

THE INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI, 10 YEARS ON

Lessons from the response and ongoing humanitarian funding challenges



Evacuation signs showing the way to Tsunami safety points. These were erected after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. Lho-nga village, District Aceh Besar, Aceh Province, Sumatra, Indonesia (2014). Photo: Jim Holmes/Oxfam.

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The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was a pivotal moment for the humanitarian sector; many lessons were learned and the humanitarian system was strengthened as a result. However, ten years on, significant challenges remain. Using the case of the tsunami – a rare example of a well-funded humanitarian emergency – this report looks at key lessons from the response and examines why some emergencies receive rapid, generous funding while others remain virtually ignored by the international community. As humanitarian need increases, it is imperative that the global community continue to work towards adequate, needs-based funding, and strives to reduce the costs and human impacts of future humanitarian emergencies.

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GLOSSARY

Capacity building: The process by which people, organizations and societies increase their ability to achieve objectives and effectively handle their development needs.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR): Reducing the impact of natural threats like earthquakes, floods, droughts and cyclones through prevention and preparation.¹

Domestic humanitarian response: Emergency humanitarian response from domestic governments, security and armed forces, local non-government organizations (NGOs), religious organizations and local people.²

Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA): Run by an independent research organisation, Development Initiatives, the Global Humanitarian Assistance programme analyses humanitarian financing in order to promote transparency and a shared evidence base to meet the needs of people living in humanitarian crises.

Government funding: International giving from governments and the European Commission. This type of funding is often channelled through institutional donors – i.e. multilateral agencies such as the United Nations.³

International humanitarian response: Emergency humanitarian response from the international community, including governments, individuals, NGOs, trusts, foundations, companies, and other private donors as well as military and security forces.⁴

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): OCHA is the UN body responsible for mobilising and coordinating humanitarian action in order to ease human suffering in disasters and emergencies. The organization also advocates for the rights of people in need and promotes emergency preparedness and prevention.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC): OECD DAC is an international forum that includes many of the world's wealthiest nations and largest donor governments.

Private funding: International giving from individuals, trusts, foundations, companies and other private organizations.⁵

Resilience: Ability of a system, community or society to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner.⁶

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC): TEC comprised a group of international donors, UN agencies, NGOs, and research institutes that conducted joint evaluations of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami. Reports were published between 2006 and 2007.

UN-coordinated Appeals: Any humanitarian appeals coordinated by the UN, including Strategic Response Plans (SRPs), previously known as Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) appeals.⁷

UN Financial Tracking Service (UN FTS): UN FTS is a global database of humanitarian funding compiled and managed by OCHA. Data are self-reported by donors, UN agencies, OCHA, the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and NGOs.

SUMMARY

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was an unprecedented event both in its scale and in the record level of private funding for the relief and recovery effort. An estimated \$13.5bn in donations poured in from the international community with roughly 40 percent from private individuals and organizations – making the tsunami the highest-ever privately funded emergency. The high level of international funding allowed humanitarian agencies to mobilize a rapid response and was sufficient to cover the costs of both immediate relief and long-term recovery. In fact, the tsunami was Oxfam's largest-ever humanitarian response, with the organization and its partners benefiting an estimated 2.5m people across seven tsunami-affected countries over a five year period, from 2004 to 2009.

The tsunami response was also a pivotal moment for the humanitarian sector. It provided valuable lessons about gaps in the humanitarian system, particularly around the dynamics that influence international funding. Using the case of the Indian Ocean tsunami – a rare example of a well-funded humanitarian emergency – this report examines why some humanitarian emergencies receive rapid, generous funding while others remain virtually ignored by the international community. These dynamics are particularly relevant today, as the world grapples with an unparalleled number of high-profile humanitarian crises.

INSUFFICIENT AND INEQUITABLE FUNDING

Humanitarian assistance represents vital, life-saving support designed to meet the most basic needs of people in crisis, including food, clean water and shelter. While the tsunami received a record level of private donations, this level of response is rare. In fact, international funding has often failed to meet humanitarian needs, and there are significant inequalities in terms of the level and speed of funding for different emergencies.

Insufficient funding overall

- Over the past decade, international funding has consistently failed to meet one-third of the humanitarian need outlined in UN-coordinated appeals.
- While funding for UN-coordinated appeals reached \$8.5bn in 2013, it was still only enough to meet 65 percent of the global humanitarian needs outlined in the appeals.
- The funding gap for UN-coordinated appeals is large, but not insurmountable. In 2013, the funding gap was roughly \$4.7bn: less than the combined gross domestic product (GDP) that accrues to the 34 OECD countries in one hour, less than one day's combined profits for Fortune 500 companies, and less than the retail value of two weeks of food waste in the USA.

Inequalities in funding for different emergencies

- In a typical year during the past decade, the highest-funded UN-coordinated appeals had four times the percentage of need met than the lowest-funded appeals.
- More than twice the percentage of needs were met in the month after the launch of the UN Indian Ocean tsunami appeal than in the month after the typhoon Haiyan (Philippines) appeal.
- Private funding for UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeals averages \$107m (£67m) for natural disasters; more than three times the average amount for conflict-related crises (\$34m (£21m)).

FUNDING DRIVEN BY FACTORS OTHER THAN NEED

Factors other than humanitarian need often influence the level and speed of international funding for emergencies. Many government donors (the largest humanitarian donors) have stated commitments to providing impartial, needs-based assistance, yet other factors – such as strategic geopolitical and economic factors, international pressure and media coverage – continue to influence them. Private donations, which comprise roughly one-quarter of international funding, are heavily influenced by factors other than humanitarian need, such as level of media coverage and fundraising through public-facing humanitarian appeals. Private donors are also influenced by a range of other factors, including type of emergency, perceptions about the impact of donations and ability to identify with affected populations.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the 2004 tsunami, the humanitarian sector has taken positive steps towards improving the efficiency, equity and quality of humanitarian responses. However, important challenges remain, particularly around humanitarian funding. Timely, adequate funding is important because it can reduce the human impact of a crisis and allow for high-quality, sustainable interventions that build the capacity of communities to respond to, and prepare for, future emergencies. It is imperative that the global community continues to work towards sufficient, impartial humanitarian funding – particularly as global humanitarian need is on the rise and is predicted to increase over the next century.

The research for this report points to the following ways to reduce the impact of future humanitarian emergencies and continue to improve the equity and quality of humanitarian responses.

Increase international funding and work to reduce the impact of future emergencies

With the combined resources of the international community, it should be possible to close the funding gap for UN appeals. Closing this gap would provide much-needed relief to millions of people affected by natural disasters and conflict every year. Over the long term, the most efficient and sustainable way to reduce the financial costs and human impacts of humanitarian emergencies is to work to prevent these crises before they happen and to build local capacity to respond to and recover from disasters. This includes reducing people's vulnerability to disaster through poverty reduction and strengthening of public services. Unfortunately, investment in prevention and preparedness remains low, accounting for just six percent of OECD DAC humanitarian assistance in 2012 and an estimated 0.7 percent of OECD DAC non-emergency development assistance in 2011.

Secure impartial, needs-based funding

Government donations: When consistently put into practice, formalized commitments that seek to hold government donors accountable to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship, can help to ensure that donations are based on humanitarian need. Moreover, increased government contributions to pooled funds can increase the equity and speed of humanitarian responses, as long as funding is quickly available to front-line humanitarian organizations. More research is needed to determine whether further efforts, such as a model of mandatory government contributions toward UN appeals, would be a feasible and efficient way to increase annual funding commitments as well as the overall efficiency and quality of humanitarian responses.

Private donations: Due to unequal levels of media coverage for different humanitarian emergencies and the range of other factors that influence private donors, private donations may never be truly proportional to humanitarian need. Nonetheless, steps could be taken to improve the impartiality and efficiency of these donations, such as channelling more funding through regular giving, and private contributions to multilateral and NGO pooled funds. However, further research is needed to understand whether encouraging more regular giving and donations to pooled funds might impact the overall level of private donations. These efforts would likely only be successful if humanitarian agencies worked to build the trust of private donors and used good communication strategies to demonstrate the impact of donations. As it stands, NGOs receive a large portion of humanitarian income from costly, time-intensive public appeals while private contributions to pooled funds remain low: in 2013, the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) received just over \$100,000 from private donors.

Continue to improve the quality, efficiency and sustainability of responses

While there has been considerable progress since the 2004 tsunami, more effort is needed to improve the humanitarian system in four key areas:

- *coordination*, especially as it relates to the ability to address cross-cutting issues like gender, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and building domestic capacity;
- *inclusive responses* that are sensitive to the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups;
- *capacity building and support of local civil society*, particularly for disaster preparedness and response; and
- *conflict-sensitive approaches* that either de-escalate or at least avoid exacerbating tensions between different groups.

Gather better humanitarian funding data

There are systems in place to record humanitarian donations, but there is a need for more accurate and timely reporting. This is especially true for private donations, which are currently underreported. There is also very little data available on remittances, non-monetary donations of goods and services, and domestic humanitarian responses.

1 INTRODUCTION

Tsunami funding broke the norm

26 December 2014 marks the 10-year anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami, one of the largest and most destructive natural disasters in living memory. The emergency response which followed was unprecedented in the speed and level of international humanitarian funding that it generated, particularly from private donors, including individuals, trusts, foundations, companies and other private organizations. Even today, the tsunami response remains the largest-ever privately funded disaster response.

In the days and months following the tsunami, international donations came in at a record rate.⁸ An estimated \$13.5bn was raised for the relief and recovery effort,⁹ with up to \$5.5bn of this (roughly 40 percent) from private donors.¹⁰ This equates to approximately \$2,700 per person affected by the disaster,¹¹ more than twice the 2004 GDP per capita of the two worst affected countries: Indonesia and Sri Lanka.¹² Due in large part to the generosity and speed of international funding, humanitarian organizations were able to mobilize a massive relief effort after the tsunami – one of the largest humanitarian responses in history.

Unfortunately, the swift and generous response to the tsunami remains the exception rather than the norm. International funding often does not meet humanitarian need. While funding for UN-coordinated appeals reached \$8.5bn in 2013, it was still only enough to meet 65 percent of need.¹³ In fact, over the past decade, international funding has consistently failed to meet roughly one-third of the humanitarian need outlined in UN-coordinated appeals.¹⁴ Moreover, the funding raised for different humanitarian emergencies remains highly unequal.

Putting the tsunami in context

This research report begins by reviewing the social and economic impacts of the tsunami, eliciting key lessons from the evaluations of the humanitarian response, particularly around funding. It then provides an overview of humanitarian funding trends over the past decade, highlighting inadequacies in the overall level of funding and inequalities in the funding system. Next, the report reviews existing research, emphasizing the fact that humanitarian funding is often driven by factors other than need. Finally, it presents conclusions about how the humanitarian system has evolved since the tsunami, the ongoing challenges that it faces, and potential ways to reduce the impact of future emergencies and to continue to improve the equity and quality of humanitarian responses.

As humanitarian need continues to rise, it is imperative that the international community continues to work towards adequate, needs-based humanitarian funding and strives to reduce the costs and human impact of future emergencies. In 2013, 144 million people were displaced by conflicts or affected by natural disasters, 65 million of whom (roughly the population of the UK or the combined populations of California and Texas) were targeted for assistance through UN interagency funding appeals.¹⁵ Moreover, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that by the end of 2013, the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people around the world rose to 51.2 million – more than at any time since the Second World War.¹⁶

Even as domestic humanitarian responses¹⁷ become increasingly important, international humanitarian funding continues to play a vital, life-saving role. This is especially true today, as the world grapples with an unparalleled number of high-profile humanitarian crises. Iraq, Gaza, Syria, Ukraine and the Ebola outbreak in West Africa are all competing for international attention and funding. Meanwhile, millions of people are being affected by lower-profile, but just as devastating crises, in South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR) and Pakistan, to name a few. Furthermore, other crises, such as the ongoing conflict in Myanmar, have been virtually forgotten by the international community.¹⁸

2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE TSUNAMI



On the morning of 26 December 2004, a 9.1 Richter scale earthquake struck off the western coast of the Indonesian province of Northern Sumatra.¹⁹ It was the third-largest earthquake in recorded history²⁰ and its sheer force sent a series of tsunamis surging across the Indian Ocean, some at speeds of up to 500km per hour, affecting people in 14 countries.²¹ As the epicentre was close to densely populated coastal communities, the disaster caused significant loss of life. An estimated 230,000 people died and 1.7 million people were displaced from their homes.²² Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand were the hardest hit, with 167,540 people killed in Indonesia alone.²³

The social and economic impacts of the emergency were devastating. In the early days after the tsunami, approximately five million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, including food, water and shelter.²⁴ Countries affected by the tsunami were low or middle-income countries, which tend to suffer more severely during humanitarian emergencies and take longer to recover.²⁵ Furthermore, many of the affected countries were already dealing with widespread and deep-rooted problems, such as poverty and inequality, which the tsunami only served to compound.²⁶

Disproportionate impact on poor and vulnerable groups

As is often the case in a humanitarian emergency, poor and vulnerable groups suffered most from the tsunami.²⁷ While everyone affected by it experienced a decline in their living standards, the poor were hardest hit by loss of land, housing and livelihood opportunities. This is because the poor had fewer resources available (in terms of savings, insurance and other safety nets) with which to recover from the impact of the tsunami.

The disaster also had a disproportionate impact on women, children and older people.²⁸ Across tsunami-affected areas, women were between 1.2 and 2.1 times as likely to have died as

men.²⁹ Mortality was also higher for children (14 and under) and older people (50 and older), with both groups more than twice as likely to have lost their lives in the tsunami as adults aged 15–49.³⁰ Adult males under 50 years of age had the highest chance of survival overall.³¹

The inability to swim may have been one factor behind higher mortality rates among women.³² Moreover, an Oxfam study in India found that when the tsunami hit, many men were out at sea fishing where the waves passed safely under their boats before swelling up as they reached the shore.³³ Meanwhile, women were exposed to danger as they waited on the beach to collect the fish and take them to market. Oxfam also found that many women lost their lives trying to save their children and elderly relatives. Whatever the reasons for the higher mortality rates among women, the tsunami resulted in gender imbalances in many communities, with large numbers of men becoming single parents.³⁴

Severe economic impacts



An aerial view of the vast destruction of the Indonesian coast, between the towns of Banda Aceh and Meulaboh, caused by the Indian Ocean tsunami (2005). UN Photo/Evan Schneider

In addition to the social effects, the tsunami had major economic impacts, damaging vital infrastructure in many countries and requiring billions of dollars in reconstruction costs. The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) – a group of 45 bilateral donors, multilateral organizations and international NGOs that conducted several large-scale evaluations of the response – estimated that total damages reached \$9.9bn, with almost half of those sustained in Indonesia.³⁵ The fishing industry was badly affected. In some cases, waves travelled up to 3km inland, destroying boats and disrupting livelihoods among fishing communities.³⁶ The damage to the fishing industry in Sri Lanka was particularly severe because the tsunami hit on a Buddhist holiday. As a result of this, many fishermen were not at sea and had left their boats and fishing gear on the beach, where they were destroyed by waves.³⁷

Thailand and the Maldives also experienced significant economic losses due to their heavy reliance on tourism. While loss of life as a result of the tsunami was much lower in the Maldives than in many other countries, economic damages were estimated at nearly 80 percent of the country's annual gross national income (GNI).³⁸

Box 1: Responding to the damage in the fishing community of Lhok Seudu, Aceh, Indonesia



T Buhari, 40, works on sorting and arranging fishing nets in Lhok seudu Village port. District Aceh Besar, Aceh Province, Sumatra, Indonesia (2014). Jim Holmes/Oxfam GB

This small fishing community in Lhok Seudu, coastal Aceh Besar, was severely damaged by the earthquake and tsunami. Oxfam visited this village by boat (from Peunayong) and understood the desire of the villagers to stay put, rather than be relocated to houses further away from the coast. The community relied totally on fishing and needed to be situated close to their boats and the sea.

Ten years on and the 50 Oxfam-built houses have been maintained and modified by the community. The latrines in the houses are still working effectively, and the gravity fed water supply on a nearby hill has worked successfully to provide water for to the houses. The water catchment tank on the nearby hill was damaged in late-2014 by landslides following weeks of rain. The villagers are drawing up proposals to fix it. In November, T. Buhari, a resident of Lhok Seudu, reflected on Oxfam's response in his community, 'I had never heard of Oxfam before the tsunami came. Our village was badly hit, but luckily only three villagers living here died. People in other nearby villages were harder hit, and out of about 1,000 people living around here, 300 people died on that dreadful day.'

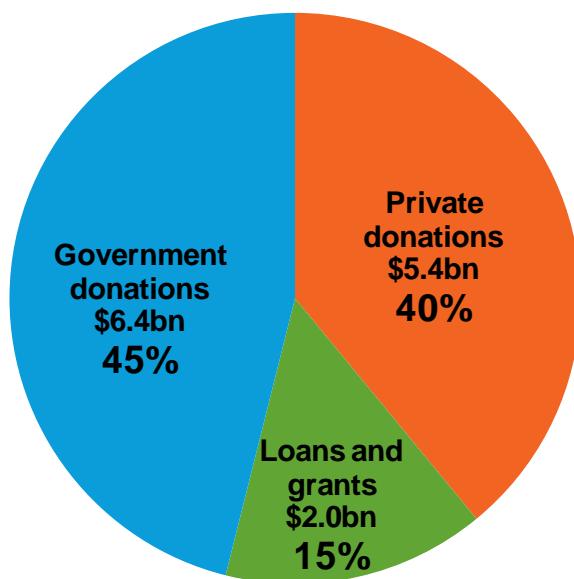
'After the wave, a few of us went into Banda Aceh to see if we could find someone to help us. I was in one of the camps for displaced people and met with Habiba who worked for Oxfam. They arranged to come to our village to assess the damage and to see if they could help. They had to come by boat because the road here was too damaged.'

'After the assessment, Oxfam said that they could help us and after this the work started and Oxfam was here with us for three years. We had a relationship with Oxfam, and we felt safe in [its] hands. There were many different NGOs working in Aceh, but Oxfam was the only one to work in our village. We trusted Oxfam because [it] listened to us and communicated with us to find out about our needs. [It] understood that we were fishing people and that we wanted to stay here. [It] didn't force us to move away from our lives. After these three years, our village felt better than it was before because we all had houses and water.'

3 THE LARGEST-EVER PRIVATELY FUNDED RESPONSE

At the time, the UN Emergency Coordinator described the tsunami response as the 'most generous and immediately funded emergency relief effort ever'.³⁹ An estimated \$13.5bn was raised by the international community for the tsunami response,⁴⁰ making it the largest ever private response to a disaster (although not the largest government response⁴¹).⁴² According to the tsunami funding review carried out by the TEC, the exceptional international funding response meant that international resources (combined with local resources) were sufficient to cover the costs of both relief and reconstruction.⁴³

Figure 1: Estimated international funding for the tsunami response as of December 2005 (\$)



Based on data reported by Development Initiatives from OECD DAC and national donor reports. Global Humanitarian Assistance Report (2006)

The largest portion of international funding (an estimated 45 percent) came from government donors, closely followed by private donors (40 percent) (see Figure 1).^{44, 45} In all, private donors gave between \$3.2bn and \$5.5bn towards the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami relief effort.⁴⁶ The majority of private donations (70 percent) went to just a few large organizations: the 10 largest NGOs (including Oxfam), the Red Cross Movement and UNICEF.⁴⁷ While the response to the tsunami was not the largest government response, it did involve the largest number of individual government and institutional donors.⁴⁸ However, just five government donors were responsible for providing over 50 percent of government funding: USA, Australia, Germany, the European Commission and Japan.⁴⁹

In total, 99 countries contributed to the response, including 13 that had never before made a recorded contribution to a disaster.⁵⁰ In addition to this, a survey in Germany found that roughly 30 percent of public donations were from people that had never donated to the respective charities before.⁵¹ Surveys carried out by the TEC in Spain, France and the USA found that approximately one-third of the population in each country donated to the tsunami response.⁵² There was also a record level of donations in the UK (see Box 2).

Box 2: Funding from private donors in the UK

The UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) is one of the largest fundraising coalitions in the world. It helps coordinate fundraising efforts for 13 UK humanitarian aid agencies, including the British Red Cross, Oxfam, Plan UK and Save the Children.

The DEC launched an appeal for the Indian Ocean tsunami on 29 December 2004, raising a record-breaking £392m (\$627m).⁵³ In just two months, the DEC tsunami appeal received eight times the amount of donations that it had received for its Sudan appeal, which had been running for four times as long.⁵⁴

Due to the scale of destruction caused by the tsunami, the DEC decided to spend the funds over a period of three years to allow for short-term relief as well as long-term recovery.⁵⁵ The DEC reports that more than 750,000 households were helped by DEC funds, which were mostly spent in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India.⁵⁶ In total, DEC member agencies constructed more than 13,700 houses, 55 schools and 68 health centres with funds raised by the UK public.⁵⁷ In a 2009 interview with the BBC, Brendan Gormley, the former DEC Chief Executive, stated that 80 percent of all UK households supported the tsunami appeal.⁵⁸

While it is difficult to determine a reliable figure for the domestic response to the tsunami in affected countries, it is clear that local and national governments, security and armed forces, local NGOs, religious organizations and local communities all played an important role in responding to the disaster. Moreover, several tsunami-affected countries were, and still are, large recipients of international remittances – money sent home by those working abroad. Remittances are often an important source of support for populations affected by humanitarian crises.⁵⁹ While it is difficult to ascertain what proportion of this money was used for tsunami relief, India was the largest global recipient of remittances in 2005 (of the countries for which the World Bank has data) with over \$22m; Indonesia was the ninth largest recipient, with \$5.4m; and Sri Lanka was the thirty-fifth largest recipient, with approximately \$2m.⁶⁰

ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES

In the first few days after the disaster, local people provided the majority of immediate life-saving assistance.⁶¹ However, within days, a record number of humanitarian agencies had arrived in affected areas to assist with the response. Even today, the Indian Ocean tsunami remains Oxfam's largest-ever humanitarian response and the first-ever coordinated response by the entire Oxfam confederation (see Box 2). One of the biggest challenges of the humanitarian response was the sheer scale of the disaster. This was an unprecedented event, spanning 14 countries and affecting roughly five million people.⁶² These challenges were compounded when another earthquake severely damaged the Indonesian island of Nias in March 2005.

Despite the scale of the emergency, generous international assistance allowed for a quick initial recovery effort. Within a few months, children were back in school in all countries and many health facilities and other services had been restored.⁶³ Six months into the response, approximately 500,000 people had been temporarily housed in Aceh province, Indonesia, with approximately 70,000 people still living in tents.⁶⁴ The fishing industry in Sri Lanka was rapidly rebuilt; more than 80 percent of damaged boats, equipment and markets were restored within six months and 70 percent of households had regained a steady income.⁶⁵ Within half a year, tourists had also begun to return to Thailand and the Maldives.⁶⁶

Through the combined efforts of local communities, local and national governments and the international community, most tsunami-affected areas have been rebuilt to better withstand future natural disasters. The city of Banda Aceh, in the worst hit region of Indonesia, stands as an example of this transformation. At the end of 2012, when the World Bank closed its Multi-Donor Fund (MDF) for Aceh and Nias, it described how roughly \$7bn in contributions from the international community and Indonesian government had driven a massive reconstruction effort.⁶⁷

There has been significant progress on disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts in Indonesia. In March 2014, UNICEF described the tsunami response as a model for the philosophy of 'building back better', noting that communities are now safer and better able to withstand future natural disasters.⁶⁸ Since the tsunami, the Indonesian government has invested in emergency education and constructed hundreds of earthquake-resistant schools.⁶⁹ Schools have also begun to conduct regular earthquake drills. Public health improvements, ranging from immunization programmes to antenatal care and malaria control, have also made families and communities more resilient and less vulnerable to future disasters.⁷⁰ While there had long been disaster management structures in place in Indonesia, the tsunami created support for their overhaul. In 2007, Law 24/2007 was passed, which mandated a new focus on risk management and prevention, and enshrined protection against the threat of disaster as a basic human right.⁷¹

Today, the city of Banda Aceh stands out because of its newly constructed buildings, wide new roads and modern waste management and drainage systems.⁷² In a January 2014 article, *The Guardian* reported that, by the end of 2010, more than 140,000 houses, 1,700 schools, nearly 1,000 government buildings, 36 airports and seaports and 3,700km of road had been built across Aceh province.⁷³ It is difficult to believe that the bustling town centre was once the scene of one of the worst natural disasters in living memory. Nonetheless, poignant reminders of the tsunami remain. The two-and-a-half tonne electrical barge that was swept approximately 2km inland now stands as a memorial to the tsunami and is a reminder of its immense power.⁷⁴

The Sri Lankan government has also made significant efforts towards better disaster preparedness in order to minimize the impact of future disasters. In 2005, the government certified the Disaster Management Act, which included the formation of a National Council of Disaster Management and Disaster Management Centre, to implement the directives of the Council at the national, district and local level.⁷⁵ In addition, the Sri Lankan National Institute of Education has incorporated DRR into the school curriculum and the Ministry of Education has developed National Guidelines for School Disaster Safety.⁷⁶

Box 3: The Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system

When the tsunami hit, there were no early warning systems in place in countries with coastlines along the Indian Ocean. Parts of Indonesia were struck by waves within 20 minutes of the earthquake, but it took hours for the waves to reach countries further away.⁷⁷ An early warning system could have saved many lives further from the epicentre. After the tsunami, the UN Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and partners began working on an Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system. By 2006, a provisional system had been established, and by 2012, a network of seismographic centres, national warning centres, agencies, and coastal and deep-ocean stations was in place to warn communities about potential tsunamis.⁷⁸

In 2012, an earthquake measuring 8.6 on the Richter scale struck in roughly the same location as the 2004 tsunami. While the 2012 earthquake did not trigger a tsunami, it did test the functioning of the early warning systems. The Head of the UN IOC reported that, while gaps remained, the three systems in Indian Ocean countries (Australia, India and Indonesia) functioned perfectly.⁷⁹ Thanks to this early warning system, the Indian Ocean region is now better prepared to reduce the human impact of future tsunamis.

OXFAM'S LARGEST-EVER HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



An Oxfam project officer checks a water pipe at the Oxfam pumping station, Aceh, Indonesia (2005).
Photo: Jim Holmes/Oxfam

Oxfam raised \$294m for the tsunami relief effort, with over 90 percent from private donors.⁸⁰ The majority of funding (54 percent by October 2008) came to Oxfam Great Britain, followed by Oxfam America (11 percent), Oxfam Novib in the Netherlands (10 percent) and Oxfam Australia (7 percent).⁸¹ Oxfam received donations through public appeals and joint-agency appeals – the largest of which was the DEC Appeal in the UK, which brought in \$126m in income to Oxfam.⁸² The speed of the donations was unprecedented, with more than 80 percent of total donations received after only one month.⁸³ Due to the large amount of funding generated through appeals, Oxfam established the Oxfam International Tsunami Fund in the first few months after the tsunami.⁸⁴ This fund helped to manage and coordinate the tsunami response across the Oxfam confederation, until it closed in December 2008.

Oxfam helped an estimated 2.5 million people in tsunami-affected areas between 2004 and 2009.⁸⁵ It worked alongside more than 170 local, national and international partner organizations to carry out relief, rehabilitation and recovery programmes across Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Thailand and Somalia.⁸⁶ In the early days after the tsunami, Oxfam conducted rapid assessments of the damage and began supporting people's immediate needs. The organization delivered clean water and provided blankets and other non-food emergency items.⁸⁷ Along with partners, it also provided temporary shelter for over 40,000 people made homeless by the tsunami.⁸⁸ As the response progressed, Oxfam shifted its focus from short-term relief to longer-term recovery work. Many of Oxfam's programmes targeted vulnerable and marginalized groups, with a particular emphasis on gender.⁸⁹

Table 1: Beneficiaries of the response by Oxfam and partners

Country	Beneficiaries (December 2004 – September 2008) ⁹⁰
Indonesia	705,138
Sri Lanka	792,127
India	776,025
Myanmar	60,171
Thailand	75,022
Somalia	59,260
Maldives	25,000
Total	2,492,743

Oxfam continued to provide clean water, delivering over 300m litres to Aceh over a three-year period.⁹¹ In all, Oxfam and its partners improved or constructed more than 10,800 wells, 90 boreholes and 55 gravity flow water systems, and built a municipal water system to supply 10,000 people in Aceh province.⁹² Oxfam and partners also built 12,000 latrines, distributed over 67,000 hygiene kits and trained over 2,500 health volunteers.⁹³ In the communities where it operated, Oxfam provided training sessions to help local communities to manage and maintain their own water systems.

The organization and its partners also reached approximately 960,000 people with livelihood development initiatives. These initiatives included employing tsunami survivors to help with clean-up projects and longer-term programmes to restore livelihoods by replacing fishing boats, constructing docks in Indonesia and Somalia, supporting improved agricultural practices and replacing livestock.⁹⁴ In the countries where it worked, Oxfam constructed over 2,900 permanent houses, cleared more than 100km of roads and built 31 bridges to allow access back into devastated communities.⁹⁵ With help from partners, the organization also constructed or repaired more than 100 schools in Indonesia and Myanmar.⁹⁶ In addition, Oxfam advocated for the rights of tsunami survivors, including working to secure housing for renters and squatters and improving women's input into the relief and recovery effort.⁹⁷

Box 4: Volunteer maintenance of gravity flow water systems in Aceh, Indonesia



Dahlan, 52, has been working on the maintenance of the gravity flow water system installed by Oxfam almost 9 years ago, following by the Indian Ocean tsunami, Lampuuk, District Aceh Besar, Aceh Province, Sumatra, Indonesia (2014). Jim Holmes/Oxfam GB

Lampuuk settlement, composed of five villages, was heavily damaged by the 2004 tsunami. Dahlan has been working on the maintenance of the gravity flow water system installed by Oxfam almost nine years ago.

'I lost my wife and two children in the tsunami. We were escaping on two motorbikes. I was in front with one child, and my wife was behind with our two other children. The wave just swept my wife and children away.'

'All of this area in Lampuuk was ruined. I took my surviving child up into the hills for two years while Lampuuk was re-planned. This was done so each of the five villages here had access to a road. We all gave up claims to our own land for the benefit of the village to make way for a new road to be built. If villagers lost land because of the road, they were then given more land behind their house.'

'Each village has a water committee, and I am the water engineer for Lambaro... I do whatever is needed to maintain and clean the system. I work with the other four engineers to make sure that the catchment pool is clean and that the pipes are de-silted, and also in the village. When one of the engineers is busy, we cover for each other and when there is a lot to do, we work together. This is not a full time job. I am a farmer and fisherman as well. I don't get paid for this – it is voluntary – we depend on donations from the community. Some houses can pay 1,000 IDS a month (\$0.08), but others pay less. This pays for operational costs, for fuel, equipment and the running of the committees.'

'Everything was working well with the system up to five days ago [November 2014] when we had heavy rain for five days. One of the pipes broke and some mud got into the system we had to clean out. We replaced the pipe and water is flowing again. When it is the dry season, our supply is less because the catchment pool is quite small. This is why we have built another pool higher up the hill to pipe water down to the main pool to keep the system going.'

'We had a lot of training from Oxfam to learn how to manage and maintain the whole system... The water may be slow sometimes, but all of the people in our villages like the system and are glad that Oxfam worked here.'

4 LESSONS LEARNED AND SUBSEQUENT CHANGES

'The tsunami, combined with the Darfur crisis of 2004 that preceded it and the [2005] Pakistan earthquake that followed it... will probably be seen in future as one of those key 'move forward' moments... as a cluster of crises that really stretched the humanitarian system and pushed it to be more efficient, more coordinated and more effective... It wasn't that these were brand new ideas, but they were all things that we learned a lot more about through the course of such an enormous response.'

Interview with Jane Cocking, Oxfam GB Humanitarian Director, 8 November 2014

Several large-scale evaluations of the tsunami response were commissioned, which provided valuable lessons for the humanitarian sector. In 2006, the TEC published a series of evaluation reports based on extensive research, including large-scale surveys in tsunami-affected regions. Three years later, the Swedish development organization, Sida, led a follow-up study, which further evaluated the success of long-term development programmes. In addition to the TEC and Sida evaluations, there have been numerous analyses by researchers and humanitarian aid organizations, including the Red Cross, the World Health Organization (WHO), UN agencies and Oxfam. The lessons learned from these evaluations have had a considerable impact on how the world responds to humanitarian emergencies. While each analysis addresses different aspects of the tsunami response, several broad themes emerge, which are discussed in more detail below.

A. STRENGTHENING THE FUNDING SYSTEM

While the speed and level of funding for the tsunami allowed for a rapid response effort, it also created problems for NGOs not used to handling such a quick influx of funds. In fact, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) closed its tsunami appeal after just one week, having raised six times more for the tsunami response than it had raised for the Darfur crisis in two months.⁹⁸ By mid-January, Oxfam also began closing funding appeals and urging the public to donate to other, less high-profile emergencies.^{99, 100} The amount of public funds raised for the tsunami compared with other large-scale humanitarian disasters also highlights the unequal and often unfair flow of funds for emergencies.¹⁰¹

Efforts to make humanitarian funding more equitable

While many governments have long-standing commitments to the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles – a set of internationally recognized standards set out in 2003 to provide a framework for more effective donor behaviour¹⁰² – few are as formalized as the European Consensus. Adopted by European Union (EU) Member States in 2007, the European Consensus is a commitment to humanitarian principles, including ‘humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence’, and to following good practice in humanitarian responses.¹⁰³ While the principles of the European Consensus are admirable, recent analysis suggests that they are not always put into practice. A 2011 report led by a number of NGOs concluded that while the European Consensus is an important tool for encouraging principled humanitarian assistance, progress among EU member states has been mixed.¹⁰⁴ A subsequent 2014 analysis found that, while EU member states and NGOs operating within them believe that the Consensus adds value by promoting humanitarian principles, NGOs often feel that these principles are not consistently acted on.¹⁰⁵ Specifically, NGOs perceive that funding decisions are frequently tied to ‘non-humanitarian’ considerations.

In existence before the tsunami, the Forgotten Crises Assessment (FCA) Index developed by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) is another effort to make funding more equitable.¹⁰⁶ The FCA Index seeks to raise awareness about the world's 'forgotten crises' – humanitarian emergencies that fail to receive donor and media attention. This index continues to serve as a useful tool for identifying unmet humanitarian need.

The increasing role of pooled humanitarian funds

An increasing amount of international humanitarian assistance is now channelled through pooled funds.¹⁰⁷ These funds are designed to aid flexibility and speed when responding to humanitarian crises and to make funding more impartial.¹⁰⁸ The tsunami was a partial catalyst for the launch of the expanded UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in 2005. In addition to CERF, there are several country-level pooled funding systems designed to support UN-coordinated response plans (common humanitarian funds or CHFs) and to fill unexpected needs that arise outside of coordinated response plans (emergency response funds or ERFs).¹⁰⁹ In 2013, pooled funds like the CERF received more than \$1bn (4.7 percent of all humanitarian assistance).¹¹⁰ Nearly half of this was distributed through the CERF.¹¹¹ More recently, NGOs have also begun to lead pooled funds, including the Start Fund, at the global level, and other country-focused pooled funds. Launched in April 2014, the Start Fund is specifically designed to 'fill gaps' in the emergency funding system by providing an early response for emergencies that fail to attract sufficient funding.¹¹²

A 2011 independent evaluation of the CERF found that the fund has increased the predictability of funding for humanitarian emergencies and is the fastest external funding source for UN agencies.¹¹³ The CERF has also increased humanitarian coverage by funding vital, but often underfunded, services, such as transportation and communications.¹¹⁴ However, a common criticism of the CERF is that funds cannot be dispersed directly to NGOs and can only reach them through agreements with recipient UN agencies.¹¹⁵ This has sometimes resulted in delays in funds reaching NGOs, though it has been less of a problem in countries with CHF/ERF funds or other sources of rapid funding directly available to NGOs.¹¹⁶ All in all, investment into pooled funds is a positive step towards improving the impartiality and speed of funding for humanitarian crises because pooled funds allocate money based on assessments of humanitarian need and can often disburse funds very quickly. While government contributions to pooled funds are on the rise, they tend to attract little funding from private donors. For example, in 2013, the CERF received just over \$100,000 in funding from private sector and civil society donors.¹¹⁷

B. COORDINATION OF THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

Generous international funding undoubtedly improved lives for tsunami survivors, but it also resulted in challenges of coordination. At one point during the summer of 2005, there were close to 200 international NGOs operating in Aceh province alone.¹¹⁸ Large amounts of private donations sometimes put pressure on NGOs to work outside of their areas of expertise, often resulting in inconsistent quality of construction projects and livelihood development programmes.^{119 120} A consistent theme across evaluations was the need for better coordination among humanitarian agencies.¹²¹

The cluster approach, and quality and accountability initiatives

Figure 2: The UN Cluster System



Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

In late 2004, the UN commissioned the Humanitarian Response Review in response to frustrations over the international response to the crisis in Darfur.¹²² The review analyzed responses to several complex emergencies and natural disasters, including the Indian Ocean tsunami.¹²³ This comprehensive review led to major reforms in how the humanitarian system is coordinated, known as the Humanitarian Reform Agenda.

One of these reforms introduced the Cluster Approach, which nominates organizational leaders to coordinate work in their sector of expertise.¹²⁴ A 2010 evaluation, commissioned by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), maintained that while the new approach has improved humanitarian responses, it has had difficulty addressing issues such as gender and disaster risk reduction, which cut across sectors.¹²⁵ Moreover, the evaluation found that local actors (local governments, NGOs, etc.) are often excluded from the response even when there is substantial local capacity available. To address these criticisms, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)¹²⁶ Transformative Agenda, agreed in 2011, focused on strengthening cross-cluster coordination and on systems to ensure that clusters are only deployed when it makes sense to do so.¹²⁷

In addition to the Cluster Approach there is now an increased emphasis on humanitarian standards. Three of the most well-established and internationally recognized quality and accountability initiatives are the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, People In Aid and Sphere, which were all established before the tsunami.¹²⁸ These set out minimum standards for life-saving activities such as water supply, sanitation, food provision, shelter and health. Efforts are currently under way to harmonize the three initiatives into a Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) in order to increase coherence and make it easier for humanitarian practitioners to put them into practice.¹²⁹

C. ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE AND MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

The TEC's joint evaluation report identified several inequalities in the way that assistance was delivered. These included national inequalities (for example, between conflict and non-conflict areas), inequalities by sector (for example, between the fishing sector and other sectors), geographical inequalities (between areas that were more and less accessible), and social inequalities (between poor and marginalized groups and better-off households).¹³⁰ One factor that drove these inequalities was a focus on replacing physical assets, such as houses or boats.¹³¹ This meant that households which had owned these kinds of assets before the tsunami (and thus tended to be better-off) had them replaced as part of the response, effectively providing more aid to better-off households. In addition, some groups, such as the fishing communities in India, were better organized and therefore better able to access aid.¹³² Moreover, while there were examples of good practice, the TEC's joint evaluation of the tsunami response noted that the needs of women, children and older people were often overlooked.¹³³

Women tend to be more vulnerable when natural disasters strike because they often have less access to resources and because emergency living conditions can create higher work burdens and increase domestic and sexual violence.¹³⁴ A survey conducted in Sri Lanka as part of the TEC joint evaluation found that, in general, women were less satisfied with the tsunami response than men.¹³⁵ In particular, many women felt that international agencies could have done more to protect women living in camps. Additionally, women were sometimes disadvantaged in terms of access to livelihoods and asset recovery programmes because many rehabilitation activities centred on male-dominated sectors, such as fishing, overlooking the livelihoods of women and other marginalized groups.^{136,137} Many women felt that livelihood projects geared towards them (such as mat-weaving) were not sufficient to provide a decent income.¹³⁸

Increased efforts towards equitable humanitarian responses

The tsunami prompted more research into how disasters affect women differently. For example, a 2007 study of more than 140 countries covering the period from 1981 to 2002 found that natural disasters (and their impacts) kill more women than men.¹³⁹ This effect is even more pronounced for women from poorer backgrounds. A study conducted in Aceh, Indonesia, after the tsunami highlighted ways to ensure that humanitarian responses are sensitive to gender. These include:

- involving women representatives in the coordination of aid distribution;
- providing separate toilet/latrine facilities and safe accommodation to ensure privacy and protect women from sexual harassment;
- providing accessible health facilities to provide care for pregnant women and babies as well as access to contraceptives; and
- prioritizing livelihood activities for women as well as men, especially women heads of household.¹⁴⁰

While international standards that promote equitable and inclusive humanitarian responses (such as the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles and Sphere) were already in place prior to the tsunami, evaluations of the disaster focused attention on the need to consistently put these principles into practice. A recent evaluation of the humanitarian system noted that while there has been increased attention given to gender and to providing more inclusive humanitarian responses, more work is needed to ensure that the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups are consistently and adequately taken into account.¹⁴¹

Box 5: Income development for poor rural women in Sri Lanka



A women's goat-rearing group in the tsunami-affected community of Komari, eastern Sri Lanka (2007). Howard Davies/Oxfam

After the tsunami, Oxfam and its partner SWOAD helped poor rural women to boost their incomes. In the village of Thandiadi in eastern Sri Lanka, livelihoods were decimated by the tsunami. Many families lost their homes, as well as the goats that were a vital source of income. Oxfam and SWOAD rebuilt 40 houses and 82 toilets, and then started groups to help women rear hybrid goats.

At the time, Ranjani, 37, a member of one of these groups explained, 'Each member puts 50 rupees (\$0.44) into the savings fund each month. So far we have saved 8,700 rupees (\$77). We can use this fund for two purposes: an emergency fund for members in need, and to purchase more goats.'

As well as training the women in practical skills, such as how to look after the goats and maintain their sheds, SWOAD also helped them to understand their rights and entitlements, and facilitated access to government departments.

D. LOCAL HUMANITARIAN PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

A mantra that emerged during the relief and recovery effort after the tsunami was 'build back better' – the idea being that aid organizations should not only restore communities, but build safer, more resilient communities to withstand future disasters. However, despite the emphasis on building back better, many organizations have been criticized for prioritizing speed over quality and undermining rather than promoting local capacity.¹⁴² The 2009 Sida evaluation notes that this became less of a problem in the latter part of the humanitarian response.

Growing focus on DRR and resilience

'Coping with the expected strains on the humanitarian system will mean a shift from global to local... Having local organizations already on the ground primed to go will increase both the speed and the efficiency of the aid effort and ultimately will save more lives.'

Jane Cocking, Oxfam GB's humanitarian director, 'Disaster relief must be more local and national, Oxfam says', *the Guardian*, 7 February 2012. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2012/feb/07/disaster-relief-local-response>

Building local capacity to prepare for, and respond to, humanitarian emergencies, as well as building resilience through poverty reduction and the strengthening of public services has the potential to reduce the financial and human costs of humanitarian emergencies and to prevent reversing important development gains. However, despite far-reaching recognition of the importance of DRR, international investment in these activities remains low. In 2012, spending on DRR comprised just 6 percent (\$630m) of OECD DAC humanitarian assistance.¹⁴³ Moreover, an estimate from 2011 indicates that OECD DAC donor countries gave only 0.7 percent of non-emergency development assistance for DRR.¹⁴⁴ More investment is also needed for poverty reduction and strengthening of public services, given that chronic and extreme poverty is linked to increased vulnerability to disaster¹⁴⁵ and countries with strong government institutions tend to be less vulnerable to natural disasters.¹⁴⁶

Box 6: Rebuilding schools in Sri Lanka



Students walk through the repaired and rebuilt Shariputra school in Sri Lanka (2007). Photo: Howard Davies/Oxfam GB

The Shariputra school in Ahangama, Sri Lanka, was severely damaged by the tsunami. It was one of seven schools rebuilt with funding from Oxfam Novib through its local partner, Educational International. The school's 1,340 students (aged 5 to 18) were taught in temporary UNICEF shelters until the school was finished and fitted with new furniture for the classrooms. The rebuilt school also included a 'tsunami wall' specifically designed to dissipate the effects of large waves, giving students more time to escape to higher ground.

As the reconstruction neared completion, the school's principal, Ruwan Arunashantha Kariyanasam, expressed his satisfaction with the project:

'We are all very pleased with the rebuilding of our school. It has not just been replaced after the tsunami, but greatly improved with many new facilities like special accessible classrooms for students with special needs and a purpose-built library, which we will have completed soon. We also have a new sports and function hall, which we can hire out to the community to raise additional funds for the school... I am looking forward to having the new school completed and the students will have a settled environment to learn in after all the turmoil of recent years.'

Capacity building and supporting local civil society

A 2008 review of reconstruction in post-tsunami Indonesia and Sri Lanka found that community involvement is essential to building back safer, stronger communities.¹⁴⁷ Capacity building and accountability to local communities are internationally recognized priorities, enshrined in the 2005 UN reforms, the IASC's Transformative Agenda, and the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles. However, recent evaluations of the humanitarian system have shown that more efforts are needed to ensure that these principles are consistently put into practice.^{148,149} For example, a recent study found that although there have been efforts to include local and national actors in the response to typhoon Haiyan (one of the strongest tropical cyclones on record which struck the Philippines in 2013), it has still been mostly led, coordinated and implemented by international actors.¹⁵⁰

E. CONSIDERATION OF PRE-EXISTING CONFLICTS

While a peace process in Indonesia was already under way prior to the Indian Ocean tsunami, the disaster has often been cited as a catalyst for the end to nearly three decades of sectarian conflict between the government and the Acehnese independence movement, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM).¹⁵¹ It has been argued that the humanitarian response acted as an incentive for state and local government to cooperate and that the presence of international staff after the tsunami encouraged the emergence of peace, security, and the enforcement of human rights.¹⁵² This finding is supported by a 2008 survey, which found that 57 percent of the population in Aceh think that the tsunami, and the response to it, had a positive effect on peace in the region.¹⁵³

Conversely, in Sri Lanka, which had also suffered from decades of conflict, the response to the tsunami has often been credited with intensifying tensions between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government. While the tsunami caused a short-term pause in the civil war, the conflict re-escalated again within a year.¹⁵⁴ Not long into the relief effort, complaints emerged that Tamil areas were receiving very little government aid, inciting suspicion about international and civil society organizations.¹⁵⁵ As a result of these concerns, an aid-sharing deal was signed between the government and the Tamil Tigers.¹⁵⁶ However, this deal ended in November 2005, when a new president was elected.¹⁵⁷ Unlike in Indonesia, the conflict in Sri Lanka continued long after the tsunami, until its bloody conclusion in 2009.

Designing conflict-sensitive responses

The TEC joint evaluation contends that any impact the humanitarian response had on the conflicts in Indonesia and Sri Lanka was 'serendipitous' rather than planned. In general, international agencies engaged in very little 'conflict-sensitive' programming in Aceh, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Conflict-sensitive programming is an approach that involves understanding the context in which a humanitarian intervention operates and acting on this understanding to minimize negative impacts.¹⁵⁸ The concept of conflict-sensitive approaches lies within the 'do no harm' edict pioneered in the late 1990s.¹⁵⁹ The central premise of 'Do No Harm' is that aid affects conflicts in one way or another, and, depending on how it is used, has the ability to exacerbate conflicts by increasing divisions between conflicting groups or to strengthen capacities for peace.¹⁶⁰

Since the Indian Ocean tsunami, there has been increasing recognition that humanitarian assistance can sometimes exacerbate conflicts. As a result, various resources, working groups, and research studies have been established to better understand and address this problem.¹⁶¹ However, a recent evaluation of the humanitarian system found that there is still a need for humanitarian agencies to devote more effort to understanding the political, ethnic and tribal contexts in which they work.¹⁶²

Box 7: An evaluation of Oxfam's response

A 2009 evaluation of Oxfam's response highlighted examples of 'excellent' practice by Oxfam and its partners, but also noted inconsistencies in the quality of housing construction and livelihood programmes and in the integration of gender and disaster risk reduction into the response.¹⁶³ A lack of collaboration between different Oxfam affiliates also sometimes affected the quality of programming. The evaluation suggested several strategic and operational methods to improve future responses, such as developing internal minimum standards for humanitarian responses, which have since been introduced.

Oxfam learned many lessons during the tsunami response which have led to changes in the way that the organization works. The tsunami reinforced the need for Oxfam to continue to become more coordinated. There has been significant progress towards this goal, including ongoing streamlining of the work carried out by the different Oxfam affiliates to make emergency responses as effective as possible.

When the tsunami hit, Oxfam was already involved in a review of the organization's humanitarian performance and capacity. The tsunami response helped to inform this review and reinforced its importance. The reforms that came out of the review included a new system for categorizing the seriousness of different crises, in order to ensure that they receive the right level of attention, and a conscious decision to focus on the organization's areas of expertise, which include providing safe water, sanitation, public health and supporting livelihoods. The 2006 internal Shelter Policy dictates that, while Oxfam should support construction by channelling funds or working with partners, it should not directly engage in construction work.¹⁶⁴

5 ONGOING CHALLENGES IN THE FUNDING SYSTEM

'Those affected by disaster or conflict have a right to life with dignity and, therefore, a right to assistance... All possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of disaster or conflict.'

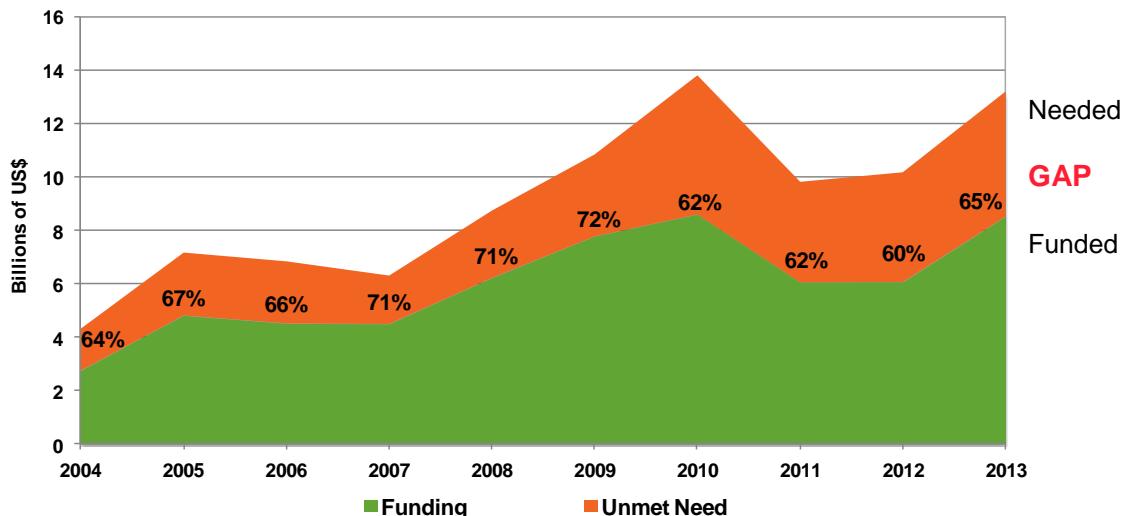
Sphere Project core beliefs, from the 2011 The Sphere Project Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response

The rapid, generous funding that followed the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami highlights the atypical nature of this response. While the tsunami received adequate funding for the relief and recovery effort, many other emergencies do not attract the same level of support. Moreover, the overall level of international funding, even when combined with the domestic response to crises, is only enough to meet a portion of global humanitarian need.

A. CURRENT FUNDING DOES NOT MEET HUMANITARIAN NEED

The Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) programme has calculated that international humanitarian assistance reached a record \$22bn in 2013,¹⁶⁵ with an estimated \$5.6bn (roughly 25 percent) from private donors.¹⁶⁶ However, humanitarian agencies consistently report that funding remains insufficient to meet the level of humanitarian need.¹⁶⁷ For example, funding for 2013 UN-coordinated appeals reached \$8.5bn, enough to meet only 65 percent of the 13.2bn required (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The growing funding gap for UN-coordinated appeals (2004–2013)



Source: UN FTS data for all appeals (consolidated, flash, other) accessed 20 October 2014. Adjusted for inflation using annual CPI data from Federal Reserve Economic Data. All values reported in constant 2013 USD.

While donations to UN appeals have dramatically increased over the past decade, the data show that since 2004 funding has continued to hover at approximately 65 percent of identified need. In other words, roughly one-third of humanitarian needs identified in UN-coordinated appeals consistently go unmet. Furthermore, increases in the amounts appealed for have resulted in an increasingly larger funding gap.¹⁶⁸ Even after adjusting for inflation, the funding gap for UN appeals has increased by nearly 200 percent since 2004, from \$1.6bn to \$4.7bn in 2013.¹⁶⁹

While this funding gap is large, it is not insurmountable. In fact, \$4.7bn is less than the combined gross domestic product (GDP) that accrues to OECD countries in one hour,¹⁷⁰ less than one day's combined profits for Fortune 500 companies,¹⁷¹ and less than the retail value of two weeks of food waste in the USA.¹⁷²

As of 1 December 2014, the revised requirement for UN-coordinated appeals was \$20.7bn – a 57 percent increase on the previous year.¹⁷³ This dramatic increase is due, in part, to the \$1.5bn Ebola appeal launched in September 2014, and the current high number of intense violent conflicts around the world. As of the beginning of December, the UN had only received 50 percent of overall requested funding. While funding for UN appeals will have risen by the end of the year, it is unlikely that donors will come any closer to meeting humanitarian needs than they have in previous years.

Delays in funding and large funding gaps mean that this year, as in previous years, millions of people affected by disasters and conflicts will fail to receive the food, clean water and shelter they urgently need. It also means that preventable situations may worsen through lack of adequate assistance.

Looking ahead, the level of humanitarian need is expected to continue to increase over the next century. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that the world will see rising wind speeds of tropical cyclones, increasing intensity of droughts, and an increase in heavy precipitation events, potentially increasing the frequency of floods.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, the world is currently experiencing a spike in the number of severe conflict-related crises, with Iraq, South Sudan, Syria and the Central African Republic all declared 'level 3' emergencies by the UN (the organization's highest designation).^{175, 176}

B. INEQUALITY PERSISTS IN INTERNATIONAL FUNDING

People affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami received a record level of support (eclipsed only by the 2010 Haiti earthquake). More than twice the percentage of needs were met in the month after the launch of the UN Indian Ocean tsunami appeal than in the month after the typhoon Haiyan (Philippines) appeal.¹⁷⁷ In general, there are significant differences in the level and speed of funding for different crises. For example, the 2010 Pakistan floods, which affected around 20 million people¹⁷⁸ – and were described as 'worse than the tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake and the Haiti earthquake' by a spokesman for UN OCHA¹⁷⁹ – failed to mobilize the level of generosity seen after the tsunami. One month after the Pakistan floods began, the UN-coordinated appeal for the crisis was only 24 percent funded.¹⁸⁰ Conversely, one month after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, which affected 2.1 million people, the appeal was 49 percent funded, more than double that of the Pakistan floods.¹⁸¹

Roughly five months after each emergency, the percentage of funding began to equalize, with both reaching approximately 65 percent of needs met. However, five months after typhoon Haiyan, funding remained at only 55 percent.¹⁸² Delays in funding and inadequate levels of funding can have a huge human cost, including an increase in preventable deaths and the large-scale disruption of lives and livelihoods (see Box 6).

Box 8: The importance of a rapid, well-funded humanitarian response

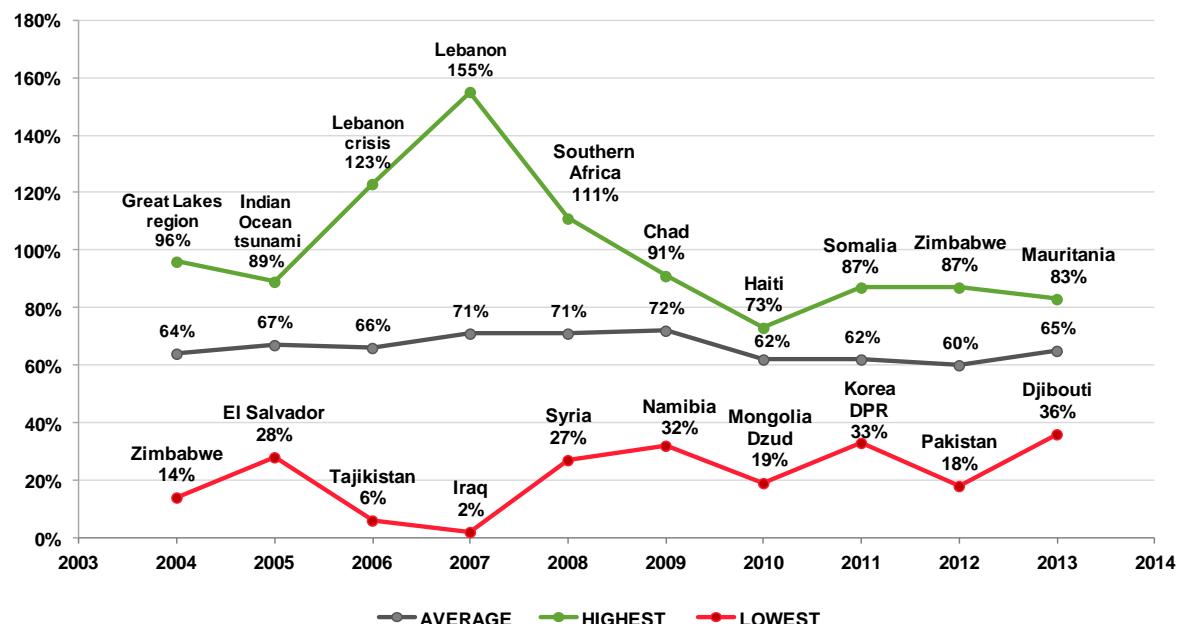
The case of the 2011 Somalia famine highlights the importance of an adequate and timely international funding response. Nearly a year before the famine was declared, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issued a warning about the impending food crisis.¹⁸³ Yet the international community did not react until people began experiencing pre-famine conditions in late June 2011 – essentially, until it was too late.¹⁸⁴

During the second half of 2011, four million people (nearly two-thirds of Somalia's population) were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.¹⁸⁵ An estimated 258,000 people died during the famine, 52 percent of whom were children under the age of five.¹⁸⁶ Many of these deaths could have been prevented if the international community had reacted more quickly to the early warnings.

Between the first warning in August 2010 and July 2011, when the UN officially declared a famine in Somalia, FEWS NET and the Somalia-Focused Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) issued 78 bulletins and 50 briefings about the impending crisis.¹⁸⁷ While the UN famine announcement did trigger a rapid increase in donations, it was too late for early intervention and prevention. An earlier response from the international community could have saved lives through nutrition support and cash transfer programmes.¹⁸⁸

The percentage of need met for different emergencies varies greatly (see Figure 4). In a typical year between 2004 and 2013, the highest-funded UN appeals had four times the percentage of need met than the lowest-funded appeals.¹⁸⁹ However, differences in the highest and lowest-funded appeals have varied greatly over the past decade: from more than two times the percentage of need met than the lowest-funded appeal in 2013, to more than 77 times in 2007. Although the gap between the highest and lowest-funded appeals does appear to be narrowing, in 2013, the UN-coordinated appeal for people facing food insecurity in Mauritania (the highest-funded appeal at 83 percent) still had twice the percentage of needs met as the appeal for people affected by drought in Djibouti (the lowest-funded appeal at 36 percent).

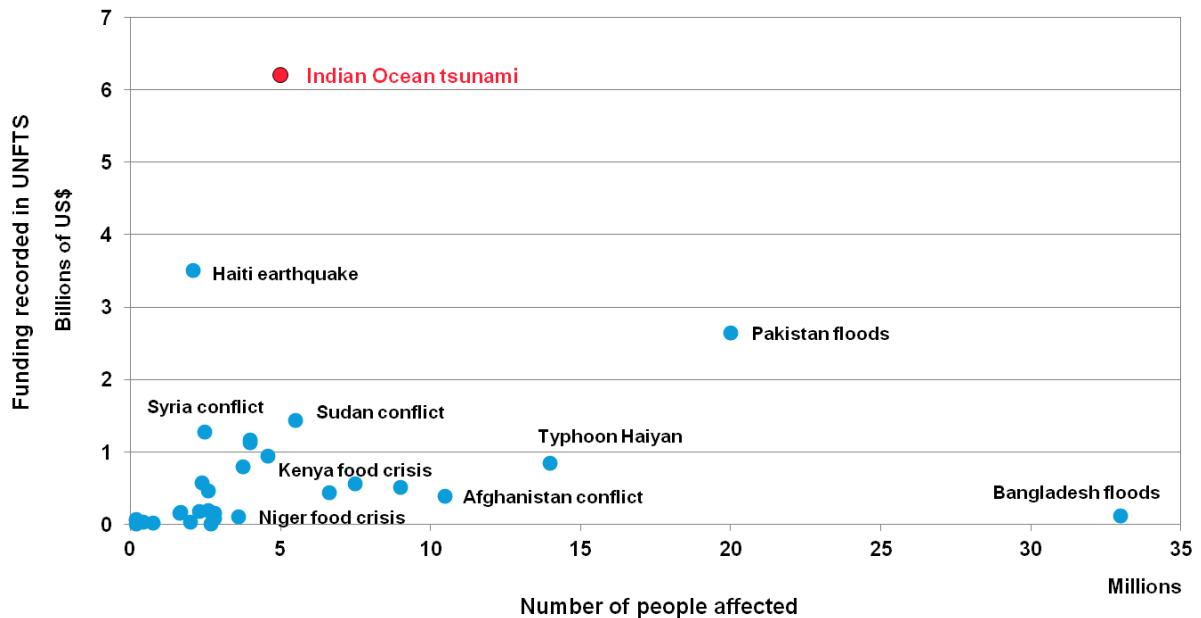
Figure 4: Highest and lowest funded UN-coordinated appeals (2004–2013)



Source: Reproduced using data from Development Initiatives, *Global Humanitarian Assistance (2014) 'Global Humanitarian Assistance Report'*

Both the Mauritania and Djibouti appeals (pictured in Figure 4) were launched in December 2012 and both targeted urgent humanitarian needs, yet donors met more of the needs for Mauritania than for Djibouti. While more funding was requested for Mauritania (\$107m) than for Djibouti (\$70m), the difference in funding is not simply due to the size of the appeals. In fact, the GHA notes that there is no clear correlation between the size of an appeal and the level of funding that it receives.¹⁹⁰

Figure 5: Humanitarian funding compared with number of people affected



Source: Funding data from UN FTS database <http://fts.unocha.org/> (Accessed August 2014). Number of people affected taken from UN appeal documents for individual emergencies. See Appendix for more information on methodology.

Figure 5 shows that there is no clear relationship between humanitarian funding and humanitarian need. Plotting donations recorded in the UN FTS for 30 of the largest humanitarian emergencies in the last decade (for one year after their approximate start date)¹⁹¹ reveals that while the Indian Ocean tsunami and Haiti earthquake received the largest amount of donations, many slow-onset natural disasters and conflicts (with similar numbers of people affected) received very little funding. The Bangladesh floods of 2004 stand out because they affected the highest number of people (among the 30 emergencies) yet received some of the lowest levels of funding.

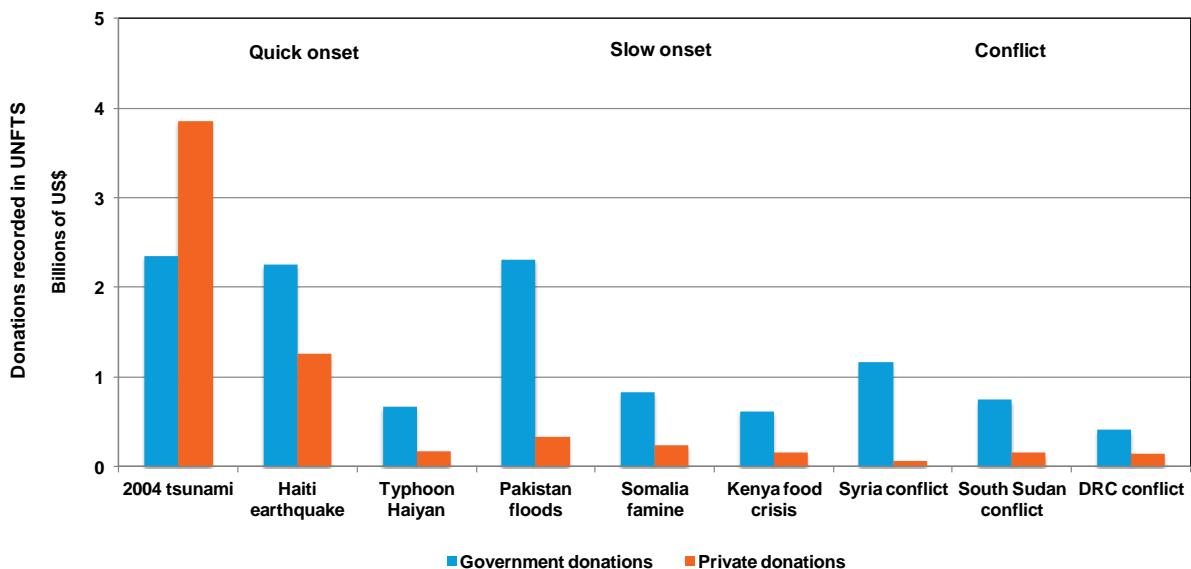
C. PRIVATE VERSUS GOVERNMENT DONATIONS

The primary funding streams for international humanitarian assistance – private donations and government donations – show very different patterns. Government donors contribute the vast majority of humanitarian funding (nearly three-quarters in 2013).¹⁹² However, donations from private donors also comprise a significant share. Between 2008 and 2012, private funding from individuals, trusts, foundations, companies and other private organizations comprised more than one quarter of humanitarian funding.¹⁹³ In 2012, individual donors provided \$3bn (82 percent) of all private donations, followed by foundations (7 percent), private companies (5 percent) and national societies (5 percent).¹⁹⁴ Most private funding is channelled through NGOs, which rely on private funds for approximately 50 percent of their humanitarian income, although this differs greatly by organization.¹⁹⁵

Private funding is more variable than government funding, rising and falling more dramatically. For example, GHA notes that private donors reacted to the Haiti earthquake and other large-scale emergencies in 2010 by increasing donations by 47 percent over the previous year,

compared with a 10 percent increase in government funding.¹⁹⁶ However, donations also dropped away more quickly the following year. Figure 6 provides a breakdown of private and government funding for nine recent humanitarian emergencies. In order to facilitate comparison across the nine emergencies, the figure includes one year of funding for each crisis. While government donors provided the majority of funding for all but one of the emergencies pictured, there was a large private funding response for the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Haiti earthquake. As will be discussed in Section 6, private donors tend to give higher amounts to quick-onset natural disasters and less to slow-onset natural disasters and conflicts. It is also important to note that government donors often continue to provide funding towards emergencies for much longer periods of time than private donors. This is especially true for conflict-related emergencies, which receive the majority of humanitarian funding overall.¹⁹⁷

Figure 6: Government and private donations recorded in UNFTS



Based on funding recorded in the UN FTS database <http://fts.unocha.org/> (Accessed August 2014). See Appendix for more information on methodology.

While private donations make up a smaller overall share of international funding, humanitarian agencies find this type of funding particularly valuable¹⁹⁸ because it often arrives faster and is more flexible than government funding. Government funding is usually earmarked for a specific project or purpose, whereas private funds can be quickly allocated wherever the need is greatest. However, private donations also have their limitations; most are earmarked for particular emergencies and cannot be reallocated. After the Indian Ocean tsunami, many charities were overwhelmed with private donations. However, even when funding requirements were exceeded, most NGOs could not reallocate funds to other less well funded emergencies. This left some NGOs struggling to spend large amounts of money quickly in order to demonstrate the impact of generous donations.

What lies behind increasing levels of humanitarian need?

'Needs are increasing much faster than funds.'

Kristalina Georgieva, EU commissioner for International Cooperation, 'Not enough money for emergency relief? Get used to it', the Guardian, 15 July 2014.

Over the past decade, UN appeal requirements have more than tripled.¹⁹⁹ UN OCHA reports that there is no one simple explanation for this trend.²⁰⁰ Inter-agency appeals now target between 60 and 70 million people a year compared with 30 to 40 million people a decade ago.²⁰¹ This could be due to both better needs assessments and an increasing number of people affected by humanitarian crises. While mortality rates after natural disasters are decreasing, the number of people impacted by them is rising.²⁰² Additionally, while the number

of conflicts is falling, the number of people displaced by conflict is on the rise.²⁰³ UN OCHA has also noted that poverty is becoming more concentrated in fragile states, leaving many more people more vulnerable to humanitarian crisis.²⁰⁴

D. NEED FOR BETTER DATA

It is clear that the current level and distribution of international funding, even when combined with domestic responses, does not adequately meet global humanitarian needs.^{205, 206} In fact, funding is often insufficient for humanitarian agencies to meet the minimum agreed international standards for assistance.²⁰⁷ However, a lack of data makes it difficult to gain an accurate picture of overall humanitarian funding. While there are systems in place to record humanitarian giving (such as the UN FTS, OECD DAC, and the EC's European Emergency Disaster Response Information System (EDRIS)), there is a need for more accurate and timely reporting. This is especially true for private donations to NGOs and other non-government humanitarian actors, which tend to be underreported in these systems. As private donations make up roughly one quarter of humanitarian funding, it is important to understand what role these donations play in funding humanitarian emergencies. Additionally, there is very little data available on the role of remittances, non-monetary donations of goods and services and the domestic humanitarian response, which makes it challenging to assess the total humanitarian response in any given year.

6 THE FACTORS THAT DRIVE INTERNATIONAL FUNDING

The TEC joint evaluation of the response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami attributes the rapid and high level of international funding to four factors:

- Scale – it was a massive disaster affecting 14 countries;
- Perceived blamelessness – it was a natural disaster and those affected were seen as ‘blameless’;
- Extensive media coverage – there was a very high level of media coverage, in part due to the dramatic imagery and number of Western tourists caught up in the disaster; and
- Timing – the tsunami happened the day after Christmas, a major holiday in many large donor nations.²⁰⁸

Humanitarian donations (whether private or government) are influenced by a range of factors including but not limited to the level of humanitarian need (see Figure 9, pg. 35). This section explores how government and private donors alike are influenced by external factors that shape perceptions about the scale and seriousness of an emergency, as well as internal factors characteristic to each type of donor. While resource constraints play a role for both types of donors, they do not appear to be an overriding factor, as donations from both sources have continued to increase during the period of the global financial crisis.

PRIVATE DONORS

External factors that influence donations

Level of media coverage

Sometimes termed the ‘CNN effect’, the level of media coverage is often cited as one of the main reasons why the tsunami attracted so much funding from private donors. The tsunami attracted more media coverage in two months than the world’s top 10 ‘forgotten’ emergencies did during the entire previous year.²⁰⁹ For months after the tsunami, the disaster continued to dominate headlines.²¹⁰

Most people rely on the media (whether traditional news outlets or social media) as their primary source of information. As a result, media coverage can be very influential in shaping perceptions about the scale and seriousness of an emergency. Unfortunately, many emergencies, especially slow-onset ones in unfamiliar places, do not satisfy the established criteria for being ‘newsworthy’ (see Box 9).

Box 9: What makes a humanitarian emergency ‘newsworthy’?²¹¹

Several factors influence the likelihood of a news story being placed at the top of the worldwide news agenda. Nearly 40 years ago, media researchers Galtung and Ruge compiled one of the best known lists of news values. They argued that journalists generally select stories based on the following three categories:

- **Impact of the event:** High-impact, sudden events with extreme effects tend to attract more news coverage. Straightforward stories are also thought to be more ‘newsworthy’ because they do not require an understanding of complex issues in order to grasp the implications.
- **Ability of the audience to identify:** People tend to be interested in news stories that contain a human-interest element, especially if the story is about a well-known person or celebrity. Moreover, they are generally more interested in stories about people that they can identify with.

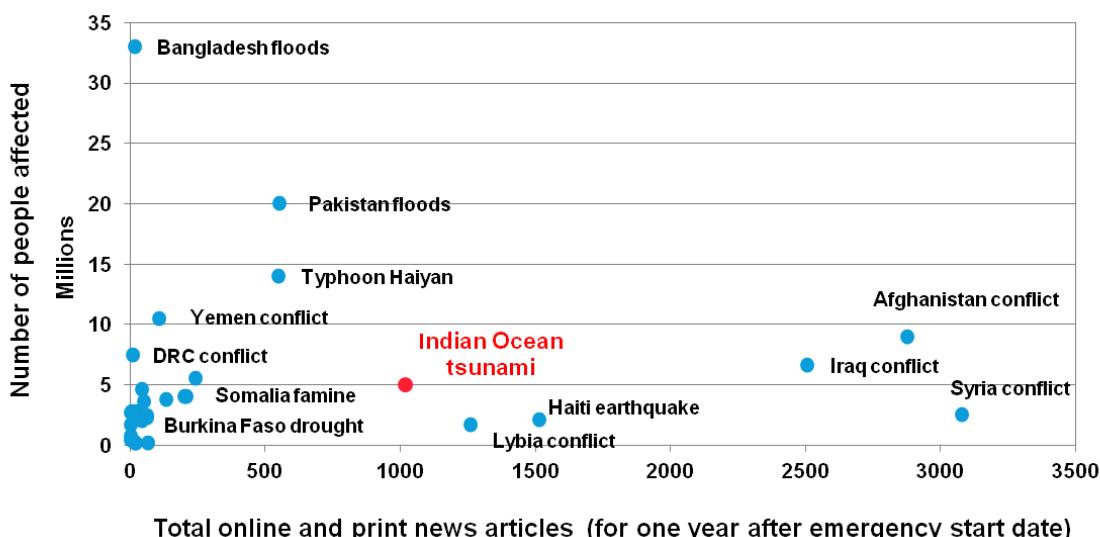
- **Practicalities and limited space:** The media is thought to be more likely to report on stories that fit into a pre-established formula. Coverage of a story also depends on other stories that are competing for attention at the same time. Stories that are already in the news have a tendency to gather ‘momentum’.

There is a fundamental misalignment between what qualifies as newsworthy and the realities of humanitarian need. While the role of the media is to inform the general public, it would be virtually impossible to provide regular, in-depth analysis of every humanitarian emergency happening on a given day. The job of the media is to filter through a sea of local, national and international news to find what they consider to be the most relevant content for their audiences. By necessity, there will always be information that is left out.

Research shows a strong relationship between media coverage and private funding for humanitarian emergencies. A 2006 study that tested the effect of media coverage on donations to US charities for the Indian Ocean tsunami in the 100 days after the disaster.²¹² While the results varied for each charity, the researchers found that, on average, every additional minute of nightly news coverage on *ABC World News Tonight*, *CBS Evening News* and *NBC Nightly News* increased that day's online donations by 13.2 percent, while every additional 700-word article in *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal* raised that day's online donations by 18.2 percent. Similarly, a 2012 analysis of media coverage (including social media) and charitable giving after the 2010 Haiti earthquake found a positive relationship between media coverage and donations – when media coverage increased, so too did donations.²¹³ Moreover, they found that a 10 percent increase in Twitter messages²¹⁴ was associated with an additional \$236,540 in donations and that each news story from *ABC News* was associated with a \$963,800 increase.

One of the most famous examples of the media's ability to attract attention to humanitarian crises was the BBC's coverage of the 1983 to 1985 Ethiopia famine. The images broadcast were so shocking that they prompted mass action, including benefit concerts and fundraisers that raised millions for famine relief. News coverage of the famine also catalyzed one of the first examples of ‘celebrity humanitarianism’ when a group of prominent musicians decided to organize Band Aid using their fame to raise funds for famine relief. Overall, the Band Aid movement has reportedly raised more than £150m (\$242m) for famine relief in Ethiopia.²¹⁵ Band Aid also inspired the USA for Africa movement, which reports that it raised more than \$75m to fight poverty in Africa.²¹⁶ The Band Aid movement is still going today with Band Aid 30 raising funds for the Ebola crisis in West Africa.²¹⁷

Figure 7: Number of people affected compared with media coverage

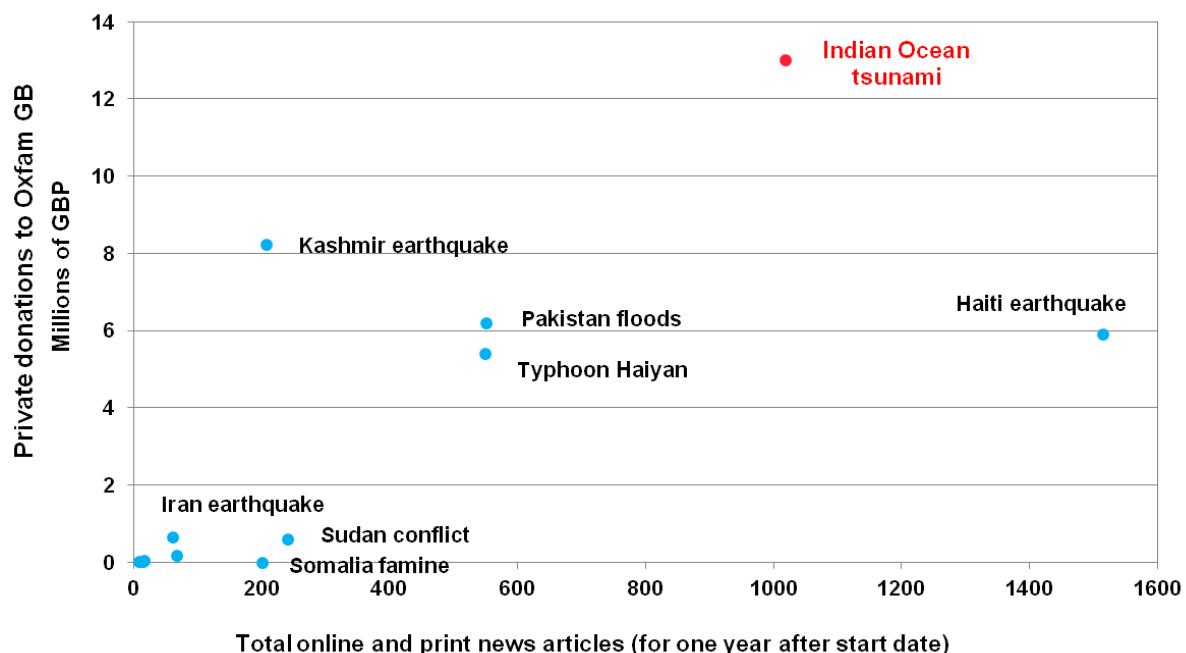


Online and print news articles for the six largest US and UK print and online newspapers in terms of circulation. Source: Factiva database <http://global.factiva.com> (last accessed September 2014). Number of people affected taken from UN appeal documents for individual emergencies. See Appendix for more information on methodology.

Figure 7 shows that media coverage does not always reflect the level of humanitarian need arising from a given emergency. Plotting media coverage against the number of people affected for 30 of the largest humanitarian emergencies (one year from the start date) reveals that some of the worst emergencies (in terms of number of people affected) received low media coverage. Among the 30 emergencies, high-profile conflicts and quick-onset natural disasters generally received the highest level of media coverage. However, while there was a high level of news coverage about the conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, much of it was about geopolitical rather than humanitarian issues.

Oxfam has also noticed this trend, with emergencies that have more media coverage tending to attract more donations from private donors. Plotting media coverage against private donations to Oxfam Great Britain reveals that, in general, emergencies that received higher levels of media coverage also attracted more donations (see Figure 8). However, the 2005 Kashmir earthquake received a relatively high level of donations despite relatively low media coverage. This could be due to the presence of large Indian and Pakistani diaspora communities in the UK. Figure 6 only includes donations to Oxfam Great Britain. However, Oxfam's affiliate in America received much higher donations for the Haiti earthquake, likely due to the fact that America is much closer to Haiti and hosts a large Haitian immigrant population.

Figure 8: Private donations to Oxfam GB compared to media coverage



Online and print news articles for the six largest US and UK print and online newspapers in terms of circulation. Source: Based on data from Factiva database <http://global.factiva.com> (Accessed September 2014) and Oxfam GB historic appeals income from the public, including donations from individuals and corporations. See Appendix for more information on methodology.

Level of fundraising

The majority of private donations are channelled through NGOs²¹⁸ and these organizations play a well-recognized role in attracting private donations for humanitarian emergencies. Like media coverage, NGOs and other humanitarian organizations can influence perceptions about the scale and seriousness of a disaster and the level of humanitarian need. In fact, fundraising efforts often work in conjunction with media coverage, with one supporting and reinforcing the other.

INTERNAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE DONATIONS

Perceived impact of donation

Research shows that private donations are justifiably influenced by perceptions about the impact that a donation will have. A 2012 study found that when people were given the choice of donating to different scenarios, perceptions about the victim's need, the impact of the donation, and the amount donated by others were all significant factors.²¹⁹ Moreover, the perceived need of the victims only influenced decisions when perceived impact of donations was high. A study that tested the donation behaviour of 430 German students also found that respondents were likely to give more when they were confident about the allocation of their donation.²²⁰

In addition to considerations about the potential impact of a donation, private donors are also influenced by other, less objective, factors.

Empathy for, and identification with, people affected by the emergency

In the days and months following the Indian Ocean tsunami, there was a great deal of press coverage about Westerners affected by the disaster. While less than 1 percent of those that died were tourists, they received a large share of the media coverage in donor countries.²²¹ In fact, one study found that 40 percent of Western media coverage about populations affected by the tsunami focused on Westerners.²²²

A 2013 analysis used the examples of the 2004 tsunami and 2008 Chinese earthquakes to test whether knowing more about a geographic area increases the likelihood of donating to help the victims of a disaster there.²²³ The results confirm that the more donors know about an area and the people there, the more likely they are to donate. In a previous study, the same researchers identified that factors including feelings of 'oneness' with the victims and perceptions about the victims (i.e. empathy and positive emotions versus blame) also impact donations.²²⁴

Type of emergency

Independent of the fact that the media is more likely to cover quick-onset natural disasters, private donors also seem to prefer donating to this type of emergency. An example of this trend is funding for the DEC appeals, which have averaged £21m (\$34m) for conflict-related crises and £67m (\$107m) for natural disasters since 1999.²²⁵ A recent study tested this phenomenon by asking people to donate to different types of disasters. The researchers found that people gave more to the victims of natural disasters due to perceptions that those victims were less to blame for their situation.²²⁶ Moreover, the number of people killed in a disaster seems to have a significant impact on the level of donations. A 2013 study found that donation decisions are overwhelmingly based on the number of fatalities rather than the number of survivors affected (i.e. the actual beneficiaries of humanitarian relief).²²⁷

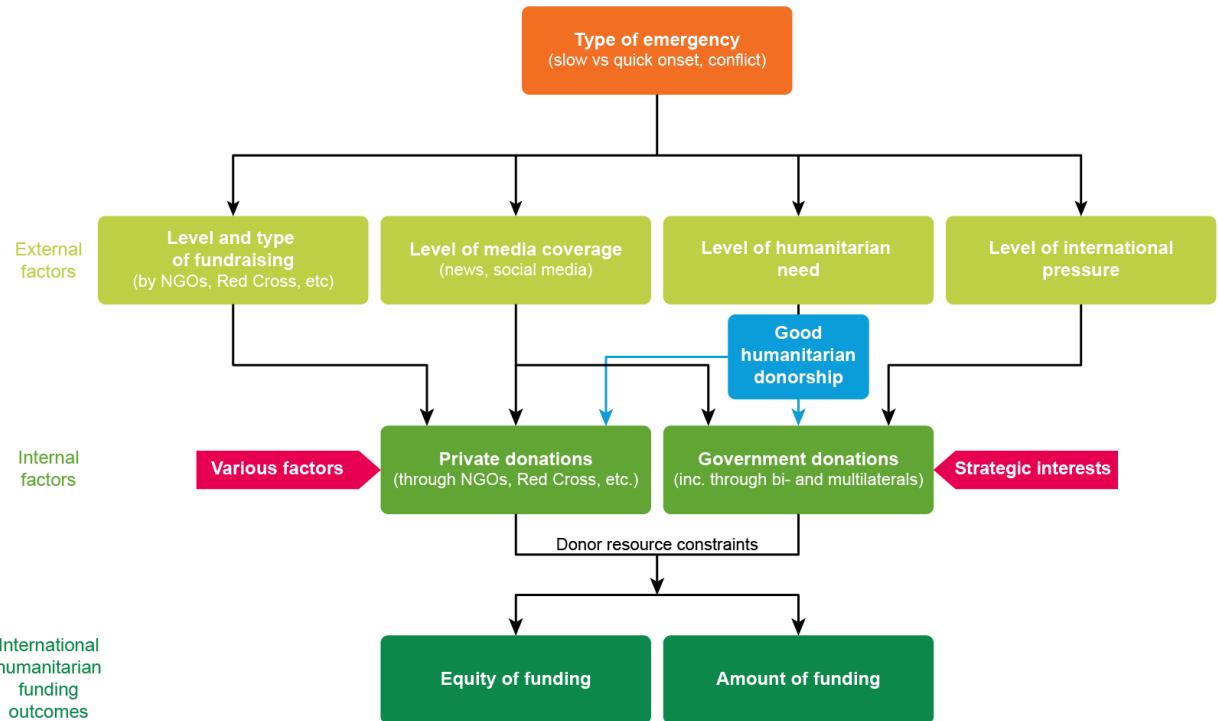
The tendency of private donors to give disproportionately to natural disasters may also be due, in part, to 'immediacy bias' – a phenomenon where people donate more to crises that arouse immediate emotion. In a 2011 study, participants were shown four films about four separate humanitarian crises in Africa. Randomly assigned to watch the films in one of four different orders, the participants donated disproportionately more to the last film.²²⁸ When participants were asked to make a donation decision after watching each film, they gave the largest portion of their set donation amount to the first film in the sequence.

Compassion fade

The public tends to be more likely to donate to help individual people in need rather than larger groups.²²⁹ Moreover, statistics about extreme and horrific events, such as genocide, often fail to convey the reality of these events and, therefore, also fail to motivate people to act.²³⁰

Furthermore, people tend to be more generous when giving directly to individuals in need rather than to people represented by organizations, as with humanitarian appeals.²³¹ These effects have implications for humanitarian emergencies because they indicate that it is often more difficult for private donors to feel compassion for large groups of far away people in need than it is to empathize with a neighbour in need, whose suffering is more tangible and easier to perceive.

Figure 9: Diagram of factors that influence humanitarian funding



B. GOVERNMENT DONORS

External factors that influence donations

Level of humanitarian need

Many governments have stated commitments to providing assistance based on the level of humanitarian need. The European Consensus has even taken steps to codify this commitment. A 2014 study of US disaster assistance allocations to natural disasters and conflicts between 1989 and 2009 found that the level of need was a greater determinant of humanitarian giving than US self-interest.²³² This study contradicts previous research about US humanitarian aid allocations,²³³ and may be an indication that government donor behaviour is improving. However, contemporary studies continue to conclude that factors other than humanitarian need remain a significant influence for many governments.^{234, 235} Interestingly, a 2014 analysis found that countries which allocate funds based on humanitarian need tend to have stronger economies and larger public sectors.²³⁶

Level of international pressure

Governments come under pressure from the UN, NGOs and other governments to donate to humanitarian emergencies. UN OCHA frequently publishes press releases to highlight humanitarian funding needs. Moreover, humanitarian NGOs such as Oxfam often call on donor governments to increase their donations to humanitarian emergencies. In addition to pressure from the UN and NGOs, a ‘bandwagon’ effect exists, with donor governments often influenced by the behaviour of other donors. A study of government donations to 270 recent natural

disasters observed this trend,²³⁷ as did an analysis of the humanitarian aid allocations of the USA, the UK and the European Commission, with the UK found to exert particular influence.²³⁸

Level of media coverage

As with private donors, several studies have observed that the level of media coverage for an emergency also influences the donation behaviour of some governments.^{239, 240} A 2007 study concluded that while donations are higher for disasters of greater severity and those affecting low-income countries, governments also give significantly more to disaster relief when there is increased news coverage.²⁴¹

Internal factors that influence donations

Strategic geopolitical and economic interests

Several studies have found that strategic geopolitical and economic interests play a significant role in government humanitarian assistance allocations. While funding from the USA, the UK and the European Commission was found to be influenced by humanitarian need, it has also been shown to be influenced by the donor's economic interests.²⁴² Furthermore, government donors have been found to be more responsive to countries they identify as strategically important.^{243, 244}

Geographic location also appears to play a role for many donor governments, with studies finding that governments give significantly more when an affected country is nearby or when they share a common language or colonial ties.^{245, 246} One study found that to attract the same level of funding as a neighbouring country, a disaster on the other side of the world would have to cause 160 times the number of deaths. Moreover, to attract the same amount of funding as a former colony, it would need to cause 50 times the number of deaths.²⁴⁷ Finally, a 2014 analysis of three of the most catastrophic natural disasters of the 21st century (Hurricane Katrina in the USA, the Wenchuan earthquake in China, and the Haiti earthquake) shows that 'geographies of generosity' exist around the world, with North American countries more likely to donate to the USA and Asian countries more likely to donate to China.²⁴⁸

7 CONCLUSIONS

As things stand, the humanitarian funding system does not provide sufficient assistance to meet global humanitarian needs. Furthermore, there are significant inequalities in the speed and level of funding for different humanitarian emergencies. While international humanitarian assistance is only a portion of overall humanitarian assistance (which also includes domestic assistance from national and local governments, local organizations and local communities), it continues to play a vital, life-saving role around the world. Insufficient funding is particularly worrying as global humanitarian need is on the rise and is predicted to increase further over the next century.²⁴⁹

Ten years on from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the humanitarian sector has made a number of positive steps towards improving the quality, efficiency and sustainability of humanitarian responses. However, several important challenges remain, particularly related to providing adequate, impartial, needs-based funding for humanitarian emergencies. Good donorship principles and multilateral and NGO pooled funds have been designed to improve the overall level, speed and equity of humanitarian funding, especially for low-profile emergencies that fail to attract media or public attention. However, as yet, these measures have not been able to overcome problems with insufficient funding and inequalities in the funding system.

The research for this report points to the following conclusions about ways to reduce the impact of future emergencies and to continue to improve the equity and quality of humanitarian responses.

Increase international funding and work to reduce the impact of future emergencies

While funding for UN-coordinated appeals continues to hover at around 65 percent, the international community has sufficient combined resources to close the funding gap. Closing this gap would provide much needed relief to millions of people affected by natural disasters and conflict every year.

Investment in DRR and resilience. Long-term, reducing vulnerability to disasters through poverty reduction, strengthening of public services, and investment in DRR – including improving local capacity to prepare for and respond to natural disasters – has the potential to prevent and/or reduce the costs and overall impacts of humanitarian emergencies. However, funding for prevention and preparedness remains low. Spending on DRR accounted for just 6 percent of OECD DAC humanitarian assistance in 2012 and an estimated 0.7 percent of OECD DAC non-emergency development assistance in 2011.²⁵⁰

Secure impartial, needs-based international funding

Government donations: While many governments have expressed commitments to providing assistance based on humanitarian need, inequalities remain in the funding system. However, when consistently put into practice, formal commitments that seek to hold donors accountable to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship can help to ensure that donation decisions are based on humanitarian need. Increased contributions to pooled funds can also improve the equity and speed of humanitarian responses, as long as funding is quickly made available to front-line humanitarian organisations. More research is needed to determine whether further efforts, such as a model of mandatory government contributions toward UN appeals, would be a feasible and efficient way to increase annual funding commitments and the overall efficiency and quality of humanitarian responses. Such a model exists for peacekeeping expenses, which are apportioned using a formula developed by UN Member States that takes account of a country's relative wealth.²⁵¹

Private donations: While the generosity of private donors is a critical component of global humanitarian funding, private donations may never be truly proportional to humanitarian needs due to inequalities in the level of media coverage for different humanitarian emergencies and the range of factors that influence private donors. Nonetheless, steps could be taken to attempt to improve the impartiality and efficiency of private donations. For example, increasing regular giving and contributions to multilateral and NGO pooled funds might help to ensure that private funding is more needs-based. However, further research is needed to understand whether this might also impact the overall level of private funding. Moreover, these efforts would likely only be successful if humanitarian agencies worked to build the trust of private donors that their donations would be well spent and used good communication strategies to demonstrate the impact of donations. As it stands, NGOs receive a large portion of their income from costly, public-facing appeals, while contributions to pooled funds are very low. In 2013, the CERF received just over \$100,000 in private funding.²⁵²

Continue to improve the quality, efficiency and sustainability of humanitarian responses

The response to the Indian Ocean tsunami highlighted gaps in the humanitarian system. Many lessons were learned and the system was strengthened as a result. However, more effort is needed to continue to improve the quality, efficiency and sustainability of humanitarian responses.

Coordination of the humanitarian system. Continued effort is needed to address issues that cut across clusters, such as gender and DRR, and to better involve domestic actors (such as local governments and civil society organizations) in responses.²⁵³

Addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable populations. While inclusive humanitarian responses are a global priority (promoted by international measures such as the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles and Sphere standards), more effort is needed to ensure that this priority is consistently put into practice.

Capacity building and supporting local civil society. Although fostering the capacity of local communities is an internationally recognised principle, concerted effort is needed to improve capacity-building elements in humanitarian interventions, particularly as they relate to strengthening local capacity for disaster preparedness and responding to emergencies.

Consideration of pre-existing conflicts. There is an ongoing need for humanitarian agencies to devote more effort to designing conflict-sensitive approaches that either de-escalate or at least avoid exacerbating tensions between different groups.

Gather better humanitarian funding data

There are systems in place to record humanitarian donations from governments and private donors, but more accurate and timely reporting is needed. Private donations comprise roughly one quarter of humanitarian funding, yet these donations are currently underreported. It is important to gain a clearer understanding of the trends surrounding this type of funding. Moreover, there is very little available data on the role of remittances during humanitarian emergencies, non-monetary donations of goods and services and domestic humanitarian responses.

APPENDIX

Data sources

UN Financial Tracking Service: The UN Financial Tracking Service (FTS) is a global database of humanitarian funding. Data is self-reported by donors, UN agencies, OCHA, the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and NGOs. Donations are recorded daily based on date committed. UN FTS advises using monthly or quarterly data in analysis as some decision dates may be approximate. UN FTS is managed by OCHA and can be found at <http://fts.unocha.org>.

Oxfam Great Britain (GB) fundraising data: Oxfam GB historic appeals income from the public (individuals and corporations) from 1999 to 2014. Excludes donations that came to Oxfam through DEC Appeals. For data from 1999 to 2010, the fiscal year ran from May to April; for data from 2011 to 2014, the fiscal year ran from April to March. For ease of analysis, all data was scaled to the annual year and year-end balancing is recorded in month 12 of the fiscal year (i.e. April for 1999 to 2010, and March for 2011 to 2014).

Factiva data on news media coverage: Factiva is a global database of over 8,000 publications with content from 118 countries, including national and international newspapers, newswires, business journals, market research and analysts' reports, and websites.²⁵⁴ Using a set of standardized search terms, data on news media coverage was accessed from Factiva from six leading online and print US and UK newspapers in terms of total circulation. *The New York Times, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Sun, The Telegraph, and The Guardian*. These data include the source, author, title of article, and word count. While only a selection of data was used in the final analysis, data were retrieved for the 30 selected crises from January 1, 2003 to August 15, 2014.

Methodology

Three categories of disaster were defined: quick-onset natural disasters, slow-onset natural disasters and conflict situations. This designation is based on existing research about donor behaviour towards different types of crises and the assumption that these three categories tend to create similar types of humanitarian need. A total of 30 humanitarian crises were selected based on severity (number of people affected) and to ensure a variety of disaster types and geographic contexts. When an emergency involved more than one category (i.e., the 2011 Somalia famine, which was caused by both drought and conflict), the category it was included under was based on the primary driver behind humanitarian need, as identified by the UN OCHA appeal documents. Regional appeals and appeals not tied to a specific crisis (i.e. West Africa, Great Lakes Region, appeals for building UN capacity, etc.) were excluded from analysis.

The start date for the analysis is based on EM-DAT data (for quick onset natural disasters) and UN documents for (slow onset natural disasters). For ongoing conflicts, a start date was chosen based on UN documents and the availability of reliable data on the number of people affected (with a preference towards periods of intensity, based on the number of people affected). For ease of analysis, start dates were placed on the first day of the month that the emergency began or closest to when the emergency began (or the defined start date for ongoing conflicts). Start date and number of people affected were sourced from UN OCHA appeal documents (including UN OCHA crisis overviews, strategic response plans, humanitarian action plans, and mid-year reviews) for all emergencies except for Cuba Hurricane Ike (sourced from the 2008 CERF Annual Report on use of CERF grants) and the Colombia conflict (sourced from the UNHCR annual report – number of refugees, asylum-seekers, returning refugees and internally displaced).

UN appeals were used to define the emergencies and relevant dates for analysis; however, the UN FTS funding data includes all donations towards an emergency during the time period (whether it was attached to an appeal or not).

Limitations

This report analyses data on funding for UN-coordinated appeals. UN-coordinated appeals do not cover all needs of all people facing humanitarian crisis in a given year. Moreover, donations recorded in UN FTS towards these appeals do not cover the total amount of international humanitarian assistance or domestic humanitarian assistance available in a given year. However, UN-coordinated appeals are the best available barometer of global humanitarian need and funding for these appeals serves as an indicator of shortfalls and inequalities in humanitarian funding.

While UN FTS is the most comprehensive record of international humanitarian assistance from a range of different donors (including governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, and NGOs), not all donations or available assistance is recorded through this system and, due to the self-reported nature of these data, inaccuracies may exist.

This analysis uses data from Factiva on online and print news articles for six leading USA and UK newspapers (based on online and print circulation). Choosing a selection of news sources necessarily limits the scope of the coverage. However, because these newspapers were selected based on circulation, one can be fairly confident that they serve as a reasonable proxy for trends in news media coverage in the USA and the UK.

The three types of crises defined in this analysis present challenges when analysing news media coverage. News stories about natural disasters generally include a humanitarian element while coverage of conflicts is often more complex, including coverage of political issues (i.e. ceasefires, peace negotiations, etc.). Additionally, for conflicts like those in Iraq and Afghanistan, news coverage may include stories related to USA and UK involvement in these conflicts (i.e. military spending, battle deaths, etc.).

Table 2: List of emergencies

Emergency	Disaster type ²⁵⁵	Region ²⁵⁶	Analysis start date ²⁵⁷	People affected ²⁵⁸
Yemen conflict	Conflict	North Africa/Middle East	1 January 2012	10,500,000
Afghanistan conflict	Conflict	South Asia	1 January 2012	9,000,000
DRC conflict	Conflict	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 December 2010	7,500,000
Iraq conflict	Conflict	North Africa/Middle East	1 December 2009	6,629,070
Sudan conflict	Conflict	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 January 2005	5,520,000
South Sudan conflict	Conflict	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 December 2012	4,600,000
Syria conflict	Conflict	North Africa/Middle East	1 January 2012	2,500,000
Colombia conflict	Conflict	Latin America/Caribbean	1 March 2003	2,000,000
Libya conflict	Conflict	North Africa/Middle East	1 June 2011	1,660,000
Chad refugee crisis	Conflict	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 January 2006	242,500
Typhoon Haiyan	Quick	East Asia/Pacific	1 November 2013	14,000,000
Indian Ocean tsunami	Quick	East Asia/Pacific	1 December 2004	5,000,000
Kashmir earthquake	Quick	South Asia	1 October 2005	4,000,000
Myanmar cyclone Nargis	Quick	East Asia/Pacific	1 May 2008	2,400,000
Haiti earthquake	Quick	Latin America/Caribbean	1 January 2010	2,100,000
Madagascar cyclone Gafilo	Quick	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 March 2004	773,000
Mozambique cyclone Flavio	Quick	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 March 2007	435,000
Peru earthquake	Quick	Latin America/Caribbean	1 August 2007	200,000
Cuba hurricane Ike	Quick	Latin America/Caribbean	1 September 2008	200,000
Iran earthquake	Quick	North Africa/Middle East	1 January 2004	200,000
Bangladesh floods	Slow	South Asia	1 June 2004	33,000,000
Pakistan floods	Slow	South Asia	1 August 2010	20,000,000
Somalia famine	Slow	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 September 2011	4,000,000
Kenya food crisis drought	Slow	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 June 2011	3,750,000
Niger food crisis	Slow	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 July 2005	3,600,000
Korea DPR food crisis	Slow	East Asia/Pacific	1 April 2012	2,800,000
Burkina Faso drought	Slow	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 December 2011	2,800,000
Guatemala drought	Slow	Latin America/Caribbean	1 March 2009	2,700,000
Ethiopia floods drought	Slow	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 November 2005	2,600,000
Eritrea drought	Slow	Sub-Saharan Africa	1 January 2003	1,700,000

NOTES

- 1 Based on definition used by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- 2 Based on definition used by Global Humanitarian Assistance.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Based on definition used by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- 7 Based on definition used by Global Humanitarian Assistance.
- 8 J. Telford, J. Cosgrave and R. Houghton (2006) 'Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report', London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, <http://www.alnap.org/resource/3535> (last accessed September 2014)
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Oxfam calculation based on number of people affected as detailed in UN OCHA appeal documents.
- 12 Based on 2004 data from World Development Indicators, The World Bank.
- 13 Development Initiatives, Global Humanitarian Assistance (2014). 'Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014', Bristol, UK, <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/report/gha-report-2014> (last accessed October 2014)
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 UN OCHA (2012) 'World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2013', https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/WHDT_2013%20WEB.pdf (last accessed November 2014)
- 16 UNHCR (2014) 'World Refugee Day: Global forced displacement tops 50 million for first time in post-World War II era', News Stories, June 20. <http://www.unhcr.org/53a155bc6.html> (last accessed November 2014)
- 17 Defined as emergency humanitarian response from domestic governments, security and armed forces, local NGOs, religious organizations, and local people (as defined by Global Humanitarian Assistance).
- 18 Development Initiatives (2014) op. cit.
- 19 US Geological Survey (2014) 'Largest Earthquakes in the World Since 1900', March 11, http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/world/10_largest_world.php (last accessed September 2014)
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 J. Telford, J. Cosgrave and R. Houghton (2006) op. cit.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 UN OCHA (2005) 'Indian Ocean Earthquake –Tsunami 2005 Mid-Term Review', https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/MTR_2005_IndianOceanTsunami.pdf (last accessed September 2014)
- 25 D. Strömborg (2007) 'Natural disasters, economic development, and humanitarian aid', The Journal of Economic Perspectives 21(3): 199–222
- 26 J. Telford, J. Cosgrave and R. Houghton (2006) op. cit.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
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