



World Humanitarian Action Forum 2019 Concept Note

SUMMARY

Project Title: World Humanitarian Action Forum 2 (WHAF2)

Project Type: Biennial Forum (every 2 years)

Project length: 18 months (January 2019 – June 2020)

Forum Date: 15-16th October 2019

Location: Istanbul, Turkey

Host Lead Partner: The Turkish Red Crescent Society

Theme for 2019: Dignity in Humanity

The vision: Effective humanitarian work that better serves affected communities (beneficiaries)

The aim of WHAF is to enhance partnership and collaboration among humanitarian actors from the global North and South and to share effective humanitarian practices and responses that affect local, national and international NGOs.

WHAF will contribute towards two key objectives:

1. Develop strategies for informing policy on key issues affecting humanitarian organisations particularly those from the global 'South'
2. Develop joint initiatives and campaigns for collaborative work at local, national and international levels

Partnership:

The Humanitarian Forum, in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent Society, will mobilise the second World Humanitarian Action Forum along with a variety of other stakeholders including local and national NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, INGOs, donors, government representatives and the private sector. **WHAF2 is led and managed by a number of advisory group partners and steering group collaborators.**

WHAF2 is a continuation of the highly successful WHAF 2017 (WHAF1) which was held as a pilot project to ascertain the need for enhanced collaboration between different humanitarian actors on key issues affecting the sector (see summary on pages 3-4 and WHAF 2017 report).

Proposed topics to be addressed (Roundtables):

1. **Finance:** counter terrorist financing & technology, non-traditional financial models, innovation and private sector partnerships to increase access and opportunity
2. **Localisation:** Successful models/ practices/ methods and the ways in which to overcome barriers to change, shrinking civil society space and Leadership
3. **Conflicts:** The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and the need to work for peace in protracted crises, protection strategies and Gender Based Violence
4. **Resilience:** Climate change and disaster risk reduction, migration and community resilience

PROJECT RATIONALE

Since 2014, and as part of the UN World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) process, The Humanitarian Forum (THF) has been working with local and international partners across the globe to assess the current humanitarian system and approaches. The process involves collecting and documenting information and analysis from a variety of stakeholders including affected communities, the private sector, government representatives, INGOs, national NGOs and grassroots organisations. Together with partners in 35 countries, 39 consultations were organised in which nearly 2,000 representatives of national and local humanitarian NGOs participated. The primary purpose of these consultations was to gauge perspectives on ways to improve the existing humanitarian system and enable local voices to reach and be heard on international platforms.

From these consultations, as well as desk research and case studies, THF has found that multiple and parallel humanitarian crises of the last decade have imposed several challenges to the traditional humanitarian system. For example, international humanitarian organisations have encountered constraints to access required, an urgent need to adapt their programmes and a greater need for increased funding. Furthermore, the formal humanitarian system has traditionally been led by United Nations initiatives, which is funded and managed by a relatively small number of wealthy countries together with several large international NGOs (Oxfam, 2015). With little weight given to the capabilities and impact of organisations in the global 'South' assumes a weak local or regional humanitarian community in terms of scale, principles and coordination.

Many civil society organisations (CSOs) consider networking key to the success of their policy engagement as it enables information sharing, learning and communicating with other actors. However, CSOs do not work together often enough, which is perhaps due to fear of competition for funding and influence. Having priorities and incentives not always align are further constraints on the coordination between CSOs, researchers and policymakers. The WHAF initiative aims to address these shortfalls and provide an opportunity for CSOs to network with other humanitarian actors to discuss leadership, high professional standards and ways in which to respond effectively in highly complex and demanding contexts.

An initiative like WHAF also helps to increase collective agreement amongst different humanitarian actors operating in high-risk settings. Collective agreement is required on regional priorities and mechanisms for organising humanitarian responses that promote long-term thinking and planning. For NGOs, there is a clear recognition of the need to better connect with other responses through operational partnerships. Building a broader support base through engagement with more diverse stakeholders is essential to strengthening the acceptance, perception and relevance of humanitarian aid. There is also a need to invest more in the local NGO workforce and the way in which NGOs manage, support and retain staff. Striking the right balance between diversity, culture and macro and micro policies that aim to develop leadership and highest possible professional standards is crucial in a workforce that is increasingly required to respond to an ever-changing and demanding humanitarian landscape.

The World Humanitarian Action Forum aims to address these issues by keeping the momentum flowing for reinforced partnership and collaboration amongst humanitarian actors in the 'South' and 'North' post-WHS 2016. It will also contribute to enhanced coherence in humanitarian response by facilitating communication and collaboration between key stakeholders and increasing effectiveness in policy engagement strategies. WHAF 2019 also aims to take forward some of the key recommendations brought forward from the WHAF 2017 that took place in London (see WHAF 2017 Report).

WHAF 2017 Pilot

On the 28th of November 2017, representatives from INGOs, local and national NGOs from the global 'North' and 'South', public sector officials, philanthropists, donors, academics and the media met in London for the first World Humanitarian Action Forum (WHAF).

The forum drew over 230 delegates, of which 97 international delegates represented organisations from the global 'South'. It was important that conversations and recommendations included the voice of communities and organisations from the global 'South' in order to achieve inclusive, balanced and effective outcomes that were better informed.

The day included a plenary and closing session with three parallel roundtable sessions led by several organisations. Participants were able to attend one of the roundtables on:

1. De-risking and Financial Access: Shared Risk, Shared Responsibility
2. Localisation Agenda: Sustainable Investment and Core Capacity
3. Conflicts and Crisis: Forced Migration and Protection with a Gender Based Violence (GBV) focus

Prior to delegates breaking out to their roundtable groups, the opening session provided a time to reflect on the key purpose of the forum such as its importance and influence in carrying on the recommendations and actions forward. The President of The Humanitarian Forum stressed that the WHAF had a vision and mission to accomplish; to protect the humanitarian sector and help it grow and flourish. A distinguished speaker from one of the UN agencies urged that "it was important for organisations to continue to work together in the future in order to protect the humanitarian space against politicisation and polarisation... and for organisations not to give up in the face of challenges". This was clearly evident by the involvement of 35 partners and collaborative organisations who made the WHAF initiative possible and continue to take its message, recommendations and actions forward.

Post WHAF 2017 Activities

The success of any conference lies in what happens after the event itself. Thus, the WHAF secretariat - The Humanitarian Forum (THF) - were very conscious of ensuring the recommendations and ideas that were shared at the Forum were taken forward. To remain true to its objectives, a number of activities have already taken place since November 2017. Below is a summary of some of the activities and outputs of WHAF 2017

Roundtable Session	Key Outputs
De-risking and Financial Access: Share the research findings and inform policy	Four bank de-risking country case studies and a policy brief were published in August 2018 in partnership with the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development and the London School of Economics and Political Science. The case studies were Yemen, Somalia, Palestine and Syria.
	We shared the findings of the de-risking research report at the International Stakeholder Dialogue at The Hague on 15th February 2018, which was hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Finance and Human Security Collective and involved the World Bank, ACAMS, government policy makers and regulators.
	A series of key stakeholder meetings were held from 7 th -9 th of May 2018 in Washington DC with US policymakers including the US State Department, US Treasury, Congressmen, think-tanks and NPOs.
	Findings of the de-risking research report from several country case studies were shared at the International Humanitarian Studies Association Conference at The Hague in August 2018.

	<p>Research and the policy recommendations and findings were presented at the G20 Interfaith Forum in Argentina in September 2018 and contributed to a paper for the G20 Summit.</p>
	<p>THF delivered a Financial Governance training course in April for local NGOs in Gaziantep, Turkey, to raise awareness of bank de-risking and preventative measures to contribute to both financial integrity and financial access. The course was repeated in Istanbul in September 2018.</p>
Localisation Agenda: Share Recommendations	<p>The summary recommendations of the Localisation roundtable were shared with the Charter4Change group and other channels.</p>
	<p>The recommendations were shared with relevant donors including DfID, ECHO and the Swiss Government.</p>
	<p>The recommendations have also been shared with participants at the UNOCHA Global Policy Forum and with the Grand Bargain localisation work-stream members to bear in mind when looking at their 2018/19 work plan and future initiatives.</p>
	<p>In line with the capacity strengthening agenda, a series of training courses were delivered to over 200 local NGO staff in Turkey and Iraq throughout April of 2018. Topics included; Financial Governance and Accountability, Sustainable and Integrated Development, The Role of Women and Youth in Civil Society, Partnerships and Coalitions.</p>
	<p>Advocacy work on the recommendations in order to maintain the momentum on these key priorities around locally led humanitarian action.</p>
Conflicts and Crises: To continue the advocacy work	<p>The outputs from the roundtable were used to engage in advocacy work with UNHCR to influence the Global Compact on Forced Migration and feed into the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.</p>
	<p>IRW, in collaboration with the Joint Learning Initiative network, are conducting research on protection in refugee settings.</p>
	<p>IRW launched its policies on GBV at the UN Commission on the Status of Women session 62 held in New York in March 2018. The Gender Justice Declaration will also be launched at 2 high level meetings and at CSO level. IRW also engaged in a workshop on Sexual Violence in Conflict in Iraq in early January 2018.</p>
	<p>THF conducted a number of field visits to the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Iraq, Somalia, Bangladesh and Baluchistan.</p>
	<p>THF and IRW supported a conference in Iraq in December 2018 on 'Iraqi Communities in Action'.</p>

WHAF APPROACH

The World Humanitarian Action Forum is not an organisation, it is an initiative to address common issues affecting the sector and promote collaborative working at local and international levels.

The WHAF approach is such that the initiative is:

- **Led and managed by several partners**
 - An Advisory Group of partners will lead on the overall Forum
 - A Steering Group will be set up to manage each of the four Roundtables
 - The Chair (& Co-Chair) of each Steering Group will make up the Advisory Group
- **Action orientated** – before and during the Forum, a series of post-WHAF activities will be discussed and planned for.
- **Inclusive** – with a balance of representatives from the ‘South’ and ‘North’ to foster greater communication
- **Collaborative** – with a development of joint campaigns & initiatives, to address throughout the year, thus facilitating improved collaboration and coordination in humanitarian work.

WHAF 2019 will serve as a continuation of the WHAF 2017 themes to ensure we keep the momentum for policy changes in these crucial areas, with a particular focus on activities addressing issues of localisation, financial access and protection.

The roundtable session plan

The Triple P approach:

Session 1: Problem - To identify and highlight the problem/s

Session 2: Practice - To share models of good practice, experiences and solutions

Session 3: Policy - To agree on recommendations to inform policy and action

Who is it for?

WHAF is for representatives from INGOs, local and national NGOs from the global ‘South’, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, government representatives, philanthropists, donors, academia, media and the private sector.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION/ACTIVITIES

The WHAF 2019 will achieve its objectives through two major activities:

Activity 1: A two-day Forum

The first activity will be a two-day Forum. The WHAF will provide an opportunity for over 300 representatives to discuss and exchange expertise and experiences on how humanitarian actors can influence policy engagement strategies on topics such as financial access, localisation, protection and peace promotion.

Delegates will have the opportunity to attend one of the roundtable meetings to address the key priorities, case studies, issues affecting the sector and conduct solution-focused discussions. There will be networking opportunities to rekindle old partnerships and friendships as well as form new ones.

Proposed topics to be addressed*

WHAF 2019 main topics, in the form of roundtable workshops, will look to build on the recommendations from WHAF 2017 and other related workstreams and will revolve around the following key areas:

1. **Finance:**
 - a. counter terrorist financing & technology,
 - b. non-traditional financial models,
 - c. private sector partnerships and innovation
2. **Localisation:**
 - a. What has worked and overcoming barriers to change,
 - b. Shrinking civil society space,
 - c. Leadership
3. **Conflicts:**
 - a. The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus,
 - b. Protection strategies,
 - c. Gender Based Violence
4. **Resilience:**
 - a. Climate change challenge,
 - b. Disaster risk reduction,
 - c. Migration,
 - d. Community resilience

Each roundtable will have a steering group of partners that will meet regularly to discuss the objectives and relevance of their theme and sub-topics and decide on specialist speakers and panellists.

Each roundtable will attempt to make reference to the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals and World Humanitarian Summit commitments and initiatives.

*the WHAF Steering Group for each main topic will finalise the key areas to address ahead of the roundtable in October.

Activity 2: Post-WHAF 2019 Advocacy

The WHAF Secretariat alongside partner organisations will share the recommendations brought forward from WHAF 2019 (and WHAF 2017) with key stakeholders to inform policy and action. The WHAF secretariat will develop initiatives and activities to maintain the momentum on the key recommendations.

Some of the activities will include:

- Follow up on recommendations and actions from WHAF 2019 (& WHAF 2017)
- Carry out consultations and events to address the following issues:
 - Commitments and initiatives of the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016
 - Women and children in crisis, GBV, protection and psycho-social support
 - Youth empowerment and their role in humanitarian action
 - Crises and adaptation toward climate change and disaster risk reduction
 - The role of peacebuilding in ending conflict
 - Responding to local needs through capacity and resource management
- Advocacy – Jointly tackle key issues affecting the humanitarian sector and especially those on the work of southern NGOs by sharing recommendations with donors, global policy forums and advocacy groups. Conduct further research with like-minded organisations on some of the key issues addressed such as the impact of de-risking and protection mechanisms in refugee settings
- Partnership and Networking – Bring together experts from humanitarian and non-humanitarian organisations, such as those from the public and private sectors
- Learning and information sharing – Discuss and exchange experiences, new trends and innovations in humanitarian aid and development through online platforms and bespoke training programmes
- Visibility – Increase the visibility of both local and international humanitarian work and that of CSOs in particular. Support leaders of southern NGOs to position their organisations at the international platforms
- Capacity strengthening - Provide southern NGOs with the latest effective and innovative implementation approaches, trends and success stories through formal and informal training programmes
- Communication–Continue to mobilise the development of the WHAF initiative to address issues more effectively and at higher levels

Partnership working

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



IN COLLABORATION WITH



WHAF SECRETARIAT CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of lead organisation:	The Humanitarian Forum
Address:	37 Westminster Bridge Road, 6 Whitehorse Mews, London, SE1 7QD, United Kingdom
Website:	www.whaf.org.uk
Lead contact Person:	Rawaad Mahyub Executive Director Email: info@whaf.org.uk Direct Email: rawaad@humanitarianforum.org Tel: +44 (0) 203 096 1786
Mission of the organisation:	<p>THF is a non-membership based network of key humanitarian and development organisations from both the global 'North' and 'South'.</p> <p>THF grew out of a belief that humanitarian work should be a place where diverse communities can come together and find common areas of cooperation. It was founded on the back of discussions held in 2005-6 amongst an international Steering Committee and during 14 consultation workshops in 14 countries.</p> <p>We complement the work of others by bringing actors together to fill gaps in existing systems. We are a safe, neutral space to mediate different views, share skills and promote solutions.</p>

