

HPG

**Humanitarian
Policy Group**

Annual Review

2014–15



ABOUT HPG

WE ARE one of the world's leading independent research teams working on humanitarian issues.

WE ARE DEDICATED to improving humanitarian policy and practice through a combination of high-quality research, dialogue and debate.

OUR WORK IS DIRECTED BY OUR INTEGRATED PROGRAMME (IP), a body of research examining critical issues facing humanitarian policy and practice, designed in consultation with our Advisory Group. This is complemented by commissioned studies, evaluations and communications and networking activity.

Grounded in field research spanning a range of countries and emergencies, IP projects allow us to cast a critical eye over the pressing issues affecting humanitarian policy

and practice and to set the agenda on key debates in the sector.

OUR RESEARCH FOCUSES ON FIVE CROSS-CUTTING THEMES:

- Principles, politics and the humanitarian system
- Civilian security and protection
- Livelihoods and food security in crises
- Displacement, migration and urbanisation
- Protracted crises and transitions

WE HOST THE HUMANITARIAN PRACTICE NETWORK (HPN), an independent forum for humanitarian practitioners to share and disseminate information and experience.

LEARNING AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT are critical areas of our work. We edit and produce *Disasters* journal, and run two courses for mid-

level and senior policymakers and practitioners in the sector every year.

WE OFFER CONSULTANCY SERVICES, policy advice and commissioned studies relating to HPG's core aims and objectives.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS are a core part of our work, helping to promote and disseminate our research findings, encourage debate and influence perceptions and understanding of humanitarian issues amongst the wider media and public.

OUR DONORS provide the funding that enables us to pursue IP research.

This Annual Review documents the highlights of our work from April 2014 – March 2015.

For more information visit us at www.odi.org/hpg.



THE CHANGING HUMANITARIAN LANDSCAPE

The humanitarian landscape is changing.

The system is struggling to respond to the weight of today's many complex crises – Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and the Central African Republic to name a few.

It has never been more important to understand and improve how the system works with alternative humanitarian responders.

This drive has been at the heart of our research, policy engagement and public affairs work.

Over the year, we've reflected on the diverse histories of humanitarian action, helped improve responses to crises and highlighted the rise of new – or newly acknowledged – humanitarian responders.

THE SYRIA CRISIS

AND DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS

As the crisis in Syria deepened over the past year, we continued to shape the debate on the aid response.

International aid agencies have struggled to provide aid in Syria due to a range of security, access and bureaucratic obstacles. Our research looked at the many Syrian local and diaspora groups getting life-saving aid into Syria.

We found that many of these Syrian diaspora and local organisations are able to provide aid in parts of Syria which many international organisations cannot reach. But recognition and willingness to form equal partnerships with these groups are still lacking.

The research has stimulated debate on how the traditional humanitarian system collaborates with these under-recognised aid groups. We organised a high-level conference in Jordan and briefed senior UN figures in the aid response. Our research also featured in scores of influential media outlets, with nearly 200 media hits.



REGIONAL RESPONSES

TO REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CRISES

We've highlighted the role of regional organisations as rising players in humanitarian response.

We're now seeing an increasing number of regional crises, such as the rise of IS and the Ebola outbreak. The international humanitarian system is stretched to breaking point.

Regional organisations are becoming increasingly important players in humanitarian responses.

Building on two years of research and several publications, in February 2015, we brought together – for the first time ever – the humanitarian leads of ten major regional organisations to discuss how they can play a larger role in responding to crises around the world.

This landmark conference has paved the way for developing an inter-regional humanitarian network. It has helped shape an agenda for how many of these regional organisations, including the African Union, ASEAN, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, work and interact.

PRIVATE SECTOR

AND THE POWER OF BUSINESSES

We’ve developed a new business case for private sector engagement in humanitarian action.

Businesses are increasingly at the forefront of humanitarian action. But many aid agencies remain hesitant to work with them to respond to crises.

We carried out in-depth research on how the private sector is getting involved in humanitarian action. We found that companies that see humanitarian crises as business opportunities often make a more positive difference than those spearheading initiatives in the name of CSR. This was the basis of a new business case for companies looking to get involved in humanitarian action.

The research has quickly become the key source of information for businesses looking to work on humanitarian issues, and for NGOs trying to understand how to broker private sector partnerships. It has captured the attention of members of the World Economic Forum and fostered the creation of new private sector focused groups and initiatives in UN OCHA.



DRIVING CHANGE IN THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

REVITALISING THE INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

In light of the changes in the humanitarian landscape, we looked at how the current humanitarian architecture must adapt.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian aid, led by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).

We were asked to undertake a rapid review of the IASC. Pinpointing areas for change, we proposed alternative ways of working that can better facilitate

the involvement of a more diverse range of players engaged in humanitarian response.

The findings have been shared at the highest levels of the IASC. Valerie Amos, as the ERC in post at the time, asked the IASC Secretariat to implement some of the recommendations, and conveyed the findings of the report to her successor.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF COUNTER-TERRORISM LAWS

As aid agencies continue to fear falling foul of counter-terrorism laws, we unpicked what impact UK counter-terrorism legislation is having on international NGOs.

British charities have long argued that counter-terrorism laws and measures undermine their humanitarian work in crises. Some Muslim organisations feel particularly affected or discriminated against.

Our research found a genuine – though overstated – risk that international NGOs may be abused for terrorist purposes. The small number of cases of abuse have hurt the reputation of the sector. To protect against this, charities need to improve their management of risk and have a joined up approach to engaging with banks, the government and the

UK Charity Commission. The research also found that the government must provide much clearer guidance to charities and banks alike on the implications of current laws and measures.

Our report has prompted responses from UK government, leading banks and a wide swath of international NGOs. Shahid Bashir, Deputy CEO of Muslim Hands UK, a relief organisation operating in over 50 countries, said our *‘brilliant report... manages to encapsulate research and findings on a broad and often complex array of issues very well’*.



[This report] is exactly the calm, measured and constructive contribution we need in the debate... It's also a clarion call to Government and the Charity Commission to work constructively with charities to ensure the risks in their work are mitigated early and openly."

SIR STEPHEN BUBB - CEO of ACEVO



SPARKING A CONVERSATION ON MALE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

We worked with key partners to raise the issue of sexual- and gender-based violence against men and boys in conflict.

2014 saw the first Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, a key initiative by the UK government to address sexual- and gender-based violence.

However, a critical issue was missing in the early stages of the summit planning – sexual and gender-based violence against men and boys in conflict.

We convened a high-level roundtable with organisations including the Refugee Law Project, Plan International and War Child to raise this issue.

Following the roundtable, the Global Summit was amended to make space for male survivors. A male survivor, who gave a testimony during the roundtable, was featured in a video played during the Summit to over 1,000 people.

High level speakers including US Secretary of State John Kerry, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos and Angelina Jolie also highlighted male survivors of sexual violence in their speeches.



EXAMINING AID DELIVERY IN IS-HELD TERRITORY

As the so-called Islamic State (IS) swept across the Middle East, we worked with IRIN news to provide rapid, in-depth analysis of the challenges of providing aid in IS-held territory

We worked with leading aid news provider IRIN News to combine on-the-ground reporting with in-depth analysis, producing a crisis brief on aid delivery in areas of Iraq controlled by IS.

The brief provided a snapshot of what aid had been provided, where and by whom. It examined IS' attitudes towards aid and reflected on how counter-terror legislation comes into play when carrying out humanitarian negotiations with the group.

Released in December 2014, the brief preceded the revelation that IS was rebranding WFP aid with their own emblem. Our brief was widely cited in the ensuing news coverage as a vital source of information on aid provision in IS territory.

It also helped spark a deeper conversation around the importance of engaging with the armed group in order to provide aid to those in need. This built on previous work on engagement with Al Shabaab and the Taliban.



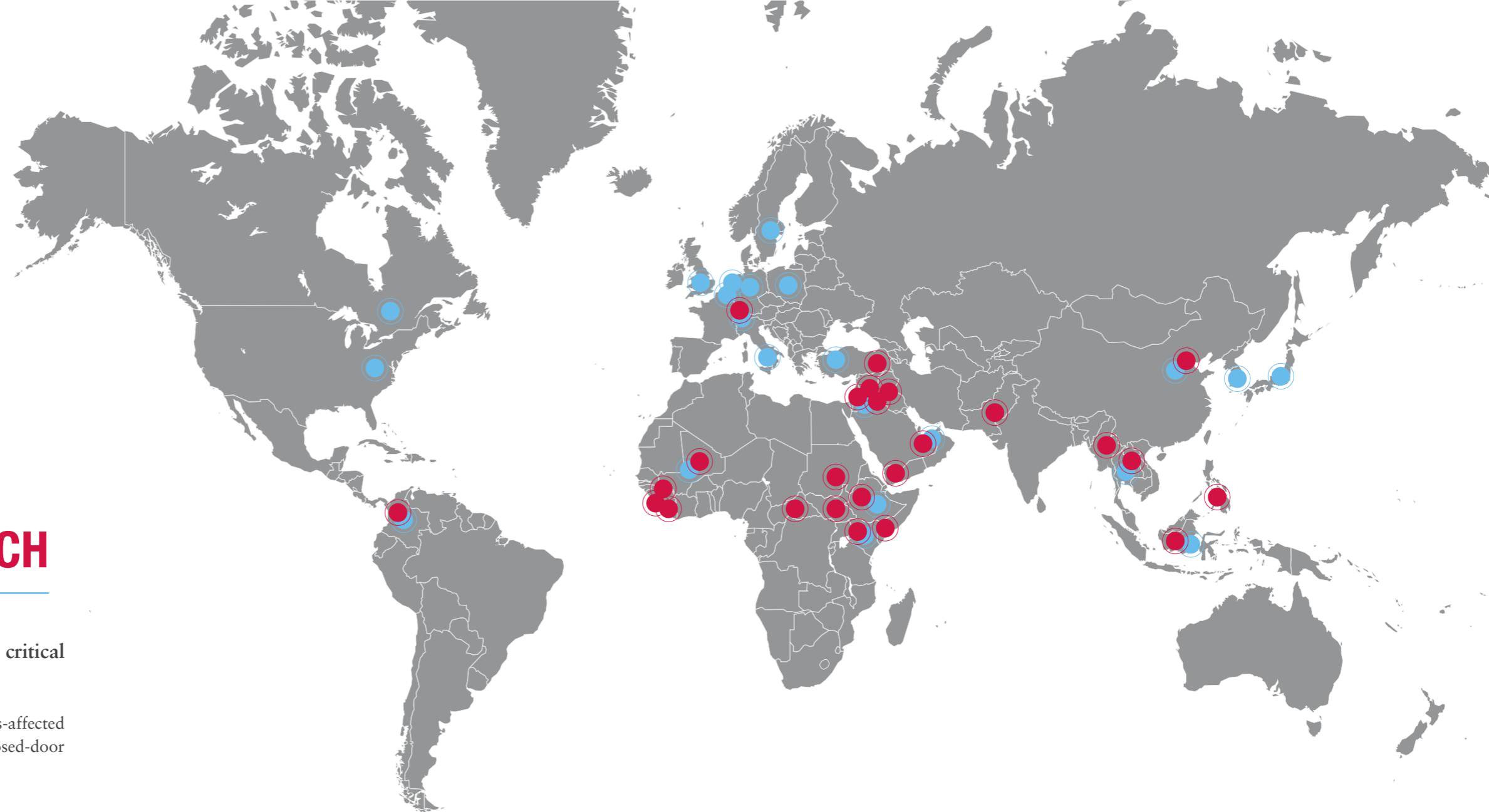
LOOKING BACK TO FACE THE FUTURE

Over the last year, we continued our project looking at the history of humanitarian action around the world. Our historical work on Latin America and China had great traction, with events held in the respective regions.

Latin America has a rich history of humanitarian action, from disaster response to social movements to responding to urban violence and mass displacement. We captured this history at a high-level conference in Bogotá, Colombia, with leading Latin American government officials, academics, aid practitioners and policymakers.

We also examined the history of humanitarian action in China, tracking its evolution from Confucian thought to Maoist influences. This research was launched in Beijing, at a public event at Tsinghua University and also at our Senior Leadership training course for Chinese civil servants and humanitarian responders, held in conjunction with the Chinese Academy of Governance.

- HPG engagement and field research
- Events and speaking engagements



OUR GLOBAL REACH

Our work cuts across the globe, with critical engagement in five continents.

We’ve conducted in-depth field research in crisis-affected countries and held hard-hitting events and closed-door roundtables in key humanitarian hubs.

Our researchers have also travelled the globe to present our work and ensure that it reaches donors, aid agencies and governments in affected countries.

ENGAGING WITH PRACTITIONERS AND ACADEMIA

HUMANITARIAN PRACTICE NETWORK

The Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN), managed by HPG, is a forum for policy-makers, practitioners and others working in the humanitarian sector. It allows them to share, disseminate and learn from information, analysis and experience.

HPN produces specialist resources – written for and by practitioners – and facilitates dialogue and debate through regular public and closed-door events.

Over the past year HPN has released three issues of Humanitarian Exchange magazine focusing on the conflict in the Central African Republic, the crisis in Yemen and the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

We also shared key learning and knowledge through two Network

Papers. One was on lessons from the Emergency Capacity Building Project and the other examined key elements of counter-terror legislation.

A complementary range of partner events with HPN members included an influential roundtable on sexual violence against men and boys in conflict (more on page 10) and a public event on findings from the 2011 famine in Somalia.

SENIOR-LEVEL COURSE

We hold week-long courses for midcareer and senior professionals working in the fields of humanitarian, development and post-conflict recovery policymaking and practice.

Over the last year, we held an Advanced Course in York, UK. We also maintained our ties with Chinese academic circles, collaborating with the Chinese

Academy of Governance and Tsinghua University to promote learning among Chinese and international researchers and decision-makers.

DISASTERS JOURNAL

We manage *Disasters*, a leading peer-reviewed quarterly journal, with articles relating to all aspects of complex emergencies and natural disasters.

With a wide online user base, journal articles saw more than 130,000 downloads over the year.

In 2013-14, *Disasters* published three supplementary issues, in addition to the quarterly editions, on the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the 2011 Japan earthquake and disaster resilience. Three virtual issues were also published, on the Ebola epidemic, the tenth anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami and the 3rd World Conference on DRR.



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Rohingya women in Basara IDP camp near Sittwe, Myanmar
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Syrian refugees in Lebanon receive e-vouchers
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Salvadoran refugees in Colomoncagua camp in 1990
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Aerial view of earthquake damage in Nepal
© MCIPAC Combat Camera Staff Sgt. Jeffrey D. Anderson



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Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict fringe event
© Foreign and Commonwealth Office



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Damaged buildings in downtown Homs, Syria
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Iraqi children in Newroz camp, Syria
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The **Humanitarian Policy Group** at the **Overseas Development Institute** is dedicated to improving humanitarian policy and practice through original research, high-quality analysis, dialogue and debate.

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E-newsletter

Our e-newsletter has all the latest information on our work, from publications to meetings.

Sign up online at www.odi.org/hpg or send an email to hpgadmin@odi.org.

Annual Report

This Annual Review captures the highlights of our work. For a full look at all our work over the year, read the HPG Annual Report 2014-15 at


www.odi.org/hpg/annual-report

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