



**WORLD  
HUMANITARIAN  
ACTION  
FORUM**

# **WHAF**

## Dignity in Humanity

Istanbul • 15-16 October 2019

**Summary Report 2020**



**480**  
Participants



**261** NGOs  
200 from the global south



**53** Partners  
21 from the global south



**51** Countries  
38 from the global south



**14**  
Workshops



**4**  
Roundtables

# WHAF 2019 theme: **Dignity in Humanity**

ACTING NOW FOR A SECURER FUTURE

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*Note: This report was prepared six months after the forum (April 2020), in order to capture and share the outputs and activities of WHAF that have happened since the forum held in October 2019. Several other activities were planned but were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

# Acknowledgements

The World Humanitarian Action Forum (WHAF) Secretariat at The Humanitarian Forum gratefully appreciates the tremendous support of the WHAF Advisory and Steering Group partners who provided their expertise, time and energy to organise and manage the four WHAF Roundtables

## Resilience

**Islamic Relief Worldwide** (CHAIR)  
**Turk Kizilay** (CO-CHAIR)

Supported by: Action Aid,  
 British Red Cross

## Finance

**Human Security Collective** (CHAIR)  
**Overseas Development Institute** (CO-CHAIR)

Supported by: Charity & Security Network,  
 Islamic Relief Worldwide, TechSoup,  
 The Humanitarian Forum and  
 The World Bank as convener of financial access  
 roundtable in the United States.

## Localisation

**Save Somali Women and Children** (CHAIR)  
**Humanitarian Leadership Academy** (CO-CHAIR)

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## Conflicts

**Interpeace** (CHAIR)  
**International Federation of Red Cross  
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*Special thanks to our hosts Turk Kizilay and  
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*Thanks and appreciation to all the volunteers  
 for their help and the participants who  
 provided insightful inputs for an effective  
 discussion at the forum*



## Organised by



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## Media & Event Partners



# Our shared purpose



*WHAF engaged a wide spectrum of views, experiences, and commitments and partners provided many deep insights from grounded practice, careful research and compassion*

Brought together by over 53 partners, The World Humanitarian Action Forum (WHAF) was led by an Advisory Group and supported by four Steering Groups of partners.

The WHAF Biennial Forum, hosted by Turk Kizilay (Turkish Red Crescent) in Istanbul, brought together over 480 delegates representing local and national NGOs, INGOs, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, networks, philanthropists and academics from across the humanitarian, development and peace-building sector for a two-day forum on 15-16 October 2019.

This was the second Forum, following the successful 2017 WHAF event in London and coincided with UN World Dignity Day on 16 October.

The 2019 Forum focused on the central theme of 'Dignity in Humanity' and combined a series of parallel solution focused roundtables on four vital humanitarian themes - Finance, Localisation, Conflict, and Resilience. Local and international actors from across the humanitarian sector worked together to formulate concrete practical steps to advance the agenda for key issues across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

WHAF engaged a wide spectrum of views, experiences, and commitments and partners provided many deep insights from grounded practice, careful research and compassion that they bring to their work and care for people in need.



*Elhadj As Sy, Secretary General of IFRC*

The Forum included an innovative platform to encourage an open exchange of ideas and structured opportunities for networking and partnership building.

Looking to the future, the 2019 Forum helped to guide intended changes and desired results.

This summary report presents key observations, ideas, and recommendations for influence and action.



## **Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey**

**YAVUZ SELIM KIRAN**

*"You have all shown that we have enthusiasm, goodwill, and the ability to take proper action to end human suffering ... in the areas of resilience, conflict, finance and localisation.*

*As the hosting organisation, it is our privilege to be part of such a forum. We have a unique opportunity with international NGOs and local NGOs to address common concerns with direct approaches from deep perspectives."*

# The WHAF Journey to 2019 & Beyond

The WHAF is not simply a one-off, two-day event, it is a long-term initiative that starts with consultations, develops recommendations and culminates in action

**Pre-WHAF**

Somalia 22 JUNE 2019

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Nigeria 26 AUG 2019

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Chad 4 SEPT 2019

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Turkey 11 SEPT 2019

*Consultations*

**WHAF**

Partners Monthly Meetings

14 FEB - 14 OCT 2019

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Istanbul 15-16 OCT 2019

*Recommendations*

**Post-WHAF**

Cameroon 27 OCT 2019

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South Africa 12 NOV 2019

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Sweden 29 NOV 2019

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Somalia 1 MAR 2020

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Ethiopia 3 MAR 2020

*Action*



Somalia 2019



Nigeria 2019



Chad 2019



Turkey 2019



Partners Monthly Meetings 2019



Istanbul 2019



Somalia 2020



Cameroon 2019



South Africa 2019



Ethiopia 2020

# The Humanitarian Challenge

## Dignity in Humanity



### Tackling injustice through data, communications and advocacy

Humanitarian engagement and adherence to principles depends on action, evidence, and data. Everybody is publishing data. The difference for us is that we collect, analyse, synthesise and publish data from the perspective of the people who are suffering these violations of their dignity and their lives. Many of the current data sets are established using different criteria standards and models. We want to have a genuine set of the community's own data standards that can be compared and eventually help to produce a 'Humanitarian Watch Report'.

**Martin Barber, OBE**

## SETTING THE SCENE

### Morning plenary discussions

#### Worsening crises

Against the background of the crisis in Syria and grave violations now affecting millions of people globally, we are witnessing a steady decline in respect for international norms and standards in the application of International Humanitarian Law and Humanitarian Principles.

We are seeing governments and other armed actors deliberately bombing civilians and defying civilians' rights whilst supposedly protecting hospitals, schools and homes. This is unacceptable but there is also a crisis at the heart of humanitarian action today. Humanitarian actors have prioritised speed and the humanitarian imperative over the need for impartiality and neutrality. While governments are unable to resolve the political problems, nonetheless many humanitarian organisations find themselves dependent on funding from governments.



*"States take sides. Humanitarian actors have core principles and do not take sides. If we are to benefit from development funds, we must be free to work impartially."*

**Martin Barber, OBE**  
FOUNDING MEMBER,  
UNITED AGAINST INHUMANITY

#### Fundamental Ethics of Dignity for Humanity

Research amongst vulnerable and displaced people about what dignity means to different people in the world at different times. Definitions are contextually specific with several fundamental aspects – respect, self-reliance, honour, rights, truth and pride. Dignity is an individual right and a social necessity at community level. Humanitarian dignity is seen as what people need and the basic assistance they receive; cash programming is now critical though not a panacea. Dignity also relates to what aid is given, by whom and how. Half of the 13.7 million volunteers in the IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent) are younger than 30 years. We should not underestimate how people in crisis can do things for others. The ultimate dignity lies in respect. The dignity of others depends on our own mental health; we need to be able to share the feelings that we get from this work with other like-minded people of different generations, different communities and finding that within our own group.

Research has found that humanitarian action is not enough. We have to shift how we look at community action and invest in normal times upfront. Who are the people doing the groundwork? Local actors are valuable - volunteers, but also civil societies and leaders, local women, teachers, who understand the context, language and cultures.



*"People are important. Listening to them and face-to-face communication means you can't just go in with aid and that will be everything people need."*

**Dr Jemilah Mahmood,**  
IFRC UNDER SECRETARY  
GENERAL FOR PARTNERSHIPS



## Vital Needs

Dignity in humanity is an essential concept in an international humanitarian role. Conflicts last for decades, causing damage and destruction. The cost of conflict is the loss of dignity.

Millions of people are displaced. Infrastructure and services are chronically undermaintained and resourced. Health facilities, businesses suffer directly and indirectly. Armed conflict is also about children who miss education.

Adults in communities lose their livelihoods. It affects the fabric of society and leaves humanitarian scars. Wars have challenged us to meet local needs and communities. There is a need for autonomy and self-sufficiency. If people are not able to look after themselves, they lose their dignity. Dignity urgently depends upon access and proximity to basic services, respect for humanitarian law and financial resources. Building sustainable humanitarian impact demands urgent relief in helping people to rebuild their lives.

## Impact of our work

Dignity is our passion - to prevent and stop wars, to protect humanity and children from agony and to nurture our environment.

The legacy we leave to our children must not be inequality, violence and abuse. It will be determined by either our ability to respond or reluctance to act. This is a world of displacement, disease and disasters.

Over 200 million people will be in need of assistance if we do nothing. As humanitarian workers we need to come together - to share our knowledge, skills, and networks – and to take action together.



*“It is not bottom up if you still come in with an emergency mindset and with operational procedures.”*

**Dr Katja Gentinetta**  
ICRC BOARD MEMBER



## We celebrate the unsung heroes in humanitarian crises

*Message from WHAF for Global Dignity Day  
16 October 2019*

Freedom, justice, progress, development, human rights and dignity are words that we hold true to the moral courage of those humanitarians who are lost in service in the most difficult areas of Afghanistan, South Sudan, Yemen, Syria and in too many other parts of the world.

On this day, we honour the world of both men and women, the unsung heroes – people guided by the declaration and dedication to humanity, driven by the normal cause of helping others. We celebrate the courage and relentless commitment not only of our colleagues and partners but also of the people, families and communities affected by crises for their resilience often over the years.

**Shahin Ashraf** MBE  
ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE

# Identifying Priorities for Action

## WHAF Roundtables Solution-focused discussion

The Roundtables provide an opportunity for WHAF partners to identify together the issues and problems, to share models of good practice, experience and solutions, and to agree recommendations that inform policy and action. The following section summarises the main topics, observations, and priorities discussed during the four roundtables:

**Finance – Localisation – Conflicts – Resilience.**  
Roundtable briefing papers are available at [www.whaf.org.uk](http://www.whaf.org.uk)

## FINANCE - ROUNDTABLE A

**Increasing financial access:** Policy and technology solutions to increase access and opportunity, including the potential and challenges of Islamic Social Financing

Discussion explored the context for transferring money and the barriers to be overcome including where there is no banking industry, slow and opaque financial systems, and the security agenda.

Potential policy and technological solutions to help solve derisking and improve financial access for NPOs are being actively sought. These include roundtable dialogue processes with multiple stakeholders, including banks, NPOs, governments, and international and regional organisations to understand varied mandates and overcome policy incoherencies. Discussion also explored Islamic finance in relation to humanitarian crises and the need to take a realistic, systemic view on the boundaries, opportunities, challenges, and context for Islamic finance within the sector. With the benefit of detailed overview, discussion explored existing models and examples of Islamic finance schemes.

### Challenges

Delivering humanitarian financial assistance depends upon getting the money through the last mile. Problems include the political and strategic challenges facing such assistance; the impact of delays, frustration and human costs; and the now urgent needs that must be resolved to overcome the impediments including understanding and dialogue, systems, and principled agreement for financial assistance to meet humanitarian necessities.

### Technological solutions

Technological solutions depend upon collaboration and co-creation. Financial instruments are changing and despite resistance from banks there is need to explore new modalities. These include 'last mile' mobile solutions for transfers and tracking through cards, mobile tech, blockchain. There are a lot of unknowns and there is need for caution. Barriers to entry for many not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) can be tackled by networks that bridge



*Technology panel with: Human Security Collective, World Vision, Tech Soup, START Network, Disberse*

organisations, provide capacity and know-how to fill gaps (for example by TechSoup) and help with the journey to manage risk between NPOs and donors (for example with START UK or the fintech 'Disberse').

Due diligence must be used for good, not "weaponised", for example, by redefining banking for aid, establishing common standards with locally adapted systems and appropriate technology. Data protection and transparency are essential to build trust.

### Islamic Social Finance (ISF)

*Unlocking the potential for humanitarian and development action.*

ISF for humanitarian response is hindered by problems of coordination, competition and scrutiny. There is need for regulation (imposed or voluntary), efficiency and timeliness, and the urgent need to reconcile moral, political and systemic imperatives. The Muslim philanthropy sector is mature; this is no longer a sector in its infancy. From the 1970's, Islamic philanthropy has developed from ad hoc giving to the strategic mobilisation of resources directed towards social and economic justice,





Panel: Human Security Collective, Community World Service, Turk Kizilay, Islamic Relief Worldwide, World Bank

socially responsible investing, and not humanitarian response alone. This maturity is often not taken into account by Western donors and other actors.

There is a need for “radical accountability” and the opportunity to develop a new encounter between Islamic finance and humanitarianism from a global perspective. Evidence-based encounters that challenge misconceptions and unlock new opportunities are all for the benefit of humanity. The demonization of ISF persists despite increasing crises and growing amounts of philanthropy.

ISF models for innovation reflect ‘participation

finance’, scale of potential funding, and the roots of humanity in dignity. Expanding scope for participation includes blended finance, broader range of collaborating institutions, and maturity and complementarity. Finding where Islamic philanthropy and finance intersects demands that ISF is not dismissed or marginalised but instead we work to resolve restrictions and philosophical disputes (religious funding or a means to deliver benefit and public good), win recognition of the scale and volume of funding, and clarify and build evidence of benefits of distribution, reach, and basis of assistance.

## Recognising the opportunities for Islamic Social Finance created by the Islamic Development Bank

The main finance tools of Islamic philanthropy are zakat (compulsory giving), saddaqa (charitable giving) and waqf (Islamic endowment).

There have been remarkable innovations by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) that explore socially responsible investing, such as crowdfunding sukuk (comparable to Shariah compliant bonds) and Islamic bonds for fragile countries. The volume of humanitarian funding from IDB is much smaller than developmental funding. IDB is now exploring how to expand its humanitarian role, testing and exploring new models that combine traditional Islamic finance with new Islamic tools. Other countries like Turkey and Indonesia have already developed their own models. While these are all ‘Islamic’, in practice they differ because of cultural and contextual differences.

What is the scope for success for ISF? It is to ‘graduate people from poverty’ irrespective of whether they are in a humanitarian crisis or in an underdeveloped state. Islamic philanthropy



Panel: Overseas Development Institute, Islamic Development Bank, World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists

is deeply developmental in its approach as it is humanitarian. Nexus barriers (humanitarian – development) aren’t really an issue for ISF because the foundations of Islamic giving are about creating livelihood opportunities and dignity and not just handouts. However, there are challenges for ISF. Coordination among Islamic funders and donors is a problem because there are contextual and cultural differences in how ISF is implemented. There is a need to find out if some form of coherence could be developed. WHAF or the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists (WCMP) could provide the platforms for this exploration.



Panel: WASDA, Consultant, Eco-WEB, SSWC, COAST, IFRC, ICVA

## LOCALISATION - ROUNDTABLE B

### A more dignified humanitarian eco-system: Localisation in practice and realisation of Grand Bargain Commitments

Starting with setting the scene and taking stock on progress (achievements, opportunities and challenges in different elements of the localisation agenda) discussions then shifted to focus on awareness, engagement, implementation and institutionalisation from a number of perspectives including donors, international agencies and local and national actors.

Strategic action planning was then considered and discussion finally moved to individual and collective action to move the agenda forward. It was observed that the localisation agenda is complex and multifaceted and means different things to different people. For some, the onus is on funding; for others, localisation means better and equitable partnerships, and others, capacity sharing, a two-way exchange of skills, experience and knowledge. Progress is taking place but it is slow and we all have a role to play in driving this forward.

Despite the goals set out during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and the Grand Bargain in particular, localisation has still not yet secured major political or financial investment. The amount of funding channelled to local organisations remains significantly below the 25% goal set out for 2020. Challenges include a lack of adequate funding towards institutional capacity, and a continuing tendency for international NGOs to treat local actors as sub-contractors instead of equal partners.

### Localisation Development Highlights

Partnerships are central to our purposes of delivery and change and are influenced by funding and enabling environment. The IFRC Consortium Project for strengthening response capacity and decision making illustrates how many organisations are facing familiar issues.

Funding flow patterns impact on localisation. Donor commitments under the Grand Bargain are lagging. Very small amount of funding currently actually goes directly to local NGOs and there is high competition for a small pot.

The conditions for delivering Localisation and Grand Bargain recognise that this is a moral commitment and not a legal obligation. Changing attitudes and behaviour must be achieved by agreement not imposition and positive engagement with donors is a big opportunity to advance the empowerment of local actors.

## Awareness, Engagement, Implementation and Institutionalisation of the Commitments and Localisation Agenda

Localisation comprises six key elements: improved partnerships and visibility for local actors, increased funding, increased capacities, better coordination and complementarity, policy influence, and participation from the local population.

The World Humanitarian Summit marked the growing recognition amongst local, national actors about the need for a stronger voice and a more coherent framework of issues. Awareness and engagement with localisation, especially amongst donors, illustrates the tensions from local to global level. Donors give to organisations that they trust and the degree of trust demonstrated influences the level and direction of funding. Compliance, accountability, and capacity are crucial – we need to trust local organisations and work together to use systems fully.

The institutionalisation of localisation still varies across organisations and between levels. Some international donors and NGOs have made substantial commitment to driving changes internally and externally through NGO networks. More action is needed to change mindsets, adopt new skills and involve local actors more extensively through information, engagement, and practice. NGO networks have a lot of potential in terms of local representation, raising voices, raising issues and defining the agenda, and ensuring the presence of local actors but must not allow international NGOs to dominate national NGOs. Change depends upon how power is shared between organisations and this is determined by the skills and capabilities of staff.

## Future direction for how stakeholders can maximise impact of their roles

Localisation of what and to who? Firstly, Compliance with donor standards are very complex and drain resources of local NGOs. Second, local NGOs and individuals lack recognition. Positive, continuous, and consistent engagement, without blame or hostility,

to create allies and advocacy. The continuous assessment of capacity of all stakeholders is crucial, including those responding locally to and those recovering from disasters and crises.

## Partnership

Partnership is more than sub-contracting and is not imposed. Local NGOs have capacity to gain acceptance quickly. International NGOs are working with local partners because they have a much better access to the affected population. "It's the value they bring because they're local rather than just because they're local." A significant ambition of the localisation agenda is not just to empower and resource national civil society actors, but to give people affected by crisis a stronger voice and as far as possible put them in the driving seat of their own response and recovery. Local NGOs are often closer to people affected by crisis and hence better-positioned to respect their agency, dignity and voice. For some WHAF actors, empowering local NGOs is a means toward the end of empowering people affected by crisis.

There is a need for respect. The language and nature of high-level meetings can exclude local NGOs

Joining groups of local NGOs offers more opportunity for inclusion but demands resources and capacity.

*"We are not aware of the language of these meetings. Sometimes you talk in an aggressive way, sometimes they laugh when I talk. They say you have to fight for your space, we fight, and we manage. One of the problems, how to coordinate and participate, this is one of them."*

DELEGATE

*"If you join all these boards, you have to spend more money. Many NGOs, they don't refuse but they don't really care for participating. They ask us to join these things. I'm very tired in being in their city, many meetings I attend but I feel like we affect the decision making. They hear our voice."*

DELEGATE

*"Quite often with the recommendations - they're about what the INGOs should do. Local organisations need to be given ideas on how they can help and have their own idea of encouraging local organisations to come together and network. It also gives them something to hold on to."*

DELEGATE



## The Localisation Dilemma

Extract from 'Local2Global Protection' presentation

Extract from NEAR network's 'Localisation Performance Measurement Framework' presented at the localisation roundtable

Localisation Component		Localisation Progress		
		Poor	Modest	Excellent
<b>Partnerships</b>				
1.1 Quality in relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L/NA exercise power in relationships</li> <li>PoP are explicitly referred to in all partnership agreements</li> <li>Partnership quality monitoring tools are used</li> <li>Partnership reviews are conducted</li> <li>Concerns about the partnership can be effectively addressed</li> </ul>			
1.2 Shift from project-based to strategic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L/NA has strategic partnerships which support organisational development</li> </ul>			
1.3 Engagement of partners throughout the project cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L/NA routinely participate in all aspects of the project cycle</li> </ul>			
Summary assessment for partnership				
<b>Funding</b>				
2.1 Quantity of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases in human funding to L/NA</li> <li>INGO/UN publish the % of funding that they pass to L/NA</li> <li>Increases in the number of funding mechanisms being made available to L/NA</li> </ul>			
2.2 Quality of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of funding for L/NA for a new humanitarian response within 2 weeks</li> <li>Funding for operating costs including relevant institutional costs</li> <li>Partnership costs shared equally between L/NA and INGO/UN</li> </ul>			



## HUMANITARIAN SPACE AND TIME The scope for partnership building

The whole system in the humanitarian sector is working against building a partnership. How do we put effective systems in place or indicators that make partnership a real obligation for all of us? When we find ourselves working against time and want to respond as fast as possible, it can be easier for humanitarian actors to just go to the field and implement, without actually finding a partner. There is also a lot of competition between humanitarian actors for funding to implement and in reaching the most beneficiaries possible. But responding quickly is only part of the solution - we need an impactful and sustainable response. Indeed building the trust of the partners, building capacity and making a common effort to establish a project or system takes time, but often it is less about time and more about the space between us!

## CONFLICTS - ROUNDTABLE C

**From silos to synergies:** How peacebuilding, humanitarian and development actors can learn from each other

Humanitarians and peacebuilders explored together the implications of partnership approaches to conflict situations and conflict sensitivity and the issues that challenge the way we work, why we do what we do, and any hope for change.

These include the biases that are limiting our ability to engage with youth-led initiatives, and the rules that inhibit this, and engagement with armed groups.

There are positive examples and in relation to conflict sensitivity, a locally led approach to humanitarian response, to peacebuilding and to development goes hand-in-hand with conflict sensitivity. The securitisation of aid affects all of us as our space for action shrinks and donors are responding to growing insecurity. Development, humanitarian and peacebuilding work is being undermined by the securitisation narrative.

To move forward, we need to focus on downward accountability, and institutional change within donors to force reflection and investment, provide policy recommendations, and identify practical action points.

### Partnerships in Conflict

Discussion focused on forging meaningful partnerships from the perspectives of local actors, INGO and donors on the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus; funding patterns and management of risk; perspectives resulting from unequal power dynamics in partnership relationships, involvement of youth, and working with informal groups.

For partnership in a conflict context, leadership is mostly driven by good intentions. In the face of national, natural disasters the whole world flocks to provide humanitarian assistance; in conflict settings political agendas, even from the humanitarian perspective, impede leadership. Partnership is needed in conflict to get to the root of relationships.

More partnerships and more agencies are needed to work with 1.3 billion young people between the age group 15-24 years, one billion of whom are from developing countries and many of whom face conflicts.

Partnering with the right people in conflict settings is often more complex than in other emergency contexts. Non-prescriptive approaches are crucial. In the name of localisation, many international actors and agencies ask local partners to work in conflict. It is they who go to people in the conflict and it is they who are caught in crossfire. In many places, like Yemen, today's conflicts are between state and non-state actors that control different geographic areas. This presents challenges of working with non-neutral partners, diversion of aid, and prolongation of conflict. Crises, like Syria, have led to funding possibilities which have drawn in more agencies creating demand for more funding, dilemmas for how to operate, and pressure for pragmatism with challenges for humanitarian principles.

Power balances and bias threaten partnerships and credibility between international organisations and local actors; this has proved a major challenge for youth organisations. In conflict settings, choices must be made about where to invest – in transitional relationships or where communities gain power. Localisation is about sustaining power from the international actor to the national actor, from national to regional, from regional to community. In places like Myanmar, after decades of authoritarian rule now there are hundreds of international actors,



wide scope for funds to be misused, and power contests leaving a community constantly in conflict. Despite the many challenges, there are examples of positive experiences including sharing capacity between partners, adopting an empathetic and collaborative approach to donor engagement using social media (for example in India and Pakistan), and campaigns to demonstrate impact to donors. In Syria, solidarity among the humanitarian community has helped to achieve agreement for legal framework with donor funding and the attention of the UN Security Council.

Key questions identified include the financial challenges for operating in conflict zones, the choice of partners and the risk of being 'blacklisted'. Beyond the challenges of partnering between international and local organisations, there are deeper layers of complexity for local organisations partnering with one another, for example in Iraq.

## Understanding Conflict Sensitive Approaches

Aspects discussed included: the challenges of protection and advocacy; the role of humanitarian actors during conflict sensitivity; incentivizing conflict sensitive humanitarian practices.

People and communities are central. Adapting approaches to local custom and procedures are vital and must not disempower people by making them targets for assistance. The resilience-based approach puts a focus on trying to understand what the capacities are in the setting and what's working.

The realities of protection are that judgement and making decisions in very unstable and volatile settings is very complex for humanitarian and peace workers on the ground, for conflict affected communities, and for refugees and displaced people. The dilemmas for protection advocacy arise from the tension between doing nothing and trying to do everything to improve protection outcomes for civilians in conflict zones. Communities themselves are very resourceful in coming up to their own mechanisms to provide protection and advocacy that may be similar to that of international organisations. Examples include Libyans living in Tunisia, Syrians refugees in Turkey.

However, there is a disconnect between the legal aspect of protection advocacy (the foundations for which are legal documents and instruments of international human rights law, humanitarian law, and refugee law) and how it is implemented on the ground and the differing instruments coordinated in practice. The global protection architecture also presents problems: the humanitarian sector did not emerge as a system, there is no singular mandated leader, and international law is open to interpretation by states. Together, this undermines credibility and trust with local communities.

Peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance share similar concerns but have differences that must be understood in relation to donor power dynamics, mandate differences, funding, and know how. Conflict-sensitivity operates to a 'common sense rule' (a heuristic) - as you localise, as you move the power to the more local level, you tend to become more conflict sensitive; localisation and conflict sensitivity are closely aligned. Many larger agencies are recognising the need to be more conflict sensitive and peace responsive.

## Challenges of Donors and Securitised Interests

Aspects discussed included: proscription of armed groups and financial regulations; growth of countering violent extremism (CVE) measures and impact on the triple nexus; counter migration strategies and impact on conflict affected states.

At present, aid is increasingly being securitised and some of the approaches are resulting in programmes that are exacerbating conflict and the grievances that as humanitarians and peacebuilders we are trying to resolve or undermining our future ability to resolve conflict. Key manifestations include stabilisation peacekeeping missions and measures to counter and prevent violent extremism (PVE). PVE in particular risks exacerbating grievances/conflict and endangering the work of local civil society in a number of ways; by framing one side of conflict (and potentially sympathetic communities) 'extremists', by reducing opportunities for civil society to engage in non-PVE peacebuilding and by targeting and victimising 'at risk' communities.

State responsibilities include security. Sanctions against armed groups and the legal framework represent a crude instrument deployed in all sorts of ways that have negative downstream impacts.

Many states have their own sanctions regimes for organisations which may or may not also be on UN lists. 'Blacklisting' is not effective because the effect of these sanctions can no longer change behaviour or put pressure on them to bring them to the bargaining table. There is also tension between national security and development interests due to funding streams being dominated and aligned with national counter terrorist priorities which are neither neutral, impartial or conflict sensitive.

Perspectives on governance in the humanitarian sector includes safeguarding, the proper use of funds and protection for the most vulnerable from those who are supposed to protect them. We must also acknowledge the role of Governments in humanitarian response and accept the need to influence that so it does not exacerbate conflict.

## Changing the words we use can help

"We support refugees in Delhi and the government is not very supportive; we were called antinationalist. So we took a different approach. We stopped saying we're providing rehabilitation support. We followed more of a voluntary approach than an organisation intervening in that community. Words can trigger reactions so if you are working on peace and security, we call it 'peace education'."

Indian NGO

## Fortifying ourselves against 'blacklisting' and making people our voice

"In Yemen, we try to bridge the gap between certain organisations and the community we serve. We try to communicate with them and make them our voice, so that when other actors try to accuse us or blacklist us, we have some kind of campaign coming from the ground, from people. They say we serve them. They say, "Why are you [other actors] fighting over resources, killing thousands of people? These [NGOs] are the people who do the good things to preserve our dignity, our humanity."

Yemeni NGO



# RESILIENCE - ROUNDTABLE D

## Building capacity to adapt to change: Climate change, disaster risk reduction, migration and community resilience

Discussion started by hearing from academics, local partners, INGOs and UN representatives about current understanding of resilience and what this means in the humanitarian space, the importance of building in localisation in humanitarian responses and taking a human rights approach to building resilience.

Discussions explored opportunities to tackle the humanitarian-development nexus and went on to unpack some of the challenges and what is restricting us, increasing the risk arising from climate change, including the need for flexible funding and gaps in awareness about disaster reduction in vulnerable communities. It was observed that in building resilience we are having to tackle a fatalistic mindset in the communities we work in and some of them have lost hope. How do we really tackle political will when not all countries are seeing the same risk and impacts caused by climate change and there is a lack of governance structures for risk combined with a lack of local level and awareness on what to do in practice. Discussion also explored forecasted migration change and what we can do.

### Context

Climate change and inequality are creating unprecedented impacts with consequences for sustainable development and migration and creating fundamental complex challenges for communities, organisations, academics, and institutions. It is now imperative that impediments to the agency of vulnerable communities and organisations are resolved through adequate resources, political will, and the rejection of false choices between development and sustainable environmental management. The relationship between humanitarian assistance and resilience must be strengthened for the most vulnerable if

no one is to be left behind in the 2030 agenda. Relationships depend on trust and human focus not simply at structural level and social cohesion depends on a combination of self-reliance and well-being for the individual. The scientific community and policy makers know the importance of resilience but systemic change is difficult and controversial. We need to be bold and adapt to situations but also bend the trends to be able to create better societies. Organisations are embedding resilience as their 'humanitarian signature', align with the Sendai Framework, and advocating for flexible funding for the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and private sector funding.

### Climate

The exponential increase in climate-related crises result in greater costs in rich countries but crises more devastating in poorer countries. Crises and vulnerabilities are experienced differently across countries. Challenges in how to tackle the root causes of climate change include accessibility to water and basic needs, the dynamic nature of risks and lack of long-term funding. Lack of security and low climate change awareness prevent action.

Strategies are recognising the importance of an holistic approach to climate risk management that embraces climate adaptation, communication, and building resilience through sustainable development and disaster risk reduction. The Sendai framework shows we need to build back better; disaster management includes reducing the risk to an acceptable level and risk reduction requires prevention and mitigation. Governance and behaviour change affect the different levels of impact that we see from disasters. Investment in risk reduction results in declining loss of human lives. Comparison of disaster magnitude over time and in different places illustrates that scale of impact is directly affected by preparedness and mitigating action. In Bangladesh, for example, despite similar levels of cyclone disaster magnitude loss of life was 140,000 in 1991 but was 4,000 in 2007.

### Disaster Risk Reduction

Climate change is today, not in the future and tackling human impact of climate change requires small actions that add up, identifying opportunities not just challenges, and reaching beyond humanitarian sector to conservation and environment sector. Resilience and DRR depend upon understanding anthropogenic, as well as natural causes, of climate change and the impacts on rises in temperature, including land use, emissions, and energy demand. The scale and variety of crisis scenarios include all aspects of coastal, terrestrial and settlement disruption that is driving displacement, migration and conflict. Strategies to promote climate resilience include

supporting communities to be climate aware equipped with information and climate smart through appropriate early action protocols (warning, preparation, forecasts) and early action partnerships. Climate change must be reflected in implementation of development and humanitarian action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals with realism about length of impact of displacement crises (up to 25 years) and practical action for example use of environmentally sustainable materials and waste.

We do not have all the answers but we can share good and bad practices, weighing up costs and benefits in responses and learning across geographies.



### Migration

Migration is shrouded in negativity and labelling; migrants and refugees have fast become the scapegoats.

Increasingly, migration and displacement touch on all aspects of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus requiring communities to be more resilient and adapt to an ever-changing landscape. Dignity demands that we remove stigma – displaced people suffer serious mental health trauma and are looking for basic needs, including shelter, employment, and community acceptance. Resilience of migrants differs at an individual level, at household level, at community level, at government level, and at state

level. Building resilience in communities and good practices require a comprehensive approach towards the needs and concerns of migrants, humanitarian assistance and protection as well as social protection. Supporting people to access the market and increasing dignity of people's lives means the opportunity to earn a living, cover their own needs and the needs of their families.

For communities and governments the really big issue about migration is about competition for and availability of jobs. In Jordan, for example, for young people jobs is a really big issue and many are leaving to find work elsewhere. There is need for a different approach- different ways of going about creating businesses, having the markets and the private sector more involved.

# Choosing the Path



## Summary Recommendations from the Roundtables

The key recommendations from the roundtable discussions are summarised below. They are intended to inform policy and act as the basis for influence, advocacy and practical action for the WHAF partners and in wider collaboration.

## FINANCE

### Increasing financial access

Financial accessibility continues to remain the problem and it is getting worse for many countries. Dignity demands definition and understanding of self-sufficiency and self-reliance, respect for true values and honesty.

#### Key recommendations include:

- 1) Increase capacity, information, networks, and access through technology that offers new modalities and platforms**
  - Develop guidance and tools at national level to assist NGOs in complying with due diligence responsibilities, including specifics steps to support risk management.
  - Expand body of evidence on how Islamic Social Finance can be used in humanitarian contexts and create a new encounter of ISF with a global perspective, integrated within the international system.
- 2) Promote dialogue and engagement in affected regions to build trust and greater understanding and to identify ways to address the challenges of financial access**
  - Continue to lobby and advocate at both the national and international level with bodies such as the UN, World Bank, EU, Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Alliance for Financial Inclusion and the G20 Finance workstream.
  - Convene deep and nuanced conversations about how ISF can be used in humanitarian contexts, its opportunities as well as its challenges. Capitalize on existing platforms such as the World Humanitarian Action Forum and the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists.
- 3) Build coordination and regulation based on principles of transparency and access.**
  - Gather data about how counter terrorism affects daily activities and provide data appropriate to national forums.

## LOCALISATION - A more dignified humanitarian eco-system

The issues of localisation run across all aspects of the WHAF agenda. Global actors respect the critical knowledge that exists in communities, and local actors are also part of affected communities. Whether INGOs leave the countries or not, the local actors will still be there.

### Key recommendations include:

- 1) **Coordination. Local actors are in leadership positions and should be given positions in decision making processes, especially in crisis areas.**
  - NGO networks must provide a platform and enable the voice of local organisations, especially in decision-making about humanitarian implementation and resources
  - International and local NGOs should work to shift the dynamic and encourage proactive relationship building based on comparative advantages in ideas, assets, and identities
- 2) **Funding. Access to country funding is vital for local actors and who should have representation and an advisory role in directing where funds are used.**
  - Delivery by donors under Grand Bargain commitments requires pressure from civil society and UN and a strategy for effective and equitable uses of funding and diversification of funding opportunities
  - Pooled funds should be increased and prioritised for local NGOs. Donors should triple their contributions
- 3) **Capacity. Local actors require institutional investment and capacity should not be used as a weapon to diminish local actors.**
  - Responsibility lies with civil society to establish measurement of capacity building and monitor progress and results
  - All stakeholders should now focus on equipping local staff with the skills and capabilities needed to deliver humanitarian assistance locally
  - Salaries and benefits for local actors should be standardised and upgraded to address disparities with INGOs.

## CONFLICTS From silos to synergies

Many issues relating to conflict and conflict sensitivity have arisen in all other aspects of the WHAF agenda – without a localised approach then it is very difficult to get effective responses conflict correct.

### Key recommendations include:

- 1) **Letter from WHAF Attendees addressed to donors and other partners asking them to:**
  - uphold their commitments to localisation and equal partnership with local and national civil society organisations
  - integrate gender and conflict sensitive approaches into the way programmes are delivered and commit to better program design, monitoring and evaluating impacts of humanitarian action on peace and conflict dynamics.
- 2) **Open or support spaces ('platforms') for organisations to conduct joint advocacy to mainstream IHL compliance and conflict sensitivity in counter-terrorism and proscription legislation.**
  - These platforms would undertake: collaborative research; advocate for policy change among Governments and multilateral institutions; develop training materials and guidance for humanitarian bodies and UN agencies on IHL compliance
- 3) **Host a forum for honest conversation and discourse among international and local humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations on means to address risks and failures of their work.**
  - The forums should focus on: Conflict and gender sensitivity; Dependence issues; Partnerships and risk transfer
  - Conversation should seek practical measures and space for collaboration as well as means to raise awareness of findings among international actors but also local civil society groups and communities impacted by conflict and humanitarian crisis.

## RESILIENCE - Building capacity to adapt to change

Climate resilience demands that the dignity and priorities of the most vulnerable and or most in need are addressed, particularly women and girls and marginalised groups or those who are dependent.

### Key recommendations include:

- 1) **Build common understanding of resilience with a focus on individuals as the key to social cohesion and capability**
  - Utilise local knowledge as an essential component of resilience action planning in delivering capacity and establishing sustainable climate services alongside other strategic services such as health, nutrition; shelter; livelihoods; water, sanitation and hygiene.
  - Capacity build communities through a resilience framework by assessing the risks they face and increasing their access to resources.
  - Develop forecasting and scenario-based planning to improve and enhance early actions and early responses to drought mitigation especially where these are still underdeveloped.
- 2) **Invest in resilience and deliver the finance and resourcing**
  - Reframe the understanding of inclusive investment that allows the poorest to invest in climate-resilient development, in order to tackle the multiple dimensions of vulnerability
  - Deploy financial instruments sequentially to enable the poorest to access finance and scale-up investment by ensuring more flexible and, secondly, longer-term funding
  - Embed resilience into humanitarian and developmental organisational approaches
- 3) **Challenge stigma associated with migrants and refugees, and address pre-existing policies and inequalities that lead to further unequal treatment during displacement.**
  - Identify policy challenges and opportunities for building climate resilient communities.
  - Structural change – remove funding impediments that distance humanitarian assistance from resilience and development, flexible funding for humanitarian-development- peace nexus
  - Challenging and calling out xenophobia, racism and structural inequalities

# Ideas for Exchange

## WHAF structured networking and partnership building

In advance of the Forum, organisations were given the opportunity to apply to present their stories, an initiative or concept and get feedback from their peers.

With four sessions over two days, organized in a world café style, these sessions enabled delegates to build relationships, develop new contacts and share effective humanitarian practices and coordinate with other leading humanitarian actors and specialists across the globe. The event app also enabled delegates to connect with each other.

WHAF also provided partners with complimentary exhibition space to showcase their projects and facilitate further communication and collaboration.





## Witnessing the agony of inhumanity

### TRT World 'Women of War' documentary screening

The documentary examined gender-based violence against women in war and focuses on some of the discussions concerning the wider role women have played in combating this very issue in societies ravaged by war. 'Women of War' is a short film made by an independent filmmaker



## WHAF MEDIA TRAINING PROGRAMME

### Crises Media Management

In partnership with Al Jazeera Media Institute and TRT World, THF organised a media training programme to run in parallel with the WHAF programme. This was for a small cohort of NGOs wanting to develop their capacity in dealing with the media before and during a crises.



# Dignity is at the heart of humanity

## CLOSING REMARKS



### A MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF THE WHAF SECRETARIAT

#### Dr Hany El Banna OBE

PRESIDENT, THE HUMANITARIAN FORUM

You are the champions - you were determined to do something, even if you don't have the resources. We cannot afford to leave this world without building peace.

You are the peacemakers. You need to make the best for the next generation to come. None of us can afford to leave this life without building the next step for the people we leave behind us.

I am excited by your success. Don't be put off by a lack of resources. We have everything in our hearts but we need all the time to look forward. What's next? What's next for Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Yemen, Syria, everywhere?

You are their champions.



### A MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF THE WHAF HOSTS

#### Dr Kerem Kinik

PRESIDENT, TURK KIZILAY

On behalf of Turkish Red Crescent, we are really happy to have had you all here and because of your partnership and cooperation this meeting became alive.

Thank you so much to partners of WHAF for your generosity in sharing your knowledge, your experience, and your time with us all. Success belongs to you and if we are talking about a successful meeting, this is because of you.

There is nothing left to say, just thank you.



# Looking to the future What next?

The WHAF reports serves as a record of the discussions at biennial meetings of the Forum and as a basis for building our collective action in collaboration and as partners of wider networks.

For WHAF in 2021 we look forward to harvesting insights from the outcomes and impacts resulting from the Roundtables held at the 2019 Forum and the activities and campaigns that have been carried out since then.

# Collaboration to turn recommendations in to action

Post-WHAF Activities:  
What has happened since 17 October 2019

## Consultation workshop in Cameroon 27 Oct 2019

### WHAF TOPIC: LOCALISATION

The consultation workshop was hosted by Islamic Help Cameroon and drew 34 participants from 24 local NGOs and 2 International NGOs focused on the four WHAF priority areas of the localization agenda



## Training workshop in South Africa 12 Nov 2019

### WHAF TOPIC: LOCALISATION

The workshop was hosted by Islamic Relief South Africa in Johannesburg. The training was on local leadership and governance with a focus on improved regional collaboration



## Training workshop in Sweden 29 Nov 2019

### WHAF TOPIC: LOCALISATION

The workshop was held in Stockholm with a number of NGOs addressing issues of leadership and governance



## Webinar: Ongoing shrinking of humanitarian space 2 April 2020

### WHAF TOPIC: FINANCE

The Dutch Relief Alliance and KUNO (Dutch platform for knowledge exchange on humanitarian relief issues) hosted an expert meeting via video call on "Ongoing shrinking of humanitarian space". HSC provided an introduction about the counter terrorism drivers of financial access restrictions and development of policy and technological solutions. Doctors without Borders shared how they are affected by these and other restrictions in their daily work.

## Consultation workshops in East Africa 1-3 March 2020

### WHAF TOPICS: RESILIENCE AND LOCALISATION

In preparation for the climate change conference (COP26) in Glasgow in order to get a regional perspective, we organized, with our partners, two major climate change consultations in **Mogadishu** and **Addis Ababa**.

The project also involved field visits to Sudan, South Sudan and several cities in Somalia and Ethiopia.



## Introduction

WHAF is the initiative of several organisations that share the commitment to tackle common issues affecting the humanitarian sector and to promote collaborative working at local and international levels. WHAF is open to all as partners with representatives from local and national NGOs from the global South, international NGOs, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, government representatives, philanthropists, donors, academia, media and the private sector. Biennial meetings of WHAF provide continuing attention to key themes in order to keep the momentum for policy changes and action in crucial areas, especially localisation, financial access and humanitarian protection.

## Key objectives of WHAF are to

- (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 working at local, national and international levels.

## WHAF adds value by being

- Led and managed by partners. Steering groups of NGOs manage the Roundtables to develop the focus on key issues for the sector. The WHAF Advisory Group, representatives of the steering groups, leads the overall Forum.
- Action orientated. WHAF facilitates discussion around what needs to be done to improve efficacy in humanitarian work. These recommendations are then translated into campaigns and initiatives.
- Inclusive. WHAF aims to achieve a balance of representatives from the global 'North' and 'South' to foster greater communication and relevance.
- Collaborative. WHAF partners agree on joint campaigns and initiatives to address throughout the year thereby facilitating improved collaboration and coordination in humanitarian work.



WHAF Advisory Group and Main Partners

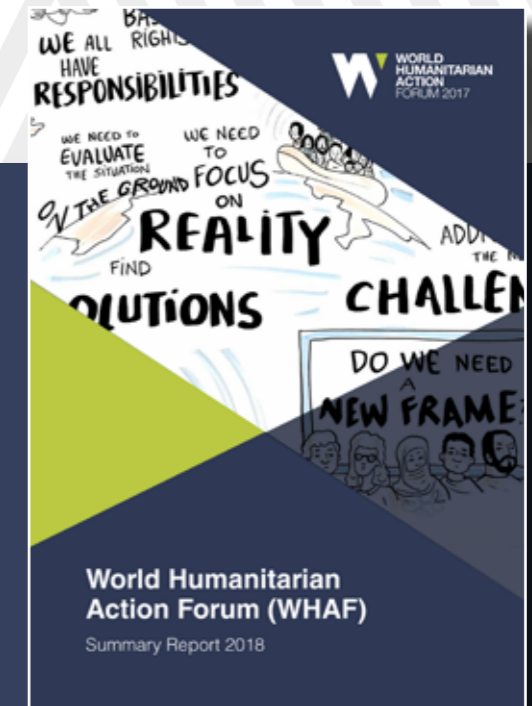
# ORIGINS OF WHAF

The Humanitarian Forum, together with a variety of stakeholders, identified that multiple parallel humanitarian crises of the last decade imposed several challenges to the traditional humanitarian system.

One, in particular, was that despite increasingly open political contexts taking shape across parts of the Southern hemisphere, civil society organizations (CSOs) still had a very limited influence on policy making.

Following the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 for enhanced coherence in humanitarian responses, the WHAF injects momentum for reinvigorated and locally appropriate partnerships and coordination amongst humanitarian actors in the global 'North' and 'South'.

Building a broader support base through engagement with more diverse stakeholders is essential to strengthen the acceptance, perception and relevance of humanitarian aid and assistance. Collective agreement



is required on regional priorities and mechanisms for organising humanitarian responses that promote long-term thinking. For NGOs, there is a clear recognition of the need to improve connections with other responses through operational partnerships.

WHAF was launched on 28 November 2017 at the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre in London, with representatives from INGOs, local and national NGOs from the global South, public sector officials, philanthropists, donors, academics and the media.

The forum drew over 136 NGOs, of which 77 were 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.



Organised by the WHAF Secretariat

The Humanitarian Forum (THF) is a non-membership based network of key humanitarian and development organisations from both the global north and south. 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. We complement the work of others by bringing actors together to fill gaps in existing systems.

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