandates and values operating in a shared space, and the reactionary nature of the evolving system with limited regulations that tend to be adaptive rather than transformative.

It could be argued that we are now experiencing a third, voluntary period, the normative phase, which was very much prompted by the increasing deficit between humanitarian need and supply, and the realisation that change in the system is required. This phase began in 2013 with calls for a first-ever gathering of all humanitarian stakeholders to set an agenda for humanitarian action post 2016. The UN has now synthesised the commitments from this gathering, the WHS, held in Istanbul in May 2016, and developed a new Agenda for Humanity with five core responsibilities. They include global leadership to prevent and end conflict; uphold the norms that safeguard humanity; leave no one behind; change people's lives—from delivering aid to ending need; and invest in humanity. According to plan, many humanitarian actors will buy into this new Agenda, which will hopefully give rise to a fourth period of management in humanitarian action, the performing phase.

The realisation of the Agenda for Humanity will pose many challenges for humanitarian actors. The need for enhanced professionalism will be greater than ever as humanitarian actors seek to transform the policies and practices to meet future demands. The following chapters in this management section offer some insight into current best practice and future challenges.

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