the
Humanitarian Leader

CENTRE FOR
HUMANITARIAN
LEADERSHIP

2022 EDITION

THE HUMANITARIAN LEADER: 2022 EDITION

About

An independent and bold voice for people working in the aid system, the *Humanitarian Leader* provides a platform for humanitarian professionals to test ideas and insight gained in humanitarian responses in an academic setting.

We are interested in telling the stories that challenge our collective assumptions about the humanitarian system. We welcome submissions that deal with concepts of humanitarian leadership, as well as ideas useful to humanitarian decision-makers, or that interact with our core understanding of the system.

Areas of focus include international humanitarian architecture, ethics, response design and implementation, evaluation methodology, strategic foresight, and innovation, but all papers must inform humanitarian leadership.

The Centre for Humanitarian Leadership acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future.

Contributors

Publisher: The Centre for Humanitarian Leadership
Editor-in-chief: Dr. Nazanin Zadeh-Cummings
Production Editor: Cara Schultz
Design: Diana De León

CONTENTS

Humanitarianism at home

DANIEL MCAVOY, ANNALISE INGRAM AND LUKE BEARUP

Daniel lectures at Deakin University in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and teaches units within the Masters of Humanitarian Assistance. He is engaged in research on policy and practices associated with state-building interventions, transnational policing, and humanitarian interventions, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific (Indonesia and Solomon Islands). Daniel has over 20 years' experience working and researching in humanitarian aid and international development.

Annalise is a humanitarian practitioner and writer currently working with UN OCHA Myanmar as an Accountability to Affected Populations and Community Engagement Specialist. Prior to this she worked with Australian Red Cross in Australia's Northern Territory, most recently as Team Leader for Emergency Services. She has also worked in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia in communications and development and holds degrees in media, international studies and Indonesian language.

Luke is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, Honourary Lecturer at the School of Sociology, ANU, and practitioner in humanitarian assistance and development. Luke's research aims to apply the tools of sociology to understanding local perspectives on social issues and international aid, and involve communities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and interventions. Luke is working for the WFP as a Senior Analyst, deployed by RedR and Australia Assists to research humanitarian assistance and social cohesion in Amman, Jordan.

Image: CFA firefighters battle a blaze in the 2020 NSW bushfires. © Alamy Stock Photo.

Abstract

Australia has faced various unprecedented challenges in recent years: the extended bushfire season of 2019–20, widespread and increasingly severe storms and flooding, and the grave health and socio-economic impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Such events have prompted greater awareness of our shared vulnerability to disasters. They have also exacerbated food insecurity, homelessness, poverty, family violence, and increased the vulnerability of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. Where disasters and similar issues are identified in low-income countries, they are typically framed in terms of humanitarian need and may even be the subject of international humanitarian action. Why is it then, that the language and practices of humanitarianism are not ordinarily applied in Australian settings? What indeed is humanitarianism when it is not international? What, if anything, do international experiences of humanitarianism have to offer in Australian contexts? This paper describes a research program that has been prompted by these questions and shares some preliminary findings concerning the perspectives of Australian practitioners on the relevance of humanitarian values, knowledge, and practices in Australia.

Leadership relevance

This paper explores the relevance of humanitarian principles, practices and knowledge within Australian contexts. It argues that the skills and knowledge developed by humanitarian leaders working internationally are directly transferable to many contexts within Australia, including emergency management, refugee settlement and the COVID-19 response. The paper reports initial findings from interviews with 15 humanitarian leaders to examine how they understand the notion of 'humanitarianism at home'.

Introduction

What is the relevance of humanitarianism in Australia? While many Australians can conjure hazy notions of what humanitarians do overseas—images of aid workers delivering convoys of food to victims of war, famine or disaster come to mind—it is less clear whether or how humanitarianism is practiced in Australia during times of disaster or in response to human needs. This lack of clarity arguably derives from a long-standing association with humanitarian action as an international project aimed at the amelioration of "distant suffering" (Boltanski, 1999) by the "heroic humanitarian worker... [as] righteous foreigner" (Slim, 2010, p. 1205). Historically, this popular construction has not only concealed the relationship between Western humanitarian aid and Western imperialism, but further perpetuated a myth that humanitarian response is something that only happens 'over there' among lower income countries. Yet if humanitarian principles and values are indeed universal, then the exercise of humanitarian values, knowledge, and practices is relevant whether at home or abroad. Towards the aim of deepening our understanding of humanitarianism and decolonising humanitarian practice, this paper describes some preliminary findings derived from the perspectives of Australian practitioners on the notion of 'humanitarianism at home'.

In some regards, emerging conversations about humanitarian practice in domestic contexts have been imposed by recent 'unprecedented' disasters in numerous high-income countries, such as Australia, the US, and across western Europe. In the Australian context such events include devastating bushfires during 2019–20, widespread and damaging storms and flooding during 2021, and the ongoing health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19. These events have prompted an acute awareness of our shared vulnerability to disasters and have even, at times, inverted the more expected dynamic of Australia as a provider of emergency assistance to other countries (Book & Coghlan, 2020). At the opening of Parliament in February 2020, amid the devastating 2019–20 fire season, for example, the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison acknowledged the scale of the devastation across the nation and noted the offers of assistance coming from as many as 70 countries:

> "Over 300 firefighters were sent from the United States, Canada and New Zealand, to whom we are so grateful. We also had offers of assistance from the UAE, which is greatly appreciated. There was military assistance from New Zealand, the United States, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore and Japan, and from our wonderful family in PNG and Fiji ... Our Pacific family has been so incredibly generous. Our

neighbours, such as Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Solomon Islands, have given generously from not much—reminding me of the widow's mite—to our bushfire relief" (Parliament of Australia, 2020).

The destruction from the bushfires and far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 have been such that the normal government structures and processes that aim to manage emergencies and enable recovery were overwhelmed (Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements [RCNDA], 2020; Atkinson and Curnin, 2020). Consequently, government at all levels has been called to better prepare for and respond to disasters, leading to the creation of initiatives such as Bushfire Recovery Victoria in January 2020, Resilience NSW in May 2020, and the establishment of a Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (RCNDA, 2020). At a local level, these events have also challenged many Australian communities, raising questions about their capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disaster (Tin, Hart and Ciottone, 2020). The experience of these emergency events has also led to many positive examples of community-led recovery and innovative models of government service delivery (Victorian Council of Social Service, 2020).

Does the concept of humanitarianism then simply not have utility in Australian settings?

The successive crises of recent years have also precipitated greater engagement from traditional and non-traditional humanitarian actors, the private sector, and not-for-profits. The involvement of humanitarian organisations like the Australian Red Cross was already well established and reflects their pre-existing humanitarian mandates. However, what has been striking is the growing number of not-for-profit actors now operating in sectors that would certainly be considered humanitarian in overseas disaster settings. This includes sectors represented in the United Nations humanitarian cluster system such as shelter, protection, early recovery, health, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and food security. For example, addressing food insecurity and food waste is a key focus of organisations such as OzHarvest, Second Bite, Fareshare, FoodBank, Halal Food Aid, and Sikh Volunteers Australia. Although these organisations have reported recent and dramatic expansions of their operations, their experiences also indicate that food security issues in Australia predates the recent crises due to bushfires, storms, and the COVID-19 pandemic (Convery and Henriques-Gomes, 2021).

While some cross-fertilisation between the international humanitarian sector and domestic emergency management and community service provision is evident, in part due to the significant transfer of personnel and expertise from international humanitarian roles to domestic roles, there appears more generally to be a major disconnect between the principles, practices, and approaches of the international humanitarian system and those of domestic emergency management. It is notable that only passing reference to 'humanitarian' or 'humanitarian services' can be identified in the voluminous grey literature that has emerged in the wake of the 2019–20 fires and COVID-19. Does the concept of humanitarianism then simply not have utility in Australian settings?

Reading against the grain of a literature which is largely silent regarding the synergies of international humanitarianism and domestic disaster response, there have been some attempts to draw these areas together (e.g. Flint, Henty and Hurley, 2020; RCNDA, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). In the context of the 2019–20 bushfire response some commentators have identified the emergence of "hyper-local, agile humanitarian responses to the crisis using the knowledge, skills and resources they had on hand" (Wilson et al., 2020, p.74). Conversely, others have noted examples of bushfire recovery interventions that made similar mistakes, and experienced parallel challenges, to those consistently met in international humanitarian responses. For example, the task of managing unsolicited bilateral donations, or donated goods, is a recurring problem of international humanitarian and domestic disaster responses, with most responding agencies indicating a strong preference for cash donations instead (Flint, Henty and Hurley, 2020). Yet, it remains striking that use of the words 'humanitarian' and 'humanitarianism' is mostly absent in Australia, where the structured and legislative language of emergency management, disaster response and recovery is predominant. Consequently, there is limited reference to, or intentional application of, humanitarian principles and practices in the domestic context, along with limited exploration of the potential for domestic responses to be informed by lessons drawn from international humanitarian action.

While comprehensive or formal attempts to apply international humanitarian principles, practices and knowledge in domestic responses may be limited, anecdotally there is a significant transfer of experience and knowledge from the international sector to Australian contexts. As the career paths of many of the practitioners interviewed for this research reveal, the boundaries between international and domestic work are highly fluid. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic but also reflecting a significant shift in the international humanitarian sector toward

increased local leadership and reduced expatriate roles in many international responses, many seasoned expatriate humanitarian professionals have reportedly returned to Australia to take on various domestic emergency management and disaster recovery roles. This represents a dramatic shift in the humanitarian workforce with implications for both domestic and international emergency management that have not yet been fully explored.

These opening paragraphs have sought to demonstrate that it is timely to give renewed reflection to the relevance of humanitarianism in domestic settings. These settings include various forms of work in domestic emergency management and recovery, in community development, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and social service delivery aimed at increasing wellbeing and resilience across a range of areas (e.g., health, aged care, disability support, homelessness, refugees and asylum seekers, etc.). While such 'social services' are rarely described as humanitarian in Australian contexts, when such activities are conducted overseas they often framed as forms of humanitarian action. Why is this case and is it important?

This paper aims to encourage a conversation about the meaning and relevance of humanitarianism at home. Having briefly outlined some of the contemporary events which have prompted the emergence of this conversation, the following section provides a historical perspective and explores academic and grey literature which frames our knowledge of humanitarianism in Australia. Next, we describe our research program, the methodology being employed, and the data collection presently underway. The findings and discussion are then focused on the initial responses of the research participants to our question about the meaning of the phrase 'humanitarianism at home'. Building on these initial findings, the paper concludes by identifying a set of questions to be further explored as part of an ongoing research program.

What is humanitarianism?

The founding idea of humanitarianism is the recognition of shared humanity—a belief in the basic dignity of all human beings regardless of race, status, age, gender, ability, or geography (Slim, 2015). The principle of humanity has come to be identified as the first of four core humanitarian principles, along with impartiality, neutrality, and independence. However, in the broadest sense, as adopted in this research, it is recognition of our shared humanity and a desire to promote human welfare that characterises humanitarianism. From recognition of our shared humanity emerges the humanitarian imperative. That is, a "right to receive humanitarian assistance and to

offer it" (International Federation of the Red Cross, 1995), in order to save lives, prevent suffering and promote human dignity (Slim, 2002).

In the contemporary era, the guardian of humanitarian principles has been the International Committee of the Red Cross. The four core principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence originated as four of the seven fundamental principles intended to guide the Red Cross movement (Bartnett and Weiss, 2008). The remaining fundamental principles of voluntary service, unity and universality were deemed specific to the Red Cross movement, but the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence have since been widely adopted by most international humanitarian organisations and for many, define humanitarian action (Barnett and Weiss, 2008). Significantly, while some scholars have pointed out that humanitarianism is popularly understood in terms of international action to relieve "distant suffering" (Boltanski, 1999), there is nothing inherent to humanitarianism that implies that it needs to be international in scope. This gives rise to the key question explored in this paper, which is, what is humanitarianism when it is not international? In other words, what is humanitarianism when it is at home?

In one letter to the editor in 1848, humanitarians advocating for the abolition of the death penalty were ridiculed for their "maudlin, blundering compassion", for their "mingled weakness and effrontery" and mocked for their "super-celestial philanthropy".

The recognition of a moral obligation to help others in need is ancient and common to all major religious and cultural traditions (Yeophantong, 2014). However, the appearance of the word 'humanitarian' in the English language seems to be relatively recent (Macquarie Dictionary, 2017). The term was not widely used in the Australian or British media until well into the 19th Century. From the 1830s onwards, Australian newspapers begin for the first time to refer to various individuals and a wide range of reform movements as 'humanitarian'. Among other things, humanitarians in the 1830s argued for "matured plans of effective [re] conciliation" between the Aboriginal population and European settlers (Philaleth, 1833). Others in the 1840s advocated for the abolition of capital punishment, for prison reform and an end to convict transportation. In the 1850s, humanitarians in the Australian colonies celebrated the abolition of the slave trade and organised relief efforts to address famine in Donegal, Ireland (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal,

1858). Then, as now, there were a wide range of highly divisive debates in the daily press. Frequently, the term 'humanitarian' was used to denigrate progressives and social reformers. In one letter to the editor in 1848, humanitarians advocating for the abolition of the death penalty were ridiculed for their "maudlin, blundering compassion", for their "mingled weakness and effrontery" and mocked for their "super-celestial philanthropy" (Harpur, 1848).

In the 1850s and 1860s a specific form of humanitarianism with an international focus entered the popular imagination. The coordination of assistance provided to wounded soldiers during the Crimean War by Florence Nightingale (1854–56), after the Battle of Solferino by Henri Dunant (1859), and during the American Civil War (1861–65) by Clara Barton gave each of these individuals a measure of humanitarian celebrity status. Growing sentiment for humanitarian activities resulted in the foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (1863) and ratification of the 1864 Geneva Convention (Maxwell and Walker, 2008). This sparked a trend of increasing institutionalisation and internationalisation of humanitarianism—a trend that has continued into the contemporary era (Barnett and Weiss, 2008). For the better part of 150 years the popular imagination of the humanitarian has been captured by an exotic vision of international aid work, led by expatriate representatives of various international or non-government organisations (de Waal and de Waal, 1999).

What is humanitarianism at home?

In this paper the concept of 'humanitarianism at home' is juxtaposed against international humanitarian action, which we argue is the dominant form of modern humanitarianism. A small but important body of academic literature has similarly focused on humanitarian action within Australia and other high-income countries. The phrase 'everyday humanitarianism' used by Richey (2018, p. 628) draws attention both to the manifold ways that 'citizen/consumers' engage in humanitarianism and try to 'make a difference' as well as the everyday practices of humanitarian aid workers. In the Australian context, in a study of local community-led responses to the 2019–20 bushfires, Wilson et al. (2020, p. 13) identify a framework of "everyday humanitarian behaviours that can be enacted in any humanitarian context". Research by Olliff (2018) draws attention to the 'everyday humanitarianism' of refugee diaspora organisations in Australia as humanitarian actors in their own right, who not only provide support to members of their community in Australia but also actively respond to the needs of 'their people' located in their homeland or in sites of displacement. Vivekananthan and Connors (2019) have similarly highlighted the important humanitarian assistance provided following disasters

to the Pacific through Australia-based diaspora networks.

The term 'domestic humanitarianism' has also gained analytic purchase and has been used by Altman to describe advocacy work and support provided within Australia to refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. Altman (2018, p. 2) blogs how her notion of "the domestic humanitarian combines a universalised humanitarian impulse with feelings of duty or responsibility tied to citizenship: providing 'humanitarianism at home'". Other scholars also use the term 'domestic humanitarianism' to describe the controversial work of archetypal international humanitarian organisation Medicins Sans Frontiers to provide services within France (Hanrieder and Galesne, 2021).

Through our conception of 'humanitarianism at home' we seek to provide a lens to examine a wide range of activities that would be considered humanitarian if they were carried out overseas. These activities include but are not necessarily limited to:

•   emergency management
•   disaster prevention, response and recovery
•   services in support of refugees and people seeking asylum
•   foodbanks and related services focused on reducing food insecurity
•   aged care, disability support and palliative care
•   crisis and emergency accommodation and associated protection activities.

As the broad scope of potential settings outlined above already foreshadows, this paper adopts a broader than usual definition of 'humanitarianism'. 'Humanitarianism' carries a range of definitions. As Olliff observes, in broad terms "humanitarianism has been taken to mean an ethos or 'cluster of sentiments' that places value on human beings and compels action in response to human suffering" (2019, p. 2). This describes rather well the wide scope of actions that take place in both domestic and international settings to address human needs in times of disaster or suffering. While international humanitarian action is now subject to expansive academic and grey literature, consideration of the relevance of humanitarianism at home is largely absent from academic conversations.

Methodology and sample

Toward the aim of exploring the concept of 'humanitarianism at home', the research program was launched with an online event held on 4 November 2021[1]. The event gathered a range of speakers, with domestic and international experience, and included some of Australia's leading social justice advocates and champions. The presenters were each invited to share about their work and their reflections on humanitarianism in Australia. Invariably, they shied away from identifying as humanitarians. Instead, their presentations tended to emphasise our collective responsibility for the vulnerable and the alleviation of their suffering, and the actions we can take to empower marginalised groups and to protect their dignity and advance their human rights.

Commencing with the event participants, we invited expressions of interest from those interested in joining a qualitative interview in the topic, and/or nominating colleagues who might be interested in receiving an invitation. Invitation emails were sent to potential research participants, including practitioners working in disaster response and recovery, emergency management, social and community services in Australia. All were invited to contribute to the research by sharing knowledge and experience related to humanitarian values, knowledge, and practices in Australian contexts.

Following our receipt of expressions of interest, potential respondents were then sent an email with a plain language statement attached. The potential participants were invited to confirm their interest in participating and nominate a preferred time. Each interview commenced with an opportunity for participants to ask any questions about the plain language statement and commenced once the participants provided verbal consent and confirmed that they would formally send an email confirming this in writing.

The qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted via the teleconferencing platform Zoom. Audio recordings were subsequently converted into text using the transcription services provided by Rev, which included a combination of human transcription and artificial intelligence. The interviews were conducted between November and December 2021, with further interviews scheduled for January and February 2022. This paper presents preliminary findings derived from the initial 15 interviews conducted in late 2021. Specifically, our findings are focused on the participants' responses to the opening question: "You have kindly agreed to participate in this research project about 'humanitarianism at home'. Please explain what this phrase means to you?"

The sample included 15 participants, comprised of eight males and seven females, all of whom identified as Australian. The participants generally occupied senior positions within their government, non-government, and corporate organisations, having worked in their fields for an average of 15 years.

We employed an inductive qualitative approach aimed at understanding "social processes in context" (Esterberg, 2002, p. 2). The social processes in this context relate to the conceptualisation of humanitarianism by practitioners working in Australia and how they relate this notion to their everyday practice. The transcriptions were imported into Nvivo software and contrasting conceptions of the phrase were coded to discrete nodes.

The data reported in this paper is preliminary and reflects our initial steps towards developing a grounded theory, aligned with the methodology outlined by Charmaz (2005; 2006; 2008; 2014). Through employing grounded theory methodology, we aim to sketch out what this phrase means to the research participants, towards the broader aim of developing a working theory of how practitioners apply the concept of humanitarianism in their lives.

Most of the research participants have worked and volunteered in Australia and abroad, in various areas that relate to resilience, preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and social services more broadly. This research aims to reflect on this emerging conversation that has been gaining momentum in the past few years.

Findings and discussion

A host of discrete meanings were ascribed to the phrase 'humanitarianism at home' by the participants. At this preliminary stage of analysis, six predominant responses are described which reflect on the phrase as a multifaceted and poorly understood concept, that provides an interesting opportunity for learning. The participants further associated the phrase with a set of core guiding principles and with the international professional humanitarian sector itself, the influence of which was considered limited in the domestic context. Interestingly, humanitarianism was generally described as being at odds with emergency management and traditional command and control approaches, or otherwise as a strategy for bringing cultural change within the sector.

Multifaceted, poorly understood and an interesting opportunity for learning

The phrase 'humanitarianism at home' was encountered by the research participants as encompassing a range of meanings and they expressed genuine interest in

articulating these. In addition to describing what the phrase meant to them personally, many participants further described a host of meanings associated with the term. As explained by Janelle, "I could think about it in multifaceted ways ... humanitarianism means different things to different people". Jacinda concurred, pointing out that the:

"...term humanitarianism in Australia, is you know, [understood] quite differently, it's [laughing], you might be working in, you know, working with animals or working in a ... you know, a local charity...!"

While identifying humanitarianism as multifaceted, Janelle argued that it remains poorly understood in Australia by:

"... lots of people, even if they work in social work or social services in Australia, [many people don't know about] ... humanitarian principles and standards. You know ... Australia is not a rights-based country in many ways. We're not about our rights ...You know, it's not ingrained in people's brains ... [they] just automatically think they have them... it's not something we really question or understand".

Similarly, Naomi considered that "humanitarianism means different things to different people". She further described her perspective as a practitioner, that:

"... humanitarianism at home is about response to ... disasters particularly in the domestic context. I would think of that immediately ... preparedness for that, responses to that ... as opposed to community service work or development work".

Similarly, for Bob, the phrase 'humanitarianism at home' reflects:

"... a broader humanitarian context that includes a multitude of, um, uh, I would say, outcomes in, in regard of, you know, prevention work, preparedness work, but you leave response out, but then also take in recovery as well ... So, yeah, it, it is an interesting term. I've sort of found that with Fire and Rescue ... I was heavily involved in, in developing our natural disaster and humanitarian capability... driving that forward from being a pure rescue focused ... to be a broader, um, more capacity building, prevention preparedness, uh, and recovery capability ... I don't know if I've answered your question that well ... it is such a broad, broad term".

Among the respondents there was a general sense that their own understandings of humanitarianism, as derived from the international humanitarian sector and its guiding principles, differed somewhat from those of average citizens. Similarly, there was a shared belief among the respondents that further reflection on

humanitarianism in Australia would be an illuminating and productive endeavour. Jacinda elaborated:

"So, we define it in a very specific way... But I guess I'm, I'm just keen for us to join the dots and to sort of say that people have a right to receive assistance everywhere, and we can learn from the different ways in which that happens internationally ...

I feel like the term humanitarianism is something that is used very much on the international stage in particular context, and I know that this is something from us in the civilian humanitarian world so when I say that I guess I'm talking about the UN, Red Cross movement, NGOs, you know because humanitarianism means something quite different if you talk to military actors ... I'm passionate about it because I feel like humanitarianism is something that is seen as something that we do elsewhere to people who are other ... in far flung places..."

"I'm passionate about it because I feel like humanitarianism is something that is seen as something that we do elsewhere to people who are other ... in far flung places..."

Humanitarian Principles and the International Professional Humanitarian Sector

The participants generally enjoyed the opportunity to reflect and tended to emphasise the relevance of humanitarian principles to the Australian domestic scene. Responding to the question about 'humanitarianism at home', Jacinda explained that humanitarianism within the international sector has a:

"distinct definition, ... being based on those four key principles humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality ... And I suppose, when you look at a domestic context people are not talking about those principles so much. And, and it doesn't mean that it's any less political here".

Janelle similarly emphasised the relevance of humanitarian principles:

"... I guess what generically comes up to me [in response to the question] is you know, responding to an emergency or disaster in Australia, but with a set of principles and practices that are kind of international if that makes sense ... having a practice of standards at home around how we respond to these different emergencies".

Jim responded by reflecting on his experiences at home and abroad, and the relative lack of clarity around the application of humanitarian principles in Australia:

"So, I have found that, internationally, it's quite clear what the roles are, and it's quite a large mandate actually, and the way humanitarian workers work overseas, I think there's sort of, an agreed code of working that, you know, you are working collaboratively, um, with a whole lot of organisations, including the government of that, of that country. And I think it's a lot less defined in Australia".

While professing the relevance of humanitarian principles in Australia, there was acknowledgment of the tensions between these principles and associated challenges in applying them. Furthermore, professional tensions were identified between those who had worked domestically and those who had worked abroad, and between development and or social services, and humanitarian assistance.

Naomi considered that "... to me as a practitioner, humanitarianism at home is about response to disasters particularly in, um, the domestic context". Without further prompting, Naomi then elaborated further to include:

"preparedness for that, response to that... as opposed to community service work or development work ... and I think, yeah, it's, it's based on particular values of, um [humanity] neutrality and impartiality, independence".

In response to an invitation to elaborate on this distinction between humanitarianism at home and community service or development work, Naomi explained:

"So professionally we consider that there's kind of different parts of a continuum in, in this, this work broadly that there's development work, which internationally we would call it development work. And domestically I think it would be referred to as community services work, which is about, uh, supporting the work of, um, working in communities to, uh, look at issues related to poverty typically, and alleviation of poverty and other associated issues like health or access to education or, um, access to housing ... [inaudible]. Uh, and that is different to humanitarian work, uh, which respond to agencies and disaster..."

Humanitarianism as a strategy for transforming emergency response

The participants were particularly interested in applying humanitarian principles, practices and standards that exist within the international sector to the domestic sector of work known as emergency management. As described by Sam:

"For me the phrase 'humanitarianism at home' ... is about learning from humanitarian practice for application within the domestic OECD environment. And how you actually meld that with traditional doctrinal emergency management approaches with a more agile and flexible approach".

Similarly, Jacinda explained:

"I love the idea of cross-learning and understanding that providing was the responsibility, and the obligation to provide assistance to people who are in need or to alleviate suffering is something that happens everywhere. And we need to I think reflect a little bit more on what that looks like in in Australia ... responding to crises in Australia is still very much dominated by uniforms and is seen as emergency management and has not generally, in my experience been defined as humanitarianism".

Sandra responded as follows:

"It's a really, great question... I love this because I work in the emergency management sector domestically. I actually think that many people who work in this sector don't think of themselves as humanitarians to be really honest with you, but I personally do. I think that the work that we do in emergency services is very much humanitarian. It's about helping people when bad things happen".

For Sandra, the language and the culture of emergency management differs from the mainstream ideas about humanitarianism in Australia. From her perspective:

"Many of the people that work in this sector, come to it because they're doers, right? We get shit done, right? Something happens, we fix it. Whatever it is. If there's a fire, we put out the fire, if there's a flood, we put sandbags up, we rescue people out of floodwaters... whatever it might be ... we're highly trained, highly skilled, we know what to do".

For a range of the participants, therefore, the application of international humanitarian principles and professional practice in the domestic context provides an opportunity for learning. Some participants argued that a humanitarian perspective provides a means of challenging the linear command and control processes and thinking associated with an Incident Command System, such as that frequently adopted by uniformed emergency management organisations in Australia.

Conclusion

As has been discussed, this paper has focused on scoping a new area of research focused on domestic humanitarianism and describing the first impressions of the participants to the phrase 'humanitarianism at home'. At this preliminary stage of analysis, it is apparent that the participants generally encountered the phrase as a multifaceted and poorly understood concept that provides an interesting opportunity for learning. The participants tended to associate the phrase with the four core humanitarian principles and with the international professional humanitarian sector itself, the influence of which was considered limited in the domestic context. Interestingly, humanitarianism was generally described as being poorly understood in Australia, and as being generally at odds with emergency management and traditional command and control approaches.

The events of recent years, the literature considered, and the enthusiasm expressed by the research participants suggests that this is a productive area for further research. In particular, the reflection on the relevance on humanitarianism in Australia provides opportunity for reflection and learning that is relevant to humanitarian practice, emergency management and community development, whether at home or abroad. These initial conversations, moreover, raise a number of questions that warrant further exploration:

- What are the identifiable components of the concept of humanitarianism and how are these relevant to humanitarian practice, the professional distinctions between preparedness, community development and social services, and the pursuit of social justice as a common good?
- Why do we think of the provision of food aid or disability support as a humanitarian act when it occurs overseas but not when it occurs at home?
- What if anything can emergency response in Australia learn from international humanitarian knowledge and practices?
- To what extent is this learning and transfer of humanitarian knowledge practice already occurring by virtue of international humanitarian practitioners returning to apply their skills at home?
- What, if anything, is there to be gained by placing a humanitarian lens on areas as diverse as aged care and disability support, to emergency response in Australia?

Both the literature and the findings suggest that the pursuit of a research program aimed at understanding humanitarianism at home is a promising endeavour. The reflection on the application of humanitarianism at home presents an opportunity to promote greater reflexivity in praxis, with potential benefits for the advancement of humanitarian values and the expression of humanitarian intervention, at home and abroad.

References

Atkinson, C., & S. Curnin. (2020). Sharing responsibility in disaster management policy. *Progress in Disaster Science*, 7, 100122.

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience. (2018). *Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection: Community Recovery*. Retrieved from https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/glossary-about/

Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. (2018). *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework*. www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-disaster-risk-reduction-framework.pdf

Barnett, M., & T. G. Weiss. (2008). *Humanitarianism in Question : Politics, Power, Ethics*. Cornell University Press.

Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal. (1858, 16 June). *The Donegal Relief Fund*. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article64376666

Boltanski, L. (1999). *Distant suffering: Morality, media and politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Book, M. & R. Coghlan. (2020). *Rethinking vulnerability in the era of COVID-19*. Centre for Humanitarian Leadership. https://centreforhumanitarianleadership.org/the-centre/news/rethinking-vulnerability-in-the-era-of-covid-19/.

Convery, S. & Henriques-Gomes, L. (2021, 21 November). 'We need to be alarmed: food banks in overdrive as politicians allow Australians to go hungry.' *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/nov/21/we-need-to-be-alarmed-food-banks-in-overdrive-as-politicians-allow-australians-to-go-hungry.

COAG. (2011). *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*. www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-strategy-for-disaster-resilience/

Cohen, I.B. (1984). Florence Nightingale. *Scientific American*, 250(3), pp.128-137.

Commonwealth of Australia. (2020). *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report*, CoA. https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/html-reportISBN: 978-1-921091-45-2

De Waal, A., & de Waal, D. A. (1997). *Famine crimes: politics & the disaster relief industry in Africa*. Indiana University Press.

Flint, J., P. Henty & B. Hurley. (2020). *The cost of good intentions in the Australian bushfires – Perspectives from the international humanitarian sector*. Humanitarian Advisory Group. Blog. Available at: https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/the-cost-of-good-intentions-in-the-australian-bushfires-perspectives-from-the-international-humanitarian-sector/

Hanrieder, T. & Galesne, C. (2021). *Domestic humanitarianism: the Mission France of Médecins Sans Frontières and Médecins du Monde*. Third World Quarterly, 42:8, pp. 1715-1732.

Harpur, J. J. (1848, 15 January). Original Correspondence: Capital Punishment. *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, p. 4. https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/695660?afterLoad=showCorrections

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (1995). *Code of conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): in disaster relief*. Geneva.

Maxwell, D. G., & P. Walker. (2008). *Shaping the humanitarian world*. Taylor & Francis Group. Oxford.

Olliff, L. (2018). From Resettled Refugees to Humanitarian Actors: Refugee Diaspora Organizations and Everyday Humanitarianism. *New Political Science*, 40(4), pp.658-674.

Parliament of Australia. (2020, 4 February). Condolences: Australian Bushfires (Speech). https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/chamber/hansardr/0fd15237-92f1-4dbd-bab5-e7bba7ee781d/0006/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

Philaleth. (1833, 13 July). To the Editor of the Perth Gazette. *The Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article641995.

Richey, L.A. (2018). Conceptualizing "everyday humanitarianism": Ethics, affects, and practices of contemporary global helping. *New Political Science*, 40(4): pp. 625-639.

Slim, H. (2002). Claiming a humanitarian imperative: NGOs and the cultivation of humanitarian duty. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 21(3), pp.113-125.

Slim, H. (2010). Book review - Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy. Edited by Richard Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(4), 1205-1206.

Slim, H. (2015). *Humanitarian ethics: A guide to the morality of aid in war and disaster*. Oxford University Press.

Tin, D., Hart, A., & Ciottone, G. R. (2020). The case for an Australian disaster reserve force. *American journal of emergency medicine*.

Wilson, S., Sivasubramaniam, D., Farmer, J., Aryani, A., De Cotta, T., Kamstra, P., Adler, V. and Knox, J., (2020). Everyday humanitarianism during the 2019/2020 Australian bushfire crisis. Available at: https://apo.org.au/node/303465

Victorian Council of Social Service. (2020). *Perspectives from the frontline: VCOSS Bushfire Recovery Project Consultation Report.* https://vcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SUB-National-Natural-Disaster-Royal-Commission-FINAL.pdf

Vivekananthan, J. and P. Connors. (2019). *Crossing the divide: Pacific diaspora in humanitarian response to natural disasters. A diasporic perspective.* Centre for Humanitarian Leadership. https://centreforhumanitarianleadership.org/research/publications/crossing-the-divide-pacific-diaspora-in-humanitarian-response-to-natural-disasters/

Yeophantong, P. (2014). *Understanding humanitarian action in East and Southeast Asia: A historical perspective.* Humanitarian Policy Group.

(Mis)communication? Social listening and the exclusion of marginalised voices

IRENE SCOTT

Irene is a former journalist who specialises in building humanitarian information systems to connect crisis affected communities with quality information to inform decision making and influence humanitarian response efforts. She is currently the Senior Community Engagement Project Manager at Internews.

Image: A young refugee looks at his phone at the Bira reception centre in Bihac, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2019 © Imrana Kapetanovic/Save the Children

Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the growing scholarship on the use of social media by humanitarian organisations in a crisis. Although social media's role in times of crisis has been rigorously studied, much of this work looks at the distribution or collection of information by first-responders or relief organisations. However, there is a growing interest in the analysis of social media content to understand community perceptions and to guide public health and risk communication interventions. This article aims to explore some key limitations of data collected using Social Media Analytics (SMA) tools in fairly representing community-wide perceptions. Through a review of 'social listening reports' produced by UN bodies and international aid organisations, this article will explore whether these data deficiencies are fairly represented. This article concludes that while there are many well documented limitations in the use of social media discourse to holistically represent community perceptions, these limitations are not adequately discussed in the reporting produced from this data. Consequentially, users of this analysis cannot adequately weigh the quality of the data when using it to influence policy decisions.

Leadership relevance

This paper aims to fuel discussion in the humanitarian sector over the ethical use of technology in the sector. Far from condemning the use of technology, I aim to encourage practitioners to understand the benefits and limitations of these approaches and to foster transparency in the sector. Focusing on the emerging field of 'infodemiology', this paper comes at an important time in the COVID-19 response, when after two years of working at a breakneck speed, practitioners are looking back on their efforts to reduce health-related misinformation, responding to community information needs, and taking a critical look at the development and impact of emerging approaches and tools.

Introduction

In the last 20 years, social media platforms have grown from a novelty to a critical form of communication and engagement worldwide (Obar, 2015). As internet penetration grows and data costs drop, these user-centric platforms designed to help people connect and communicate have flourished. They are driven by the idea that by sharing our preferences, emotions, or even pictures of our lunch, we are building an increasingly important virtual community (Noveck et al, 2021).

In an emergency, users go to these virtual networks to request and share information, locate loved ones, and find community in crisis (Appling et al, 2014). Increasingly, these virtual communities are being used by social science researchers to try and understand people's beliefs and perceptions. In this way, our online lives are directly influencing the policy decisions made for us in our offline lives. And while there is certainly merit in using these vast data sets for research, in this article I will explore the limitations of this approach, in particular, when using Social Media Analytics (SMA) tools. Understanding the limitations of any data set is vital in being able to weigh its relevance in any research or policy decision (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). My hypothesis is that by presenting this kind of data as an accurate depiction of community-wide insights, without a nuanced discussion of limitations, there is the potential to misrepresent community perceptions and to further silence and marginalise vulnerable groups.

Disasters are socially experienced, and the increasingly prominent role social media plays in a disaster—as people share their experiences, advice and sometimes heartbreak—means that social media presents a goldmine of data for researchers.

Methodology and limitations

I will begin by exploring the available literature related to the use of social media in disaster and crisis contexts by humanitarian agencies. I will then explore a non-exhaustive list of the main data quality limitations of SMA tools being employed during the COVID-19 pandemic by public health professionals and risk communicators. Finally, I will use these limitations as a metric to assess a selection of social listening reports created to inform the risk communication priorities of humanitarian agencies.

Making the assumption that this kind of analysis aims to drive actionable intelligence, I will explore how a lack of transparency about data limitations could be misleading, or impact the ability of social listening reports and other outputs to meet this aim.

There are challenges in defining 'social media'. For the purposes of this paper, I will define social media as a web-based application designed to help two or more people communicate, connect and share user-generated content (Kietzmann et al, 2011). For ease, I will focus much of this paper on three commonly used social media platforms in humanitarian settings: Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter (Walker, 2017). Facebook launched in 2004 and is the world's largest social networking site with an estimated 2.89 billion monthly active users, Twitter is a microblogging network which launched in 2006 and has an estimated 192 million users and WhatsApp is an instant messaging service launched in 2009 with an estimated two billion monthly users (Statista, 2021 and Albergotti et al, 2014). There are of course many other social media platforms available, but these will not be discussed due to the limitations of this paper. However, many of these platforms warrant further research, especially in contexts where apps such as YouTube, Instagram or Telegram may have greater community penetration and impact.

The scope of this research is limited by language and by the use of secondary data. I have only included studies, both academic and grey literature, produced in English. While this likely accounts for a significant portion of available research on this topic, it is expected that there may be relevant findings in research published in languages other than English that are excluded. This paper is primarily the result of secondary research—relying on already published papers, studies, and outputs. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) would likely have contributed to a richer understanding of the processes and priorities that influence decision making in the creation of social listening reports and the data quality mitigation strategies employed. As this is an emerging field of practice, greater research is needed to properly document and analyse the challenges, successes and evolving methodologies used by practitioners in this field.

The use of social media in humanitarian settings

Disasters are socially experienced, and the increasingly prominent role social media plays in a disaster—as people share their experiences, advice and sometimes

(Mis)communication? Social listening and the exclusion of marginalised voices

17

heartbreak—means that social media presents a goldmine of data for researchers (Oh et al, 2013). Social media is a powerful tool in identifying a crisis; for example, in 2013 the first reports of the Boston marathon bombing (Cassa et al, 2013), and the Westgate Mall Attack in Kenya (Simon et al, 2014) were published first on Twitter, well before major news networks could share the information. It can be used to map the impacts of a natural disaster (Vieweg et al, 2010), or direct first responders towards victims (Lindsay, 2011).

The collection and analysis of social media data to influence public health interventions has gained popularity in recent years (see Dashtian, 2021; Hou, 2021; Hossain, 2016 and Broniatowski, 2018). There are a huge number of works aiming to understand the benefits of various approaches—just one literature review from the World Health Organisation (WHO) uncovered more than 130 articles (Chanely, 2021). In contrast, there are well reported data quality issues, such as credibility and representative bias that may impact the use of this data in an emergency (see Duarte et al, 2018; Yang et al, 2021). However, there remains a gap in the research to understand how these limitations are being communicated to the humanitarian community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The prevalence of social listening during COVID-19

In an effort to coordinate communication and engagement activities happening in response to the pandemic in humanitarian settings, a network of Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) working groups and taskforces were launched at the local, regional and global levels. Chaired by the WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), these platforms group together like-minded bodies, including governments (ministries of health, etc), local and international NGOs, and civil society to address the "infodemic" (Zarocostas, 2020). While the term "infodemic" has been in use for more than 20 years, it has grown to prominence during the pandemic, notably through its use by the WHO to refer to "an overabundance of information—some accurate and some not—occurring during an epidemic" (WHO, 2020).

Prevention measures such as government mandated curfews and other restrictions on movement and gathering have made it difficult for communities to engage in ways they previously did, and it has also often put humanitarians at a distance from the communities they serve. For the safety of their teams, many field-based activities have been limited (Nutbeam, 2021; Plexico-Sinclair, 2020) and so it is natural the sector should turn to social listening; a form of listening that can be conducted remotely (Gilmore et al, 2020).

Social listening in a humanitarian context can be defined broadly as the process of monitoring and analysing community conversations in online spaces (such as social media) to understand needs and inform humanitarian responses (Stewart, 2018; Hou, 2021). There is a growing body of social science research that aims to better understand how social media data can be used to study people's sentiments and attitudes as an alternative to self-reported surveys (Appling et al, 2014). For example, researchers look to social media to understand how communities share information in an emergency (Simon et al, 2015; Cohen, 2013) or understand behaviours related to the spread of misinformation (Pasquetto & Jahani, 2020; Bowles et al, 2021). During the pandemic, social listening data is being used to understand people's public health perceptions.

During the pandemic, social listening data is being used to understand people's public health perceptions.

These RCCE fora have become the natural platforms for the sharing of these social listening insights. Not every organisation may have the resources to perform social listening, and so these coordination mechanisms allow insights to be shared among member agencies, usually with accompanying risk communication guidance. The communal nature of these reports intensifies the importance of a transparent discussion on the limitations of data so that members can make informed policy decisions.

Why social listening data is problematic

It is estimated that there are 500 million tweets sent every day (Rao et al, 2013). Such a huge volume of data would be impossible, if not impractical, to manually collect and analyse, so SMA tools are employed. These tools, designed to track brand insights and contribute to commercial marketing strategies, have been redeployed during the pandemic to understand sentiments related to COVID-19, vaccines, and trust in authority figures (Dashtian & Murthy, 2021). These automated systems work by using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to collect and categorise publicly available social media data in vast quantities (Gonçalves, 2017). The speed at which these tools can turn huge data sets into appealing visualisations has made them particularly attractive to time-poor humanitarian agencies. However, the rush to adopt this methodology may result in agencies not fully

understanding, mitigating or being able to communicate the limitations of the data. A non-exhaustive set of limitations is explored below.

Digital divide: Who is represented in the data?

One well documented issue with the use of social media data to understand community-wide perceptions is equitable access (Ragnedda et al, 2013; Landers, 2017). In every country, there are people who either choose not to, or simply do not have access to social media. This disparity in access to the internet, mobile phones or computers across socioeconomic groups has been dubbed the "digital divide" (Brown et al, 1995). For example, even in America, which is one of the leading countries in digital innovation, more than 100 million Americans do not use social media at all (Perrin & Anderson, 2019; Wojcik & Adam, 2019). Compare this to countries with far greater challenges in achieving digital penetration. In Afghanistan, for example, just 9% of the population are social media users—predominantly young, urban and educated professionals (Orfan, 2020), and only 16% are women (Rai, 2019). Because of these stark limitations, any assessment of social media data could only include the perceptions of this elite, capital-centric, gender skewed portion of society. In social media metrics worldwide, women are underrepresented, as are elderly populations, people living with disabilities and low-income groups (Hargittai, 2015). As a consequence, if this data is used to inform the design of humanitarian responses, we risk designing responses based on the needs of the privileged, while further marginalising and disproportionately censoring vulnerable groups.

> *In social media metrics worldwide, women are underrepresented, as are elderly populations, people living with disabilities and low-income groups.*

Language: Do dominant languages drown out marginalised voices?

Language can be another barrier in social media analysis. In most countries, the discourse on social media is held in the dominant language, or lingua franca (Hoffmann et al, 2017). English has become the default lingua franca for social media. Research into Twitter usage in Africa found that 77% of content originating from countries in Africa was in English, with Arabic and French featuring at only 10% combined (Winhill, 2018). When using AI technology, the user or researcher chooses the languages they wish to use to search and relies on the ability of that tool to understand the target languages needed for their analysis. This is done through Natural Language Processing (NLP), which involves a computer program

'learning' a language by absorbing millions of strings of data (for example, sentences) in that language (Johansson et al, 2016). Firstly, the user may choose to only search in dominant languages, so there is potential for selection bias. In addition, while these data sets are plentiful for the world's dominant languages, they may not exist for minority languages. This can mean that the tool may not identify posts in those languages at all, struggles to 'understand' or apply thematic categorisation, or has limited ability to comprehend the nuance of social media data in these languages (Duarte et al, 2018). This drop in accuracy can, for example, impact the recognition of tone that is required to understand if a post is a joke or threatening or dangerous content (Hirschberg & Manning, 2015).

This limitation is a distinct challenge for the analysis of Arabic social media text and the use of Arabizi; a form of Arabic which uses Latin letters and numbers to reproduce Arabic language that has been popularised by younger users (Darwish, 2014; Bies et al, 2014). In the context of NLP, this usually requires this data to be transliterated from Arabizi to Arabic script, or requires the system to be specifically trained to understand these complex mixed datasets (Guellil, 2021; Talafha et al, 2021). As a consequence, a SMA system that cannot understand or does not recognise this form of content risks excluding young voices.

It is evident that when working with SMA tools errors can occur—just as a human interpreter may misinterpret information. Policymakers must understand the capabilities and limits of these tools in regards to language, particularly for making decisions that could impact on the efficacy of a public health response.

What is captured: Public versus private posting

SMA tools work by scraping huge amounts of publicly available data from social media platforms. Their ability to pull in such immense amounts of data could distract some users from questioning exactly what kind of data is being captured. Publicly available data refers to posts and interactions that can be seen by anyone, without the need to 'friend', 'follow' or join a particular platform or group (Ravn, 2019; Markham, 2012). Twitter is a good example of a platform where the majority of the posts are public—just 13% of Twitter users in the United States choose to make their profile private (Remy, 2019). Twitter is a goldmine of data for researchers, and it accounts for a large portion of social media research due to the ease of extracting data, but it's important to remember that each platform may attract a specific demographic of users (Simon et al, 2015). In many nations, for example, Zimbabwe, South Sudan and South Africa, Twitter is dominated by political and social elites or the diaspora community (Windhill, 2018). In addition, the very public nature of the platform could make it intimidating for some users to openly engage with it (Salvatore et al,

(Mis)communication? Social listening and the exclusion of marginalised voices

19

2020). A study by the Pew Research Center in 2019 found that most users rarely tweet and a small group of prolific users (just 10% of accounts) were responsible for 80% of English language tweets. In addition, they found that Twitter users in the US were more likely to be young, highly educated, earn above average incomes and vote Democrat (Wojick et al, 2019). This combination of readily accessible data from a potentially narrow portion of the community can present a skewed picture of a society and its perceptions.

[The] combination of readily accessible data from a potentially narrow portion of the community can present a skewed picture of a society and its perceptions.

Despite its global popularity, there are distinct restrictions in terms of what SMA tools are able to capture from Facebook. In 2018, access to Facebook data was heavily restricted following the Cambridge Analytica scandal, when user profiles were used to direct political advertising (Zimmer, 2010). SMA tools can only capture information from posts made on a limited number of registered Facebook Pages (pages are a type of profile used by businesses, politicians, celebrities and media). Posts made on your personal profile, on friend's pages or within Facebook Messenger cannot be collected (Yang et al, 2021). Of the billions of posts made daily on the platform, only a tiny percentage could ever be analysed by SMA tools.

WhatsApp data is even more problematic for SMA tools and privacy restrictions mean they cannot access any data from this platform at all. However, WhatsApp accounts for a huge share of the social media market, especially in emerging markets, where its adaptability to low bandwidth and voice message features make it an attractive tool for users with unreliable data connections or low literacy (Berman, 2019). In addition, researchers believe the tool may be responsible for the spread of a significant amount of misinformation (see Broniatowski, 2021; Lazer, 2018 and Davies, 2020). Again, we see that the data collected by these tools presents an incomplete picture of the social media discourse that may be happening around the pandemic or other issues of interest to researchers or practitioners.

Who are you really: Unreliable demographic data
A challenge impacting all analysis of social media data, either via AI or through manual collection, is the difficulty in determining the authenticity of the users who post. A significant portion of the posts shared on social media are thought to come from either social or

malicious bots or from troll farms (Dotto, 2020). Social bots are accounts controlled by autonomous software, designed to impersonate real users (Kenworth, 2019). Troll farms are organised operations, where workers are employed to manage fraudulent social media accounts to generate online traffic aimed at affecting public opinion (Snider, 2018). Malicious accounts have been found to post more often, with content that is more politically divisive than the average social media user (Broniatowski et al, 2021). Some research suggests that nearly half of the accounts posting about the pandemic on Twitter in the United States and the Philippines are bots (Uyheng, 2020) and that a minority of accounts and pages were responsible for the majority of pandemic related misinformation (Yang et al, 2021). While humans manually collecting social media content may be able to recognise an inauthentic account, SMA systems treat all content equally. This presents an opportunity for malicious actors to flood a particular context, influencing online discourse, and consequentially the social listening reports and policy decisions taken by humanitarian actors.

A challenge impacting all analysis of social media data, either via AI or through manual collection, is the difficulty in determining the authenticity of the users who post.

A further difficulty comes in trying to determine location and demographic data such as age or gender. Sex and age disaggregated data is important in all research to gain a comprehensive understanding of the most affected groups and their unique needs (O'Mathuna et al, 2017). When users post on most social media platforms, they may volunteer their location (through profile information or a location tag in the post), or geolocalise—that is, allow their device to share their location (Appling, 2014). However, users have the ability to tag the post as being anywhere in the world and in a crisis, it also allows users to 'pretend' they are in an affected area (Utomo et al, 2018; Wiegmann et al, 2021). For instance, research into the use of Twitter during ten elections in African nations in 2017 found that 53% of the most active posters were not even in the countries where the elections were contested (Winhill, 2018). SMA tools also struggle with determining location. For instance, when other location information is unavailable, many SMA tools automatically categorise a user location based on the language used in the post. For instance, a user posting in English who has not volunteered their location is categorised as being in the US, posts in Spanish are automatically considered to be from Spain and tools consider Arabic posts to be from Saudi Arabia (Talkwalker, 2022).

Other demographic data like age and gender is similarly problematic. AI systems determine these demographic identifiers by collecting information users include in their public profile. Again, while some users may simply prefer not to include this information, others may choose to include false information to intentionally mislead, or as a kind of practical joke (for example, a teenager posting their age as 100 years old) (Wiegmann et al, 2021). The challenges in accessing reliable disaggregated data from social media users limits what researchers can infer from this data and may contribute to generalisations about community perceptions, concerns and needs.

Determining public perceptions solely from social media data ignores the fact that people use these platforms in differing ways, and that social media may not be the fora they choose to share their opinions about challenging issues that are of interest to researchers, such as political discourse, perceptions or behavioural insights.

What do you think: How opinions are shared on social media

While we may be interacting online more than ever, research suggests that people interact and share thoughts and opinions differently in online spaces. Research by the Pew Institute suggests that when issues are particularly controversial, people may be less likely to share their opinion online than they would in person. They found only 42% of Facebook and Twitter users were willing to post about a sensitive issue, while more than 80% would have an in-person conversation (Hampton et al, 2014). In both online and offline contexts, people expressed that they were more likely to express their opinion if they felt their friends or followers might be likely to agree with them (Hampton et al, 2014). This aligns with both the social theories of 'group think' (which suggests that people will irrationally choose to adopt the opinion of the 'group' to support harmony) and with the 'silence spiral' (which suggests that group members will withhold a contradictory opinion to avoid being ostracised) (Noelle-Neuman, 1974). Determining public perceptions solely from social media data ignores the fact that people use these platforms in differing ways, and that social media may not be the fora they choose to share their opinions about challenging issues that are of interest to researchers such as political discourse, perceptions or behavioural insights (Hargatti, 2015).

What are you looking for: The impact of researcher generated search terms

One challenge in social media analysis is the impact of the researcher themselves on the research. When working with AI tools, the researcher is asked to input a series of queries, or keyword searches, that allow them to narrow down the billions of data points available from social media platforms (Simon et al, 2015). This narrowing down is important to allow for data to be analysed in an efficient manner (you can't reasonably look at everything) but it also has the consequence of limiting the data to the researcher's priorities. For example, in Dashtion's research on the social discourse around the pandemic on Twitter, they collected 19 million tweets that contained the words 'coronavirus', 'covid' or 'mask' (Dashtion, 2020). This approach might yield a high number of data points, but does not capture the whole discourse on the topic. For example, if a social media post talked about the 'pandemic' instead of 'covid' that data would not have been collected. Keyword searching has the potential to miss content using local slang or common spelling mistakes (Appling et al, 2014). The selection of these terms introduces a natural bias where research is guided by the researchers, rather than the community's priorities. While arguably this is a limitation present in many approaches to research, when striving to understand 'community perceptions', we should aim to mitigate the impact of the researcher's priorities.

Analysis: Social listening reports

An analysis of current social listening reports will contribute to a better understanding of how humanitarian agencies are communicating the limitations of social media data collected using SMA tools. I will analyse two reports:

- *COVID-19 Infodemic Trends in the African Region* is a weekly social listening report created by the Africa Infodemic Response Alliance: a regional network hosted by the WHO that brings together fact-checking and media organisations, and non-governmental organisations (WHO, 2020). See Annex 1 for the report details.
- *Social Listening report on COVID-19 Vaccination in Morocco* is a weekly social listening report created by the UNICEF Communication for Development staff in the UNICEF Maroc office. See Annex 1 for the report details.

The reports will be analysed using the criteria discussed above:

- Demographic: how does the report address limitations in the demographic makeup of the data including age, gender and location?

- Language: What language/s does the report include? How does the report address limitations in the collection of that language?
- Source: What social media platforms are included in this data set? How does the report address limitations in the data included from these platforms?
- Search approach: How does the report address limitations in the keyword search approach used?

These reports are likely to have been presented in RCCE coordination meetings (or similar) and may have included further verbal discussion of the limitations and benefits of the data. However, for the purposes of this research, only the published report will be reviewed.

COVID-19 Infodemic Trends in the African Region

Demographic
After a review of the content included in seven AIRA reports, it is clear that demographic information that might allow for a more actionable response to social listening data is missing. Neither the age, nor the gender of the data sources was mentioned in any of the reports analysed. Some location data is included—the report states in the introduction that it includes data from Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, and Mali[1]. A further breakdown of this location data, for instance whether the information has been collected predominantly from rural or urban populations is not provided. In addition, the report also includes country-level social media observations from Lesotho, Ghana, Cameroon, Benin, Namibia, Malawi, Mauritius, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Reunion, and Uganda, despite these countries not being mentioned as "Target Countries" in the introduction.

Language
Some language data is included in these reports. In the report introduction, a language code is used next to the names of some target countries which, it is assumed, refers to the target language of collection. For instance, we know that English language data has been collected in South Africa (the code "EN" is written next to the name "South Africa") and French data has been collected from Niger (the code "FR" is written next to the word "Niger"). No further information is provided in regards to the source data language. This is a limited sample— there are a potential 860 languages spoken in the target areas—though of course not all languages may be commonly used for social media discourse (Ethnologue, 2021). Dominant languages are often used in social media discourse, however the language chosen by the

social media user may also signal other demographic traits such as whether the user has had access to secondary education or is considered of a higher social class. Because of this, it is important to disclose what languages make up social media data, and ideally provide demographic breakdowns, so that the reader of the social listening report is able to more clearly identify whether data is likely to have been collected from the average citizen, or the educated and elite classes.

Source
According to the methodology section of the AIRA reports, the reports are produced using "NewsWhip Analytics, TweetDeck, Crowdtangle, UNICEF Talkwalker dashboards as well as the WHO EARS platform" (AIRA, 2021). While this is an extensive list of mostly AI supported SMA tools, the report does not provide a clear breakdown of what social media platforms (or other online sources) are included in this analysis. However, report authors do provide a short sentence addressing limitations in the kind of data that can be extracted from each platform; "…data may be biased towards data emerging from formal news outlets/ official social media pages, and does not incorporate content circulating on closed platforms (e.g. Whatsapp) or groups (e.g. private Facebook groups)". It is arguable whether this brief description would be enough to inform a novice reader, but AIRA should be congratulated for making an attempt to address this key limitation.

Search approach
The report does not provide any information on the methodology used to search for this data other than listing the tools used (as explained above). There are other questions about their methodology that are also not addressed adequately. For instance, their definition of "trends" and the process for determining which trends are addressed in this report is not clear. Are the trends referring to the issues that have received the most individual posts, or do they refer to individual posts that have received a high level of engagement? One example post from Benin included in *Weekly Brief—September 13, 2021* had seen only 16 comments and six reactions as of 27 September, 2021. This could reasonably be considered a very low level of engagement with the post.

Review conclusion
While the AIRA team does take some steps to explain the limitations in their methodology in regards to data sources, a more nuanced approach to demographic data and in particular, language, is required to make this report a more practical tool to inform risk communication responses. While this element may be lacking, a positive and practical feature of these reports is the inclusion of guidance for practitioners

---

[1] Mali is mentioned as a Target Country in only one of the reports analysed: Weekly Brief— May 17, 2021.

near the end of the report. In a section titled, "Why is it concerning?", they provide brief insight into the social and behavioural impact of these perceptions, accompanied by another question: "What can we do?", where practical risk communication advice is offered. These sections contribute greatly to the likelihood of the report leading to practical policy and communication actions. However, questions remain surrounding how practical a report of this kind can be considering the diverse range of countries it attempts to address.

Social Listening report on COVID-19 Vaccination in Morocco

Demographic
Each report includes a breakdown (text and graphical) of gender, age and parental status. There is no mention of any limitations in the SMA tool's ability to determine these demographic features. In addition, "Key Takeaways" from the analysis are not presented with reference to the age, gender or parental status of the users that hold these beliefs. This gives the impression that these are the dominant beliefs across a homogenous community.

The analysis of "Family Status" is particularly unique. While it seems relevant in terms of UNICEF's mandate to advocate for and meet the needs of children (UNICEF, 2021), the SMA tool's ability to determine parental status is questionable considering this is not a key feature of data volunteered as part of social media user profiles.

At the beginning of the report, the authors state, "Location—Country of the search: Morocco", suggesting that this is the limitation they have put on the data collected through the SMA tool. While this should, in theory, exclude Moroccan diaspora or malicious actors posting from other countries, location data can be easily manipulated (as discussed above). The reports provide a breakdown of the main cities the data is collected from, with an overabundance of data coming from Rabat in the three reports where location is mentioned (no location data is provided in reports four and five). In report one, the authors briefly note a potential limitation in their location data: "We notice that most of the Data are from the Region of Rabat Salé. This may make us think of the Data collection issues. Maybe the French language or the lack of data from the other region".

Language
Four of the five reports reviewed included clear language data. While in report one, the authors only searched for Arabic, French and English data, in report 2-4 they widen their search to include "all languages", which results in the collection of a small amount of data in Spanish, Catalan, Korean, Indonesian, Thai and Hungarian.

In the first bulletin, concerns about the accuracy of language data are mentioned: "French is the language the most used. This may just mean that the platform is better at generating Data in French than other languages, namely Arabic". There are some other possible explanations for the overabundance of French data; the SMA tool may struggle to recognise Moroccan Arabic, which is the dominant language used in social media discourse (Abdouli et al, 2016). Another explanation could be spelling mistakes, or that some of the Arabic data is written in Arabizi or another form of transliteration (Abdouli et al, 2016). The source of the data is mainly Twitter, and French may simply be the dominant language for discussions on medical issues or for Moroccan users on this platform.

In report three and four, Arabic is noted as the dominant language (49% and 50.6% respectively), suggesting that either the demographic discussing COVID-19 has shifted or, more likely, the authors' approach to using the tool (perhaps using different settings) has shifted over time— presumably to help mitigate these limitations.

Source
These reports clearly display the source of their data in text and graphical form. In the second report, the authors point to a limitation related to this: "As this figure shows, more than 40% of the information is from Twitter and less than 1% from FB, a platform that is widely used in Morocco. This is one of the shortcomings of Talk Walker. The focal point suggests adding pages from FB manually to help get some results from FB." According to social media statistics, there are more than 17 million Facebook users in Morocco and close to 74% of Moroccans who have internet access are registered WhatsApp users (another data source not represented in this data) (Sasu, 2021). As the authors mention, in order to capture data from Facebook, the user must manually add the Facebook pages they wish the tool to capture data from. This is a time-consuming process, and another possible introduction of significant researcher bias.

Search approach
While it is unclear what specific keyword searches are used, "themes" are mentioned in all five reports, and these themes are presumably made up of a series of related keyword searches.

In the first report, limitations in the search results are briefly mentioned: "For the minister of health, we get articles related to other ministries, and the minister of health may not have been mentioned in the article". As well as, "For SinoPharm, the sino which means in Spanish 'only' appears in the results". It is not clear whether the identified errors resulted in the problematic data being removed from analysis or whether these limitations

(Mis)communication? Social listening and the exclusion of marginalised voices

23

are mentioned simply to explain why analysis may be inaccurate.

The UNICEF report authors do make clear attempts to discuss the limitations present in data collection and analysis, however these mentions are very brief and often do not provide enough information as to *why* the issue may be occurring and *how* they may change their approach to address the problem. The use of data visualisations is very helpful (in particular when representing gender, location and topic data) and may contribute to a larger audience being able to interact with these reports. However, while the UNICEF reports make more attempts to be transparent on data limitations, in comparison to the AIRA reports, they provide far less risk communication guidance (just 2-3 brief dot points in reports 1-3 and none in four or five. The reports are focused on *what* people are talking about, which is interesting from an academic perspective, but this approach may impact the potential for the report to take the leap from interesting data to something actionable that genuinely influences risk communication responses and policy decisions.

Conclusion

One of the main advantages of social media data is that continuous updates allow real-time monitoring of public moods and sentiments. While this is an appealing prospect for researchers, this kind of data is not without its limitations and this has implications for the types of conclusions one can draw from data derived from these platforms. As discussed in this paper, it is our responsibility as scholars to ensure the limitations of any data set are understood and clearly communicated to the audience. By undertaking an assessment of 12 sample social listening reports produced by international NGOs and UN agencies, it is clear that if these limitations are evident to the researchers, they are not being adequately communicated in the outcomes of this research.

As the aim of these social listening reports is to influence humanitarian policy and risk communication approaches, this deficit risks decisions being inadvertently made on imperfect or misrepresented data. While necessity dictates that humanitarians often make decisions based on imperfect data, it is important the users of the data are aware of the potential deficiencies and can make an informed decision of how data will be used with those limitations in mind. The need for transparency about data does not disappear just because it is collected from a social media platform. If anything, as this is an increasingly important data source that practitioners may be unfamiliar with using, it is even more important to clearly spell out any risks, limitations and concerns and for humanitarian organisations to encourage transparency in their own data and from others. Further research is needed to assess the actions taken as a result of these reports and how practitioners understood and accounted for limitations and what impact the analysis had on policy and programming.

The need for transparency about data does not disappear just because it is collected from a social media platform.

References

Abdouli, A., Chaffai, A., Hassouni, L., Anoun, H., Khalid, R. (2016). Current trends in Moroccan Social Networks, March 2016. *International Journal of Computer Science and Information Security*, 14(3). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324839604_Current_Trends_in_Moroccan_Social_Networks

Albergotti, R., MacMillan, D., Rusli, E. (2014). Facebook to Pay $19 Billion for WhatsApp. *Wall Street Journal*. pp. A1, A6. ISSN 0099-9660. https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-to-buy-whatsapp-for-16-billion-1392847766

Appling, S., Briscoe, E., Ediger, D., Poovey, J., McColl, R. (2014). *Deriving Disaster-Related Information from Social Media*. Georgia Tech Research Institute. https://www.academia.edu/10282640/Deriving_Disaster-Related_Information_from_Social_Media

Berman, H. (2019, 20 June). What's up with WhatsApp? How WhatsApp is used and misused in Africa. *The Economist* https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/07/18/how-whatsapp-is-used-and-misused-in-africa

Bies, A., Song, Z., Maamouri, M., Grimes, S., Lee, H., Wright, J., Strassel, S., Habash, N., Eskander, R., Rambow, O. (2014). *Transliteration of arabizi into Arabic orthography: developing a parallel annotated arabizi-arabic script sms/chat corpus*. Proceedings of the EMNLP 2014 Workshop on Arabic Natural Language Processing (ANLP), pp. 93–103. https://aclanthology.org/W14-3612

Bowles, J., Larreguy, H., Liu, S. (2021). Countering formation via WhatsApp: Preliminary evidence from the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe. *PLoS ONE*. 10.14.2020. pp. 1–11. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0240005.

Broniatowski, D., Jamison, A., Qi, S., AlKulaib, L., Chen, T., Benton, A., Quinn, S., Dredze, M. (2018). *Weaponized Health Communication: Twitter Bots and Russian Trolls Amplify the Vaccine Debate*. Am J Public Health. DOI:10.2105/AJPH.2018.304567.

Brown, R., Barram, D., Irving, L. (1995). *Falling through the net: a survey of the "have nots" in rural and urban America*. US Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration. https://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fallingthru.html

Cassa, C., Chunara, R., Mandl, K., Brownstein, J (2013). Twitter as a Sentinel in Emergency Situations: Lessons from the Boston Marathon Explosions *PLoS Currents*, no. JUNE. DOI: currents.dis.ad70cd1c8bc585e9470046cde334ee4b.

Chanely, S., Benjamin, P., Mechae, P. (2021). *Finding the Signal through the Noise: A landscape review and framework to enhance the effective use of digital social listening for Immunization demand generation,* Health Enabled with technical guidance and support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF and WHO. https://www.gavi.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Finding-the-Signal-Through-the-Noise.pdf

Cohen, S. E. (2013). *Lessons Learned: Social Media and Hurricane Sandy*. Virtual Social Media Working Group and DHS First Responders Group. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Lessons%20Learned%20Social%20Media%20and%20Hurricane%20Sandy.pdf>

Darwish, K. (2014). *A Panoramic Survey of Natural Language Processing in the Arab World*. Proceedings of the EMNLP 2014 Workshop on Arabic Natural Language Processing (ANLP), pp.217–224., https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=40&sid=63fecaea-5a6a-4c76-a561-abb6e3ed2c12%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=149459802&db=aci

Dashtian, H., Murthy, D. (2021). CML-COVID: A large-scale covid-19 twitter dataset with latent topics, sentiment and location information. *Academia Letters*, Article 314. https://doi.org/10.20935/AL314.

Davies, W. (2020, 2 July). What's wrong with WhatsApp? *The Guardian online.* https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jul/02/whatsapp-groups-conspiracy-theories-disinformation-democracy

Dotto, C., Cubbon, S. (2021). Disinformation exports: How foreign anti-vaccine narratives reached West African communities online. *First Draft.* https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/foreign-anti-vaccine-disinformation-reaches-west-africa/

Duarte, N., Llanso, E., Loup, A. (2018). *Mixed Messages? The Limits of Automated Social Media Content Analysis*. 2018 Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency. https://cdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/FAT-conference-draft-2018.pdf

Ethnologue. (2021). Country language profiles for: Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, and Mali. https://www.ethnologue.com/browse/countries>

Gilmore, B., Ndejjo, R., Tchetchia, R., de Claro, V., Mago, E., Diallo, A., Lopes, C., Bhattacharyya, S. (2020). Community engagement for COVID-19 prevention and control: a rapid evidence synthesis. *BMJ Global Health* 2020;5:e003188. https://gh.bmj.com/content/5/10/e003188

Goh, Dion Hoe-Lian., Chua, Alton Y. K., Shi, Hanyu., Wei, Wenju., Wang, Haiyan., Lim, Ee-peng. (2017). *An analysis of rumor and counter-rumor messages in social media, Digital libraries: Data, information, and knowledge for digital lives*. 19th International Conference on Asia-Pacific Digital Libraries, ICADL 2017, Proceedings, pp. 256–266. Research Collection School Of Information Systems. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/sis_research/3875

Goncalves, A. (2017). *Social media analytics strategy: using data to optimize business performance*. APress, https://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=4

Guellil, I., Saâdane, H., Azouaou, F., Gueni, B., Nouvel, D. (2021). Arabic natural language processing: An overview. *Journal of King Saud University – Computer and Information Sciences*, 33(5): pp. 497–507. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jksuci.2019.02.006

Hampton, K., Rainie, L., Weixu, L., Dwyer, M., Shin, I., Purcell, K. (2014). *Social Media and the 'Spiral of Silence'*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2014/08/26/social-media-and-the-spiral-of-silence/

Hargittai, E. (2015) Is Bigger Always Better? Potential Biases of Big Data Derived from Social Network Sites. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 659(1): pp. 63–76. DOI: 10.1177/0002716215570866

Hirschberg, J., Manning, C. (2015). Advances in Natural Language Processing. *Science 261*. American Association for the Advancement of Science, Stanford University. https://cs224d.stanford.edu/papers/advances.pdf.

(Mis)communication? Social listening and the exclusion of marginalised voices

25

Hoffmann, C., Bublitz, W. (2017). *Pragmatics of Social Media*. De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1595340&authtype=sso&custid=deakin&site=eds-live&scope=site

Hossain, L., Kam, D., Kong, F., Wigand, R.T., Bossomaier, T. (2016). Social media in Ebola outbreak *Epidemiol Infect.* 144(10): pp. 2136–43. DOI: 10.1017/S095026881600039X.

Hou, Z., Tong, Y., Du, F., Lu, L., Zhao, S., Yu. K., Piatek, S.J., Larson, H.J., Lin, L. (2021). Assessing COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy, Confidence, and Public Engagement: A Global Social Listening Study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research.* 23(6): pp. e27632. https://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=8a33421d-e516-4d8c-ac59-9c83af16a7f8%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#db=mdc&AN=34061757

Johansson, F., Kaati, L., Sahlgren, M. (2016). Detecting Linguistic Markers of Violent Extremism in Online Environments. *Combating Violent Extremism and Radicalization in the Digital Era.* pp. 374–90. https://www.foi.se/download/18.3bca00611589ae7987820d/1480076542059/ FOI-S--5452--SE.pdf

Kenworth, S. (2019). *How a Russian Troll Farm Aims to Upset the Current Hegemonic, Unipolar World Order.* DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.32736.74248. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333092238_How_a_Russian_Troll_Farm_Aims_to_Upset_the_Current_Hegemonic_Unipolar_World_Order

Kietzmann, J.H., Hermkens, K., McCathy, I.P., Silvestre, B.S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons.* 54(3): pp. 241–25. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0007681311000061

Lazer, D.M.J., Baum, M.A., Benkler, Y., Berinsky, A.J., Greenhill, K.M., Menczer, F. (2018). The science of fake news. *Science.* 359(6380): pp. 1094–1096. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aao2998

Landers, C. (2017). *The Digital Divide: Issues, Recommendations and Research.* Hauppauge, New York, Nova Science Publishers, Inc. https://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=4ace7791-db24-43d3-97b7

Liebermann, M. (2013). *Social: why our brains are wired to connect.* Oxford, Oxford University Press. https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=32&sid=63fecaea-5a6a-4c76-a561-abb6e3ed2c12%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=deakin.b3460813&db=cat00097a

Lindsay, B. (2011). *Social Media and Disasters: Current Uses, Future Options, and Policy Considerations,* Congressional Research Service report for Congress. https://sgp.fas.org/crs/homesec/R41987.pdf

Mancosou, M., Vegetti, F. (2020). What You Can Scrape and What Is Right to Scrape: A Proposal for a Tool to Collect Public Facebook Data. *Journal of Social Media and Society.* 6(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120940703

Markham, A., Buchanan, E. (2012). *Association for Internet Researchers' Ethics Working Committee—Ethical decision-making and Internet research*: Version 2.0. Association of Internet Researchers https://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf

Murthy, D., Gross, A.J. (2016). Social media processes in disasters: Implications of emergent technology use, *Social Science Research.* DOI: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.09.015.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion. *Journal of Communication.* 24(2): pp. 43–51. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1974.tb00367.x

Noveck, B., Button, J., Gambrell, D., Paulson. L., Spada, P., Subramanian, L. (2021). *The Power of Virtual Communities.* The Gov Lab. https://virtual-communities.thegovlab.org/files/DTR_report_en_EN.pdf

Nutbeam, D. (2021). The vital role of meaningful community engagement in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Public health research and practice.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.17061/phrp3112101.

Obar, J., Wildman S. (2015). *Social media definition and governance challenge,* University of Ontario Institute of Technology and Michigan State University, working paper. https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/38260771/Obar_Wildman_GOSM_TP_Editorial_July_22_2015-with-cover-page-v2.pdf

Oh, O., Agrawal, M., Rao, R. (2013). Community Intelligence and Social Media Services: A Rumor Theoretic Analysis of Tweets During Social Crises. *Management Information Systems Quarterly.* 37(2): pp. 407–426. https://aisel.aisnet.org/misq/vol37/iss2/7/

O'Mathuna, D., Siriwardhana, S. (2017). Research ethics and evidence for humanitarian health. *The Lancet.* 390(10109):pp. 2228-9. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)31276-X

Orfan, S. (2020). Political participation of Afghan Youths on Facebook: A case study of Northeastern Afghanistan. *Cogent Social Sciences.* 7(1) https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2020.1857916

Pasquetto, I., Jahani, E. (2020). *Mobile Instant Messengers (MIMs) in Developing Countries,* Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School. https://shorensteincenter.org/misinformation-on-mims

Perrin, A., Anderson, M. (2019). *Share of US adults using social media, including Facebook, is mostly unchanged since 2018,* Pew Research Center. https://pewrsr.ch/2VxJuJ3

Plexico-Sinclair, H., Vestrheim, K. (2020). *Engaging Communities during a Pandemic: Experiences of Community Engagement during the COVID-19 Response in Camps and Out-of-Camp Settings,* Norwegian Refugee Council. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/engaging-communities-during-a-pandemic.pdf

Ragnedda, M., Muschert, G. (2013). *The Digital Divide : The Internet and Social Inequality in International Perspective,* Routledge Advances in Sociology Series, Taylor & Francis Group. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy-f.deakin.edu.au/lib/deakin/detail.action?docID=1221501

Rai, A. (2019). Digital Divide: How Do Women in South Asia Respond?. *International Journal of Digital Literacy and Digital Competence.* 10(1). DOI: 10.4018/IJDLDC.2019010101

Ravn, S., Barnwell, A., Neves, B. (2019). What Is "Publicly Available Data"? Exploring Blurred Public–Private Boundaries and Ethical Practices Through a Case Study on Instagram. *Journal of Empirical research on Human research ethics.* 15(1-2): pp. 40–45. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1556264619850736

Remy, E. (2019). *How public and private Twitter users in the U.S. compare - and why it might matter for your research.* Pew Research Center. https://medium.com/pew-research-center-decoded/how-public-and-private-twitter-users-in-the-u-s-

d536ce2a41b3

Rosler, P., Mainka, C., Schwenk, J. (2018). *More is Less: On the End-to-End Security of Group Chats in Signal, WhatsApp, and Threema*. 2018 IEEE European Symposium on Security and Privacy. https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=13&sid=63fecaea-5a6a-4c76-a561-abb6e3ed2c12%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=edseee.8406614&db=edseee

Ross, P., Zaidi, N. (2019). Limited by our limitations. *Perspect Med Educ*. 8(4): pp. 261–264. DOI: 10.1007/s40037-019-00530-x

Salvatore, C., Biffignandi, S., Bianchi, A. (2020). Social media and twitter data quality for new social indicators. *Social Indicators Research*. 156(2-3): pp. 601-630. https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=35&sid=63fecaea-5a6a-4c76-a561-abb6e3ed2c12%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#db=her&AN=151632112

Sasu, D. (2021). *Number of active social media users in Morocco 2017-2021*, Morocco Country report. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1172771/number-of-social-media-users-morocco/

Simon, T., Goldberg, A., Aharonson-Daniel, L., Leykin, D., Adini, B. (2014). Twitter in the Cross Fire—The Use of Social Media in the Westgate Mall Terror Attack in Kenya. *PLoS ONE*. 9(8): e104136. DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0104136.

Simon, T., Avishay, G., Bruria, A. (2015). Socializing in emergencies—A review of the use of social media in emergency situations. *International Journal of Information Management*. 35: pp. 609–619. https://www.academia.edu/20379786/Socializing_in_emergencies_A_review_of_the_use_of_social_media_in_emergency_situations

Snider, M. (2018, 16 February). Robert Mueller investigation: What is a Russian troll farm? *USA Today* https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2018/02/16/robert-muellerinvestigation-what-russian-troll-farm/346159002/

Statista Analytics. (2021). *Most popular social networks worldwide as of July 2021, ranked by number of active users*, Q3 2008 to Q2 2021 industry report. Statista Research Department. https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/

Stewart, M., Arnold, C. (2018). Defining Social Listening: Recognizing an Emerging Dimension of Listening. *International Journal of Listening*. 32: pp. 85–100. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2017.1330656.

Talafha, B., Abuammar, A., Al-Ayyoub, M. (2021). ATAR: Attention-based LSTM for Arabizi transliteration. *International Journal of Electrical & Computer Engineering*. 11(3): pp. 2327-2334 https://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=29&sid=4ace7791-db24-43d3-97b7-66badfb05b47%40sessionmgr4008&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=148685260&db=aci

UNICEF. (2021). *UNICEF mission statement*. https://www.unicef.org/about-us/mission-statement

Utomo, M., Adji, T., Ardiyanto, I. (2018). *Geolocation prediction in social media data using text analysis: A review*. 2018 International Conference on Information and Communications Technology (ICOIACT). DOI: 10.1109/ICOIACT.2018.8350674.

Uyheng, J., Carley, K. (2020). Bots and online hate during the COVID-19 pandemic: case studies in the United States and the Philippines. *Journal of Computational Social Science*. 3(2): pp. 445-46. https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=20&sid=63fecaea-5a6a-4c76-a561-abb6e3ed2c12%40pdc-vsessmgr02&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=edssjs.36F3AF94&db=edssjs

Vashisha, N., Zubiaga, A. (2021). Online Multilingual Hate Speech Detection: Experimenting with Hindi and English Social Media. *Information*. 12(1). (https://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=24&sid=4ace7791-db24-43d3-97b7-66badfb05b47%40sessionmgr4008&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=148316730&db=lls

Vieweg, S., Hughes, A., Starbird, K., Panel, L. (2010). *Microblogging During Two Natural Hazards Events: What Twitter May Contribute to Situational Awareness*. CHI 2010: Crisis Informatics April 10–15, 2010. http://www.pensivepuffin.com/dwmcphd/syllabi/insc547_wi13/papers/microblog/vieweg.et.al.TwitterAwareness.CHI10.pdf

Walker, T. (2017). *Humanitarian futures for messaging apps: understanding the opportunities and risks for humanitarian action*, ICRC. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4299_002_Humanitarian-Futures-for-Messaging-Apps_WEB_.pdf

Wiegmann, M., Kerston, J., Senaratne, H., Potthast, M., Klan, F., Stein, B. (2021). Opportunities and risks of disaster data from social media: a systematic review of incident information. *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences*. 21: pp. 1431-1444. https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=42&sid=63fecaea-5a6a-4c76-a561-abb6e3ed2c12%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JmF1dGh0eXBlPXNzbyZjdXN0aWQ9ZGVha2luJnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=edsdoj.1a8e1c70ba6f4675a6353c1ed092632c&db=edsdoj

Winhill, L. (2018). *How Africa Tweets 2018*, Portland Communications. www.portlandcommuications.com/pdf/how-africa-tweets-2018.pdf

Wojcik, S., Messing, S., Smith, A., Rainie, L., Hitlin, P. (2018). *Bots in the Twittersphere*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/04/09/bots-in-the-twittersphere

Wojcik, S., Adam, H. (2019). *Sizing up Twitter users*. Pew Research Center. https://pewrsr.ch/2VUkzj4

World Health Organization. (2020). *COVID-19 Global Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy*. https://www.who.int/teams/risk-communication/the-collective-service

World Health Organization. (2020). *Landmark alliance launches in Africa to fight COVID-19 misinformation*. https://www.afro.who.int/news/landmark-alliance-launches-africa-fight-covid-19-misinformation>

Yang, K., Pierri, F., Hui, P., Axelrod, A., Torres-Lugo, C., Bryden, J., Menczer, F. (2021). *The COVID-19 Infodemic: Twitter versus Facebook, Big Data and society*. Sage Journals. https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517211013861

Zaracostas, J. (2020). How to fight an infodemic. *Lancet*. 29(395): p. 676. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30461-X

Zimmer, M. (2010). But the data is already public: on the ethics of research in Facebook, Ethics and Information Technology. *Ethics and Information Technology*. 12(4): pp. 313-325. DOI: 10.1007/s10676-010-9227-5

(Mis)communication? Social listening and the exclusion of marginalised voices

27

Author: Africa Infodemic Response Alliance		
1	COVID-19 *Infodemic Trends in the African Region*	17 May 2021
2	COVID-19 *Infodemic Trends in the African Region*	24 May 2021
3	COVID-19 *Infodemic Trends in the African Region*	5 July 2021
4	COVID-19 *Infodemic Trends in the African Region*	12 July 2021
5	COVID-19 *Infodemic Trends in the African Region*	19 July 2021
6	COVID-19 *Infodemic Trends in the African Region*	17 August 2021
7	COVID-19 *Infodemic Trends in the African Region*	13 September 2021

Author: UNICEF Morocco		
1	*Social Listening report on COVID-19 Vaccination in Morocco #1*	15-21 June 2021
2	*Social Listening report on COVID-19 Vaccination in Morocco #2*	22-28 July 2021
3	*Social Listening report on COVID-19 Vaccination in Morocco #3*	30 July-5 August 2021
4	*Social Listening report on COVID-19 Vaccination in Morocco #4*	6-12 August 2021
5	*Social Listening report on COVID-19 Vaccination in Morocco #5*	2-9 September 2021

Coming together? Social Network Analysis of humanitarian actors in Burkina Faso

AMADO BALBONE, YSSOUF SIEZA AND NIKIAGNI NABOHO

Amado is an Emergency Management Specialist trained by the Francophone Humanitarian Operation Program (FHOP) and the IFRC-TISS's Certificate of Disaster Management program. His experience includes positions at Humanity and Inclusion, Save the Children and Enfant du Monde. He is currently the Education Project Manager at the Norwegian Refugee Council. Graduated in cognitive psychology and project management, he considers complex crises and their management in order to aid rapid understanding of the phenomenon and provide better service to beneficiaries.

Yssouf is a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer for the Inclusive Governance for Resilience Project (USAID-IGR) in Burkina Faso. For the past three years, he has worked with Creative Associates International to implement a program to counter violent extremism in Burkina Faso. He has over 15 years of experience in rural development and is also a consultant and trainer in data analysis.

Nikiagni is a Field Coordinator of Humanitarian Projects at Save The Children International (SCI). With a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, he is a social worker specialising in child protection and has made humanitarian work his mission since 2019. Currently, he is an active member of the Humanitarian Response Team at SCI-Burkina Faso.

Image: Azara* and her teacher Yazmine* during a sewing class in Yatenga province, Burkina Faso, April 2021 © Adrien Bitibaly / Save the Children

Abstract

The deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso has meant that humanitarian assistance programs have now been operating in the country for several years. Over the course of the response, emergency education and child protection interventions seeking the well-being of children and their rights to quality education have been prioritised. To achieve the best possible results, the humanitarian community has put in place a coordination mechanism and a 'big deal' to ensure synergies and maximise impact. The objective of this study is to draw out the operational dynamics between the actors in the response and to reflect on the results. We have found that this push for coordination has had mixed results—only a few organisations in Burkina have extensive networks with significant centrality for state services. Our study indicates that humanitarian organisations in the fields of protection and education must establish more connections with each other, and especially with local organisations, in line with the Grand Bargain's mission to strengthen and optimise responses.

Leadership relevance

This paper discusses how good networking in humanitarian settings is important in achieving better results around the world, especially in new crisis zones such as Burkina Faso. This paper contends that to achieve the best possible results in crisis responses, the humanitarian community must take the lead in putting in place coordination mechanisms to ensure synergies between organisations and projects and increase effectiveness and impact.

Introduction

Since 2016, Burkina Faso has been marked by armed violence and insecurity. This crisis has caused massive population displacements and worsened the living conditions of many communities, often the most vulnerable in the country. These attacks multiplied in 2021 and have now reached almost the entire country, whereas in 2020 they affected only six regions.

In October 2021, the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONASUR) counted 1,407,685 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), with the Sahel and North-Central regions leading the way with 493,708 (35.07%) and 466,314 (33.13%) displaced people respectively (CONASUR, 2021). The same report highlights the high proportion of 0-14 year-olds who have been displaced—54.12%. Burkinabe are not the only people being displaced, the Sahel region also hosts more than 19,000 Malian refugees, mainly in or around Dori. In addition to armed conflict and security threats, other natural hazards such as floods, droughts, and epidemics make the humanitarian situation complex and increase the suffering and vulnerability (economic, food, physical, and psychosocial) of IDPs and host populations.

In this crisis, one of the most affected areas is undoubtedly education, with a total of 2,641 schools under attack.

In this crisis, one of the most affected areas is undoubtedly education, with a total of 2,641 schools under attack, according to the October 2021 Nationale de l'Education en Situation d'Urgence (ESU) report. Since October 2021, the number of schools closed has increased from 2,244 to 2,877—an additional 633 closures. This represents 11.01% of the 26,123 schools in the country. These closures now affect 344,363 students (159,751 girls, 184,612 boys and 9,221 teachers, including 3,161 women) in the eight regions with high security challenges, compared with 304,564 students (148,046 girls, 156,518 boys and 12,480 teachers, including 4,568 women) in the six affected regions to May 2021.

To address the important issue of education in the areas most affected by the humanitarian crisis, Burkina Faso has developed a national strategy for education in emergencies, Nationale de l'Education en Situation d'Urgence, abbreviated to SN-ESU. This strategy prioritises six of the most affected regions, including the Boucle du Mouhoun, the Central-East, the East, the Hauts-Bassins, the North and the Sahel.

In this article, we focus on two of the most affected regions since the beginning of the security crisis in 2015, namely the North-Central region and the Sahel region. It should be noted that the first incidents occurred in the Sahel region, with immediate effects on population movements inland in communes such as Dori, Djibo, Gorom-Gorom and further inland in Kaya, Yalgo, Tougouri and Barsalogho. With the government's call for assistance to IDPs, organisations have committed themselves to emergency shelter, food security, health, protection, and education.

Before security deteriorated, the Sahel zone was already an area under the assistance of non-governmental organisations, although their work was of a developmental nature. Among those already present were Humanité et Inclusion (HI), Medécins du Monde (MdM), Helvetas, Vétérinaires Sans Frontière (VSF), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), among others. After the call of the government for emergency assistance came the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Plan International (which was already in the country elsewhere), Enfants du Monde, and more. These international organisations do not work alone. They have always been accompanied, preceded, or partnered with local organisations. Although not all these local organisations work in education and protection, many of them have children at the heart of their strategies. What is most noteworthy is the change in the agendas of many of these organisations to emergency engagement rather than development responses.

The objective of this study is to highlight the connections between these humanitarian actors in order to help gauge the effectiveness of their work in responding to the needs of affected populations. In particular, it aims to focus on emergency education and protection in Burkina Faso and how organisations involved in these areas are (or are not) linked, and what strengths and potential gaps in an effective response to the needs of people affected by disaster this reveals.

In particular [this study] aims to focus on emergency education and protection in Burkina Faso and how organisations involved in these areas are (or are not) linked.

Coming together? Social Network Analysis of humanitarian actors in Burkina Faso

33

Conceptual and contextual framework

Education in Emergencies (EiE)

Education in general and education in emergencies are recognised as having an intrinsically protective role. Save the Children International describes education in emergencies (EiE) as a set of conceptual activities that enable learners to continue learning in a structured way, even in situations of emergency, crisis or long-term instability (ReliefWeb, 2021). The Interagency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) describes Universal Primary Education (UPE) as an opportunity for quality learning at all ages in crisis; including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher education, and adult education, which provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection to sustain and save lives. In the humanitarian sector, the crucial role of education in sustaining and saving lives (INEE, 2009) is recognised. Education is important to meet the basic needs of children and communities in the short term, while in the long term, it helps them reduce their vulnerability and provides them with the tools to build their 'new' lives.

Child protection in emergency situations

According to Swiss children's relief agency, Terre des Hommes (TdH), humanitarian crises expose children to specific situations of violence. Depending on whether it is an armed conflict or a natural disaster, the brutal and prolonged deprivation of the necessities of life, displacement and refuge, family separation, physical violence, sexual violence, armed violence and recruitment, torture, and trafficking may occur. When they do not lead to death, these situations have devastating effects on children, the most striking of which are injury and/or disability, psychological distress, physical, moral and sexual abuse, malnutrition and health problems, family and community violence and/or exclusion, recourse to dangerous survival activities, physical, sexual or labour exploitation and arbitrary detention.

The Child Protection Interagency Working Group (CPWG) defines protective intervention in humanitarian crises as the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children.

TdH defines the programmatic goal of child protection actors in a humanitarian crisis as working to strengthen protective factors that build children's resilience and address vulnerability factors that expose them to risk and violence. Protection programs restore skills and relationships among children, families, and communities.

Education and child protection, two complementary sectors in emergency situations

Education plays a fundamental role in enhancing the protection of vulnerable groups of children in emergencies, including that of girls, children with disabilities, members of ethnic or linguistic minorities, unaccompanied and separated children, and children associated with armed forces and groups. Learning that takes place in a safe environment facilitates the work of teachers and non-teaching staff who supervise and protect at-risk children and who intervene to protect and support them (Galloway et al, 2020).

It is therefore essential to have a protective environment in which teachers can identify protection and gender-based violence risks, so that they can act safely and confidentially through child-centred intervention and referral systems to access assistance. Within this framework, schools and learning spaces can be a fundamental starting point for providing essential support beyond the education sector, such as protection, health, nutrition, and WASH services. Psychosocial interventions for children, youth, and teachers can help restore individual capacities and build confidence for the future. Thus, psychosocial support to children and youth in emergencies as part of an ESU response requires an integrated approach that takes into account children's survival and protection needs, while emphasising the importance of family, community, and local beliefs and traditions in helping children cope with the consequences of the emergency.

Schools and learning spaces can be a fundamental starting point for providing essential support beyond the education sector, such as protection, health, nutrition, and WASH services.

The WWWWW

The 5W (Who does What Where When for Whom?) monitoring and reporting tool helps collect information on the operational presence, activities and results achieved by organisations working in the field of child protection. Analysis of the data collected provides information on the progress of the response, geographic targeting, risks of gaps and overlaps, and allows the response strategy of the area of responsibility to be adapted for better results (Martel, 2014). The 5W tool addresses a number of objectives, including clearly understanding the interventions of organisations working in the field.

Utilising the 5Ws allows organisations to:
- Coordinate intervention activities and resource allocation.
- Undertake strategic planning and decision-making based on comprehensive and meaningful information.
- Improve coverage of needs by highlighting duplication of activities and uncovered areas.
- Monitor progress and results and adjust intervention planning accordingly.
- Report to funders and beneficiaries on results achieved.
- Provide real-time response analysis for effective planning and monitoring.

Thus, the 5W system has come to be the tool most used by clusters today to collect data from member organisations' interventions, process them, and inform the humanitarian world. When we talk about the humanitarian world here, we mean the entire humanitarian community, from donors to beneficiaries, including organisations working in all sectors of intervention. Its relevance lies in the fact that it answers these five major questions about the person or entity, the type of achievement, the place of achievement, when the achievement took place and for whom.

In the context of Burkina Faso, it makes it possible to know, at the end, how many people benefited from the action and how much it cost. This allows the clusters to identify the types of actions that are missing, the concentration of actors by zone, and the gaps in the responses, in order to guide the mobilisation of resources, the content of the future response and, above all, the zone in which to implement these responses so as not to 'forget anyone' (Manset et al, 2017).

Materials and methods

Presentation of the study area

The crisis, which began in the north, has spread to almost the entire country, including the capital, which has experienced terrorist attacks. But it has affected six regions more severely, of which we choose to focus on two: the Centre-North region and the Sahel region. For the reader's understanding, we devote this passage to the description of these two regions.

The Centre-North region covers an area of 18,212 km²—or 6.6% of the national territory, and ranks seventh in the country in terms of surface area. It comprises three provinces: the province of Bam (4,092 Km²), the province of Namentenga (6,379 Km²) and the province of Sanmatenga (7,741 Km²). The capital of the region, Kaya, is located approximately 100 kilometres from Ouagadougou. The Centre-North region is bordered to the north by the Sahel region, to the south by the Central Plateau and Centre-East regions, to the east by the Eastern region and to the west by the Northern region.

Located in the extreme north of Burkina Faso, the Sahel region covers 36,166 km² or 13.2% of the national territory. It is bordered to the north by the Republic of Mali, to the northeast by the Republic of Niger, to the south by the Eastern and Centre-North regions, and to the west by the Northern region. The Sahel region, within its international boundaries, shares more than 1,500 kilometres of borders with Mali and Niger. The capital of the region is Dori. The Sahel is a desert region with a high potential for livestock production.

Social Network Analysis study area

Burkina Faso

SAHEL

493,708 Internally Displaced Persons

CENTRE-NORTH

466,314 Internally Displaced Persons

Legend
- Study area
- Burkina Faso

100 0 100 200 300 400 km

N
W E
S

Coming together? Social Network Analysis of humanitarian actors in Burkina Faso

35
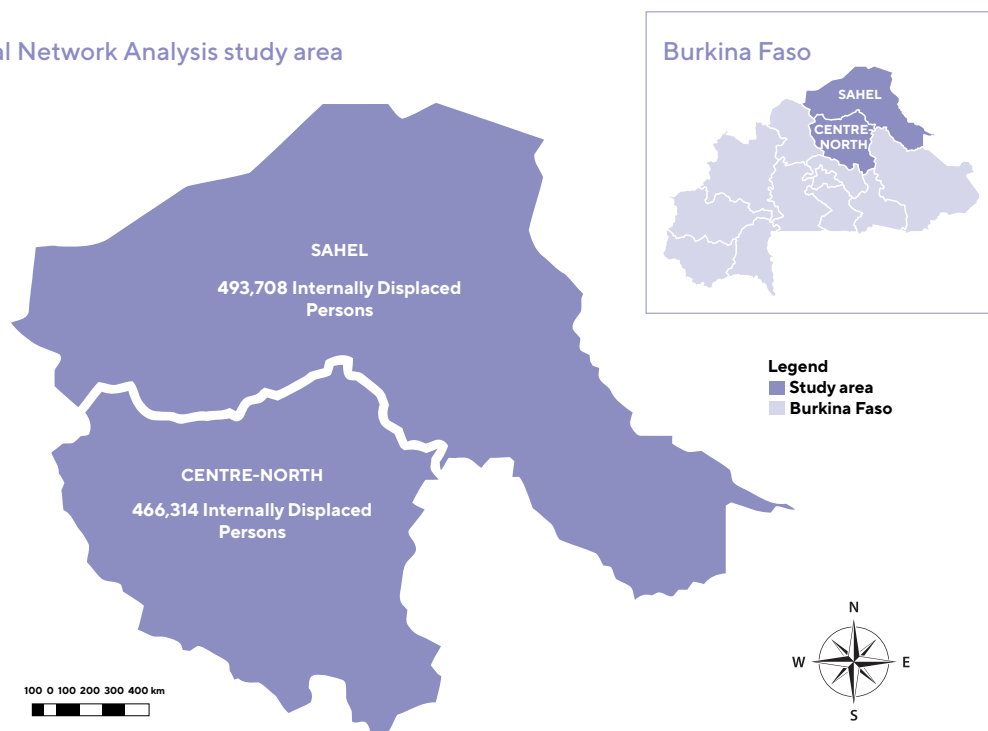
Data source

The data used in this study came from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) database. They were collected as of 4 November 2021 from https://data.humdata.org/dataset/burkina-faso-presence-operationnelle. The database was first cleaned to remove missing values and to standardise the names of organisations in the different clusters. It was then formatted before being imported for processing and analysis in kumu.io software.

Methodology of the study

The Social Network Analysis (SNA) method was used in this study. A social network is defined as a finite set of actors connected to each other through social ties. SNA can be defined as "a set of methods, concepts, theories, models, and investigations (...), which consist in taking as their object of study not the attributes of individuals (their age, their profession, etc.), but the relationships between individuals and the regularities they present, in order to describe them, to account for their formation and their transformations, to analyse their effects on individual behaviour" (Burt et al, 2013). It is therefore a process of network exploration aimed at extracting relevant knowledge and exploiting the information.

Data processing and analysis

SNA uses types of measures called 'centrality' to determine the place of an actor in a network (for example, information dissemination, prestige, resource circulation, sociability, etc.) (Borgatti et al, 2009). For our study, we have taken four measures of centrality:

- The degree of centrality is measured by the number of links established between an actor and others; the more central an actor is, the more active they are in the network. Actors with a high degree of centrality are often considered powerful, because they are surrounded by many other actors.
- Closeness centrality is measured by the number of steps that an actor must take to reach the other members of the network. Centrality here refers to proximity, a central actor can quickly get in touch with the others.
- The centrality of the 'betweenness' type is measured by the number of shortest paths on which the actor is an obligatory passage between two other actors; such a central actor controls the interactions between other actors. This centrality captures the gatekeeping, bridging and bottleneck functions of an actor in the network.
- Eigenvector centrality "indicates whether actors are central because they have ties to other central actors. Actors with high eigenvector centrality are well connected to the parts of the network that have the greatest connectivity" (Walther, 2015, p. 5).

We used these centrality measures in the online software kumu (https://kumu.io/). For each centrality measure, we created a map by scaling the size of the elements according to the results of the active metric.

Results and discussions

Figure 1: Education and protection actors in the study areas

	Education projects	Protection projects	Total
Centre-North	**176**	**17**	**193**
Plan International (PI)	82	2	84
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	37	-	37
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	27	8	35
Central government	10	-	10
OXFAM	-	6	6
Initiatives de Coopération et d'Appui aux actions Humanitaires et de Développement (ICADH)	6	-	6
World Food Programme (PAM/WFP)	4	-	4

Initiative Instruire & Impacter la Nouvelle Generation (2iNOG)	4	–	4
Centre Diocésain de Communication (CDC)	3	–	3
Abba's International Healing Center (AIHC)	2	–	2
Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous du burkina Faso (CN-EPT/BF)	1	–	1
International Organisation for Migration (OIM)	–	1	1
Sahel	**163**	**16**	**179**
Humanité et Inclusion (HI)	78	–	78
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	39	10	49
Save The Children International (SCI)	18	–	18
World Food Programme (PAM/WFP)	14	–	14
Central government	6	–	6
OXFAM	5	–	5
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	–	4	4
Centre Diocésain de Communication (CDC)	2	–	2
International Organisation for Migration (OIM)	–	2	2
Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous du burkina Faso (CN-EPT/BF)	1	–	1
Total	**339**	**33**	**372**

The above data from the 5W matrix of the education and protection clusters provides an overview of the organisations present in the North Central and Sahel regions as well as their achievements during the reporting period. These data cover the period from January to June 2021. They show 339 types of actions in education and 33 types in child protection for this period. Separately, the North Central region received 176 education interventions and 7 protection interventions. When we look at the actions of each organisation, we realise that Plan International is in the lead with 82 actions in education and two in child protection. It is followed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) with 37 and 27 actions in education and zero and eight in child protection respectively. Government institutions came fourth with 10 interventions in education and zero in child protection. The same data collected in the Sahel show other organisations according to the volume of achievements. In the two areas of intervention, there are 163 in education and 16 in protection. There is a strong presence of Humanité et Inclusion (HI), which leads in education with 78 projects, followed by DRC with 39, Save the Children (SCI) with 18 in education and zero in protection, World Food Programme (WFP) with 14 and the government with six projects. What is noteworthy in both the North Central region and the Sahel is the low volume of achievements by certain organisations that are known to be major contributors to the response to the crisis.

Social Network Analysis

The table below gives the ranking of actors according to centrality measures. The first two centralities measure the power of the actors in a network. The last two measure the connections and influences of the actors.

Coming together? Social Network Analysis of humanitarian actors in Burkina Faso

37

Betweenness		Closeness		Eigenvector		Degree	
DRC	0.00238	Plan	0.190048	DRC	0.44721	Plan	6
Central Gov.	0.00238	DRC	0.095524	UNHCR	0.27639	DRC	5
		PAM	0.07143	Decentralised services of the state	0.27639	Central Gov.	4
		UNHCR	0.07143			Decentralised services of the state	4
		CN-EPT/BF	0.04762			SCI	3
		2iNOG	0.04762			AIHC	2
		Central Gov.	0.04762			NRC	2
		OIM	0.04762			OXFAM	2
		SCI	0.04762			UNHCR	2

Figure 3: Connections and influence of actors in the network

Key

- 2iNOG - Initiative Instruire & Impacter la Nouvelle Generation
- ADC-PDE – Association pour le Développement Communautaire et la Promotion des Droits de l'Enfant
- AIHC - Abba's International Healing Center
- APIJCN - Association pour la Promotion et l'Intégration de la Jeunesse du Centre Nord
- ATAD - Alliance Technique D'Assistance Au Développement
- CDC - Centre Diocésain de Communication
- Central government
- CN-EPT/BF - Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous du burkina Faso
- DRC - Danish Refugee Council
- DSS – Decentralised state services
- ECLUD – Eveil Club Pour le Development
- HI - Humanité et Inclusion
- ICADH - Initiatives de Coopération et d'Appui aux actions Humanitaires et de Développement
- NRC - Norwegian Refugee Council
- OIM - International Organisation for Migration
- OXFAM
- PAM - World Food Programme
- Plan - Plan International
- SCI - Save The Children International
- SF - SEL France
- UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

The network analysis reveals that four organisations occupy the first place among the actors with more connections (centrality degree) in the study area. These are respectively the NGO Plan with six connections, followed by the NGO DRC with five connections. These two international organisations are followed by the central government and the decentralised state services. The decentralised services of the state have four connections, but all these connections are incoming. The two international organisations that are the best connected in the network have more outgoing connections.

In terms of influence (eigenvector centrality), the NGO DRC occupies the first place in the network. It is followed by UNHCR and the decentralised services of the state.

Figure 4: The power of actors in the network

Key

- 2iNOG - Initiative Instruire & Impacter la Nouvelle Generation
- ADC-PDE - Association pour le Développement Communautaire et la Promotion des Droits de l'Enfant
- AIHC - Abba's International Healing Center
- APIJCN - Association pour la Promotion et l'Intégration de la Jeunesse du Centre Nord
- ATAD - Alliance Technique D'Assistance Au Développement
- CDC - Centre Diocésain de Communication
- Central government
- CN-EPT/BF - Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous du burkina Faso
- DRC - Danish Refugee Council
- DSS – Decentralised state services
- ECLUD – Eveil Club Pour le Development
- HI - Humanité et Inclusion
- ICADH - Initiatives de Coopération et d'Appui aux actions Humanitaires et de Développement
- NRC - Norwegian Refugee Council
- OIM - International Organisation for Migration
- OXFAM
- PAM - World Food Programme
- Plan - Plan International
- SCI - Save The Children International
- SF - SEL France
- UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

The NGO DRC and the central government are positioned as the most essential actors in the network. They have the highest 'betweenness centrality'. This means that they are an essential passage (a bridge) in the network of education and protection actors in the study area. International NGOs such as Plan International and DRC have the highest closeness. These two NGOs therefore have a global vision of the interventions in the network (information power).

Discussion

In times of crisis, humanitarian assistance is essential to save lives and relieve suffering. Thus, based on the principles of humanity, local and international non-governmental organisations act under the leadership and invitation of the government to assist affected populations in disaster-affected areas when it feels unable to do so (Corbet, 2014). But this intervention, if it is done according to the principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence, and to complement fundamental humanitarian principles, should aim towards effective coordination to promote transparency, avoid duplication and allow the maximum needs of the maximum number of affected people to be covered. Humanitarian clusters therefore justify their importance by providing support for governments and organisations, avoiding waste, and maximising the benefits of each action (Martel, 2013). This study reveals several aspects of interest to organisations, clusters, the government and financial partners in the humanitarian response.

Our objective was to highlight the connection networks between organisations working in education and protection in order to analyse the inter-organisational dynamics and draw the consequences of the humanitarian response in a given time and area. The data shows that several organisations are active in the North Central and Sahel regions and the analysis reveals a medium level of connection with clear leadership zones. When we look at the position of Plan International, it is clear that this organisation has an extensive network and interacts with a large number of response actors, both at the governmental level and at the level of local non-governmental organisations, something that is highly desired by the humanitarian community and that responds to the philosophy of the Grand Bargain on two levels. First, at the level of the coordination of forces between international and national organisations and governmental agencies to best address needs (Principle 4); and second, at the level of strengthening the skills of governmental institutions and local NGOs (Principle 2) (IASC, 2016).

The analysis shows that state institutions in Burkina Faso play their role as repositories of authority and guarantors of the coordination and orientation of humanitarian assistance, given their central position in the network. Other organisations are catalysts for the activities of others and the government. This is the case with the WFP and the DRC, which remain in permanent connection with the central government and the decentralised government services. This is because the WFP works through state services or INGOs and local NGOs to implement its activities in the field, while the DRC serves as a link between larger organisations such as UNHCR and the technical services of the state through which it implements its actions.

Coming together? Social Network Analysis of humanitarian actors in Burkina Faso

39

At the same time, the network analysis shows that large organisations such as the NRC, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Oxfam do not have a large social network and are therefore on the periphery of the epicentre of humanitarian aid in Burkina Faso. A few clues could explain the isolation of these actors: either they implement everything directly, or their partners, if any, do not report sufficiently well on the 5W matrix. This results in a significant loss of data, which leads to a low visibility of interventions and a high risk of redundancy and being left behind.

It must also be considered that the data used is taken from the OCHA database, which is official and was used for the period indicated to inform the humanitarian community. However, it shows a disparity in the levels of intervention, which is certainly linked to the capacity of the actors, but which also raises questions. Did all organisations fill out the matrix for the period under review? If so, was it filled comprehensively? If not, does this mean that some organisations still do not know how to fill it in? In any case, we have noticed that large contributors such as the WFP, UNICEF and some local organisations have a weak presence in the network. They might not have done anything for the period, but the matrix is cumulative since previous actions not completed are also reported on.

Finally, the demand aspect also emerges in a telling way. The data from the two intervention areas used here shows that demand is higher for education than for protection, or that education actions are more reported on than protection actions. This is understandable because when a crisis occurs, some needs appear more pressing than others, and also because their nature makes them more graspable than others (Landa et al, 2021). This is the case with education, where the closing of a class means that at least 60 children run the risk of not having the right to go to school, while the physical or psychological violence suffered by a child will be drowned in the silence of makeshift shelters and in the confusion of families who are often looking for a simple explanation of why the crisis occurred. Finally, given the link established with the importance of education for child protection in times of crisis, we can assume that many protection actions have evaporated in the education data. If this is the case, it implies that the actions are not sufficiently discriminatory to be captured in the matrix.

Conclusion

The vocation of humanitarian organisations is to provide assistance to populations affected by a crisis. A successful humanitarian response requires great efforts at the strategic level, hence the development of Humanitarian Response Plans, but also at the practical level, with the establishment of clusters, and the OCHA and the Operational Coordination Group (GCCOR) present to advise, supervise and coordinate the actions of actors in the field.

For a long time, these were the concerns of the international humanitarian community. Nowadays, we are witnessing the rise of local civil society actors who are increasingly capable of helping populations without resorting to foreign partners, and who are positioning themselves for broader purposes than just post-crisis or post-disaster intervention. They are, for example, working in the fight against poverty, in social solidarity, or in the context of replacing a failing public sector. The most experienced among them have the contextual knowledge, whether political, social or cultural, to give them a significant advantage over external actors. Some of these local actors base their interventions in general, but also in crisis or disaster situations, on a purpose and operating methods that refer more or less explicitly to religion and are therefore part of a cultural referent widely shared by the populations assisted.

But the results of our study have shown that INGOs and UN agencies still do not take these local actors into account in their programming or networks—a key element of the Grand Bargain. What is needed to make humanitarian assistance more effective should be more complementarity between stakeholders to increase synergy, as well as more connection between clustered organisations, in order to expand access and leave no one behind.

The results of our study have shown that INGOs and UN agencies still do not take these local actors into account in their programming or networks—a key element of the Grand Bargain.

References

Borgatti, S., Mehra, A., Brass, D. J. and Labianca, G. (2009). Network Analysis in the Social Sciences. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1165821

Burt, R., Kilduff, M. and Tasselli, S. (2013). Social network analysis: foundations and frontiers on advantage. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *64*, 527–547. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143828

Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation. (2021). *Enregistrement des personnes deplacees internes du Burkina Faso*.

Corbet, A. (2014). Quand l'humanitaire choisit ses victimes. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.3917/PRO.340.0039

Galloway, T., Bowra, A., Butsang, T. and Mashford-Pringle, A. (2020). Education in uncertainty: Academic life as Indigenous health scholars during COVID-19. *International Review of Education. Internationale Zeitschrift Fur Erziehungswissenschaft. Revue Internationale De Pedagogie*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-020-09876-5

Interagency Standing Committee. (2016). *About the Grand Bargain*. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/about-the-grand-bargain

Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies. (2009). *L'éducation dans les situations d'urgence : inclure tout le monde*. INEE. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/2934_0.pdf/

Landa, N., Zhou, S. and Marongwe, N. (2021). Education in emergencies: Lessons from COVID-19 in South Africa. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-021-09903-z

Manset, D., Hikkerova, L. and Sahut, J.-M. (2017). Repenser le modèle humanitaire : de l'efficience à la résilience. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.3917/GMP.054.0085

Martel, A. (2013). La coordination humanitaire en Haïti suite au séisme: le mécanisme des clusters, un enjeu de gouvernance. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/3c3029d5f65a263a751504174dea894547b5c67b

Martel, A. (2014). Humanitarian Coordination in Haïti: The Role of Clusters in the Outsourcing of Aid. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/36d8490cac5fd20764360838d2e7ddf6fd9b8817

ReliefWeb. (2021). *Normes d'Éducation en Situations d'Urgence Guide du Cluster Education du Burkina Faso – Burkina Faso*. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/burkina-faso/document/burkina-fasonormes-d%E2%80%99%C3%A9ducation-en-situations-d%E2%80%99urgence-avril-2021

Walther, O. (2015). Social Network Analysis and Informal Trade. *Department of Border Region Studies Working Paper* 01/2015. https://findresearcher.sdu.dk:8443/ws/portalfiles/portal/111854202/Walther_2015_WB_WP.pdf.

Coming together? Social Network Analysis of humanitarian actors in Burkina Faso

41

For profit and progress: Rethinking the role of the private sector in humanitarian action

KILIAN T MURPHY, EDWIN M SALONGA AND ASHFAQUE ZAMAN

Kilian is the Program Lead, Thematic Innovations at the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC). He works on supporting the implementation of projects for Private Sector Engagement in Disaster Risk Reduction and helping to document best practices and lessons learned in these areas. As part of ADPC's iPrepare Business Facility, he works to raise awareness and promote an effective enabling environment for businesses to engage in Disaster Risk Reduction. He is also working to expand ADPC's portfolio to integrate innovation for disaster risk management as part of ADPC's flagship programs including the regional Asian Preparedness Partnership (APP).

Edwin is a development professional, social entrepreneur, and university lecturer. With over two decades of experience working in the development sector, he is currently affiliated with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center as its Country Program Manager in the Philippines. A firm believer in the importance of local empowerment, he supports social enterprises through research and capacity-building interventions. He also serves as a lecturer at the Ateneo de Manila University and the De La Salle University in the Philippines.

Ashfaque is a communication specialist. He has over a decade of experience working in the fields of journalism and communications for organisations such as Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC) and Save the Children Bangladesh. Ashfaque is currently a Knowledge Management Specialist at the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. He focuses on developing and facilitating knowledge content and sharing on publication and digital platforms.

Image: A worker refills oxygen cylinders in Nepal, where private sector engagement in the pandemic response and management has become critical in mitigating the crisis © Save the Children Nepal

Abstract

Key global frameworks and guiding strategies including the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* highlight the value of the private sector in the fields of humanitarian action and disaster risk management (DRM). Nonetheless, the fundamental 'business case' for commercial enterprises to be actively engaged in DRM and addressing humanitarian crises still requires further examination and evidence-based consideration to determine mutually beneficial value addition. This paper provides a conceptual overview of the shift in the private sector's engagement in humanitarian action and DRM. It also considers how such engagement with the private sector has corresponded with a heightened recognition for commercial enterprises to safeguard their own business operations from disaster events while implementing development interventions that address the needs of populations affected by disasters.

Leadership relevance

The United Nations has identified the private sector as a "key actor to achieve change" in the humanitarian sector, with commercial enterprises assisting traditional stakeholders such as governments and development partners to manage various crises. The increasingly prominent role that the private sector is playing in humanitarian action has challenged collective assumptions about which organisations can make meaningful contributions to the overall humanitarian system. This paper serves as a call to action for those business leaders who will be required to play an important role as 'humanitarian leaders' to advocate the value of businesses alongside traditional humanitarian stakeholders.

Introduction

Disaster events have doubled in frequency from 4,212 in the period 1980 to 1999 to 7,348 between 2000 to 2019 (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2019). The increasing occurrence of disasters coupled with climate change affects entire communities, nations, and regions. The trend has prioritised the need to engage a wide range of stakeholders and responders in humanitarian action and disaster risk management (DRM). Governments, humanitarian organisations, and civil society organisations (CSOs) have had a long-standing role in building resilience and mitigating the impacts of disasters. The private sector has traditionally been classified as a non-actor in DRM and humanitarian work. However, intensified disaster impacts on enterprises have heightened recognition of the sector's value in participating in disaster-related action.

This paper analyses how the private sector has actively and increasingly been engaged in DRM and humanitarian work. It examines the role of the sector in several countries in Asia through selected case studies. The increasingly prominent role that the private sector is playing in humanitarian action has challenged collective assumptions about which organisations can make meaningful contributions to the overall humanitarian system. This paper likewise serves as a call to action for business leaders to continue playing an important role as 'humanitarian leaders' by advocating the value of businesses alongside traditional humanitarian stakeholders.

Private sector contributions to humanitarian action and disaster risk management

Events that cause serious disruption to the function of societies as well as result in human, material, or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected populations to cope using their own resources are known as humanitarian crises (IASC, 2015). Such events require humanitarian action that is delivered mainly on the basis of need (Hotho and Girschik, 2019). The involvement of businesses in humanitarian action has grown considerably in recent years. They are particularly active in relief operations such as cash donations, in-kind goods, and access to critical infrastructure (Cozzolino, 2021; Fuchs and Ohler; 2021). The sector acts as suppliers, donors, and operational partners in humanitarian action (Humanitarian Leadership Academy, 2019).

The private sector has been identified as a "key actor to achieve change" in the humanitarian sector (United Nations, 2016). It leverages its own expertise, resources, and influence to address the humanitarian needs of the affected populations. The sector goes beyond providing immediate relief to contribute to sustainable peace and development (UNOCHA, 2017). Businesses are now viewed as a key stakeholder in supporting localised humanitarian action. Their participation is important given the growing complexity of emergencies that require the coordinated action of a wide range of stakeholders (UNOCHA, 2019). Humanitarian actors have transitioned from short-term results towards the widely acknowledged need for better alignment of development, humanitarian, and peace-building efforts. This serves to address the root causes of humanitarian crises (UNDRR, 2021). Moreover, local actors play an important role in humanitarian action. They serve as a representative voice of the community affected by crises and disasters (Vera and Brusola-Vera, 2021). The private sector has also been classified as a local actor.

Businesses are now viewed as a key stakeholder in supporting localised humanitarian action.

Funding of support for humanitarian assistance from the private sector totaled USD$6.6 billion between 2011 and 2015. It is an indication of how commercial enterprises may potentially assist traditional stakeholders such as governments, development partners, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or CSOs in their efforts to respond to and manage crises (Development Initiatives, 2017). The progressive collaboration between these actors and private enterprises has increasingly expanded beyond financial support. Development partners, including those at the forefront of DRM interventions, have published guidelines to direct their collaboration and partnership with the private sector (USAID, 2018; Razeq, 2014).

The private sector's engagement in DRM has extended beyond requesting businesses to donate or contribute financially to disaster response, reconstruction, or rehabilitation efforts, towards a recognition of a partnership approach with businesses at different levels. Such collaborations can advance collective causes between stakeholders from different sectors, including those focused on reducing the impacts of disasters on vulnerable populations (Connecting Business Initiative, 2021; Taylor et al, 2016). The capacity for businesses to "enhance collaborative arrangements by providing technical expertise, efficient organisational skills and innovative approaches to DRM practice" has been documented by development partners (UNESCAP et al, 2015). The strong possibility for such interventions is associated with the private sector's "abundant resources, expertise and technology" and that these "expertise and capacities can be mobilised for collaborative efforts towards disaster risk reduction" (Izumi et al, 2016).

Moreover, the private sector is already heavily involved in disaster reduction either through philanthropic or charitable purposes, or via commercial engagement as part of their core business through the provision of expertise or supply of goods and services (Twigg, 2002). This tangible engagement in disaster management has manifested itself in several different ways, including direct assistance to communities, disaster preparedness for enterprises themselves, developing innovative products based on business technology and expertise, and joint projects with NGOs, governments, and international organisations as co-implementers, as well as the establishment of private foundations, NGOs, and trusts with a mandate for addressing disaster-related challenges (Izumi et al, 2016).

Evolution of private sector engagement

The private sector has not always been actively involved in humanitarian action and DRM. Businesses historically viewed disasters as a responsibility of the government. Initiatives related to corporate social responsibility were seen to primarily benefit businesses. A majority of the documented experience of corporate social responsibility initiatives for disaster reduction were from developed countries and deemed "superficial, promotional, or anecdotal" (Twigg, 2002). Over time, the private sector has become increasingly involved in humanitarian action, focusing on disaster response and rehabilitation efforts. However, businesses are criticised as focusing on specific projects rather than industry-wide initiatives and as being reactive rather than proactive (GFDRR, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2008).

The perspective of the private sector on humanitarian action and DRM is no longer constrained to business continuity. Aside from working to lessen the potential impacts of disasters on their businesses, the private sector has started to further invest in efforts to reduce the vulnerabilities of local communities where their workforce resides. The private sector is also encouraged to integrate DRM into its business models (United Nations, 2019). This includes the combination of enterprise risk management and business continuity management mechanisms (UNDRR, 2020).

Aside from working to lessen the potential impacts of disasters on their businesses, the private sector has started to further invest in efforts to reduce the vulnerabilities of local communities where their workforce resides.

Izumi and Shaw identify various ways that the private sector is involved in disaster risk reduction measures (Izumi et al, 2016). These include direct assistance to communities; disaster preparedness for their own business; development of innovative products; joint projects with other stakeholders in disaster risk reduction; and the establishment of private foundations, NGOs, and trusts. To further encourage private sector involvement in disaster risk reduction, key issues of legislation, incentive, and engagement must be addressed. These are considered mechanisms for effective private sector involvement (Izumi et al.).

There remains a concern for the holistic nature and long-term sustainability of disaster risk reduction interventions of the private sector. It is reported that some companies still focus on the short-term business gains of their disaster risk reduction efforts. Moreover, many businesses still maximise their income potential at the expense of fragile ecosystems where they operate (United Nations, 2019). Despite this, it is important to note that there are now more cases wherein the government and the private sector work together by "expanding business sector response and recovery responsibilities beyond simple self-preservationist activities" (International Recovery Platform, 2016).

Instead of working solely towards disaster risk reduction efforts that promote their self-interest, the private sector is investing in resilience-building initiatives that grow businesses and promote sustainable development.

The private sector has become increasingly involved in resilience building at the local, national, and global levels. While businesses are adversely affected by climate change and disasters, they are seen as possible agents of change in building their resilience and that of local communities (UNDP, 2017). It is common to see many businesses compete commercially with one another. Despite the competition, there is a growing realisation that their collective and concerted efforts on all phases of disaster management can benefit their own companies as well as the communities in which they operate (International Recovery Platform, 2016). With a growing number of private sector entities joining the global drive for disaster risk reduction and resilience, "change is accelerating and is expected to be profound" (Johnson et al, 2015). Instead of working solely towards disaster risk reduction efforts that promote their self-interest, the private sector is investing in resilience-building initiatives that grow businesses and promote sustainable development (Abe et al, 2019).

The Asia region as a pioneer in engaging the private sector

Stakeholders from the private sector, development partners, and governments in the Asia Pacific region are all at the forefront of private sector involvement in the field of disaster management (GFDRR, 2020; UNESCAP et al, 2015). Regional organisations in Asia such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) have been strong advocates to enhance the private sector's involvement in disaster risk reduction in the region, in particular, facilitating cooperation between corporates and national governments (Chatterjee et al, 2015).

Business associations and chambers of commerce in different Asian countries have also formalised their contribution to disaster management through membership and active contribution to private sector initiatives coordinated by global and regional development partners such as the United Nations Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies (ARISE) network and Connecting Business Initiative (CBI) as well as the Asian Preparedness Partnership (APP) platform pioneered by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) (Abe et al, 2019; Medel et al, 2020). At the country level, the Philippines Disaster Resilience Foundation

(PDRF) is an example of a private sector-led focal organisation to coordinate private sector contributions to disaster management efforts (United Nations, 2019; Medel et al, 2020.).

The following case studies demonstrate various aspects of private sector engagement in humanitarian action and DRM in Asia. These range from examples of successful models of private sector engagement that have been shared as good practice across the region; to efforts at raising awareness and sensitising the business community; to adaptation of practical tools for disaster resilience which can be utilised by enterprises; as well as cases where the traditional conceptions of 'public-private partnerships' (PPPs) have undergone an evolution in the context of disaster management.

Multi-stakeholder approaches as a catalyst for greater private sector engagement

Platforms, comprised of stakeholders from both for-profit and nonprofit sectors, have served to enhance the engagement of the private sector in humanitarian action and disaster management by providing "a space/interface in which different actors, skills, abilities, resources, knowledge, objectives, or needs could be more

Figure 1: APP national preparedness partnerships (Source: https://app.adpc.net/about-app/)
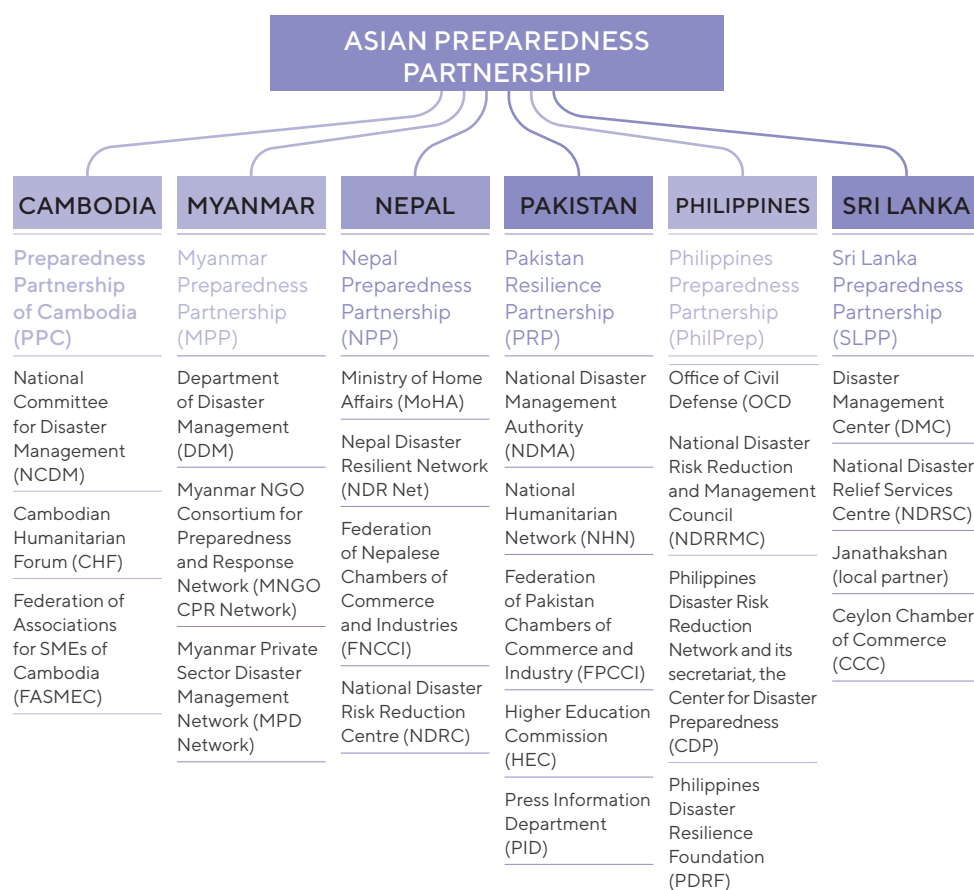
easily finalised in a concrete interaction" (Cozzolino, 2021). An added value of platforms is that they "provide a clear access point for the private sector to engage in humanitarian action and to help overcome common challenges to engagement" (Oglesby and Burke, 2012).

The Asian Preparedness Partnership is a multi-sectoral regional partnership. It seeks to establish safer and well-prepared communities through locally-led DRM actions to reduce the impacts of disasters on at-risk communities in Asia.

The Asian Preparedness Partnership is a multi-sectoral regional partnership. It seeks to establish safer and well-prepared communities through locally-led DRM actions to reduce the impacts of disasters on at-risk communities in Asia. This partnership model engages local non-governmental organisations (LNGOs), the government, and the private sector in its member countries to achieve this goal (see Figure 1). The partnership model has been implemented in six countries—Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. It seeks to promote preparedness for emergency response in these countries and beyond to improve inter-organisational coordination and dialogue among the partners.

The types of private sector partners engaged vary depending on each of the country contexts (see Figure 2). The "approach to business resilience advocated

under the APP initiatives has centered on...enhancing the disaster resilience of businesses themselves [by] ensuring enterprises can be adequately prepared for disaster events, recover quickly from disruptions, and even reduce disaster risks" as well as supporting the private sector in "contributing to efforts to enhance the disaster resilience of the communities and societies of which they are a part" (ADPC, 2018a, p. 9).

The Philippines as a leader in engaging the private sector in Asia

The private sector is integrated with humanitarian action in the Philippines. Moreover, the country is regarded as a leader in engaging the private sector in DRM in Asia. It exemplifies the valuable role that the sector can play in DRM as reflected in relevant legislation and policy frameworks (UNESCAP et al, 2015.). Businesses have been active players in disaster resilience efforts at local, subnational, and national levels in the Philippines. In terms of disaster relief, the private sector has played a prominent role in organising relief operations, delivering donations, and other support to the general public in the country, and is also self-reliant in terms of resource mobilisation (ADPC, 2018a). "Some large enterprises work independently, preferring to channel resources through their corporate foundations as well as having established direct partnerships with national and local government agencies and specific local communities" (ADPC 2018a, p. 21, which references International Labour Organisation, 2015). There has been a shift in the private sector towards investment in disaster resilience and proactive preparedness for disruptive events. The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation has advocated

Figure 2: Asian Preparedness Partnership country partnerships and private sector partners. (Source: ADPC (2018a))

Name of national partnership	Main local private sector partner	Organisation type
Preparedness Partnership of Cambodia (PPC)	Federation of Associations for SMEs of Cambodia (FASMEC)	Business Association
Myanmar Preparedness Partnership (MPP)	Myanmar Private Disaster Preparedness Network (MPD-Network)	Private Sector Network
Nepal Preparedness Partnership (NPP)	Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI)	Chamber of Commerce
Pakistan Resilience Partnership (PRP)	Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI)	Chamber of Commerce
Philippines Preparedness Partnership (PhilPrep)	Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF)	Private Sector Network
Sri Lanka Preparedness Partnership (SLPP)	Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC)	Chamber of Commerce

a holistic approach to DRM as reflected in its changing priorities from a 'reactive' focus on disaster recovery processes towards 'proactive' disaster preparedness and recovery (UNOCHA & DHL, 2016).

The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation was formed in the wake of Tropical Storm Ondoy (Typhoon Ketsana) in 2009 and was revitalised in the wake of Super Typhoon Yolanda (Typhoon Haiyan) in 2013 (Lucas, 2014). It has been actively involved in response and early recovery efforts. The Foundation coordinates in-kind support for affected populations with the understanding that the business sector would rather donate their goods than be asked to donate funding (Govinsider, 2021). Its coordination is not limited to the business sector. It also partners with governments and local and international organisations (Trajano, 2016). The organisation actively supports the national and local governments with provisions of necessary resources such as fuel, machinery, and manpower (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2017).

It is worth noting that the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation is credited with launching the world's first private sector-operated self-sufficient Emergency Operations Centre in 2017 (Connecting Business Initiative, 2019). The Centre is utilised in the coordination of relief and response efforts during major disasters as well as in the conduct of training courses on disaster preparedness (UNOCHA and DHL, 2016). It also harnesses data from local and international sources to monitor hydro-meteorological hazards and pandemics (Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, 2020), and remains active around the clock to monitor and coordinate help to areas affected by disasters. The Emergency Operations Centre's advanced system ensures that it is capable of continuous operation even during worst-case scenarios (Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, 2020). The centre also plays an important role in protecting the assets of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation's member companies as it maps data on public infrastructure to help protect them from hazards (Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, 2020).

The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation is credited with launching the world's first private sector-operated self-sufficient Emergency Operations Centre in 2017.

The efforts of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation are frequently cited when advocating for other countries in the region to enhance private sector engagement in humanitarian action and DRM (United Nations, 2019; UNOCHA and DHL, 2016). The Asia Leadership Forum for Business Resilience in 2017 was a key regional event where the Foundation was able to share its model and experiences with other countries in the region, particularly DRM stakeholders who are operating in Asian Preparedness Partnership countries. The forum proved to be a catalyst for private sector partners to join their respective national partnerships, particularly in Cambodia and Myanmar (ADPC, 2018a).

Mobilisation of the private sector through sensitisation and raising awareness

Global and regional DRM policy frameworks underline the need for a multi-stakeholder approach that includes businesses (Abe et al, 2019; Medel et al, 2020). Development partners such as the UN and Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre have supported the implementation of these frameworks in mobilising the private sector through sensitisation and awareness-raising among business communities of the value of DRM in disaster risk-prone countries of Asia (United Nations, 2019; UNDRR, 2019). Since the inception of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre has implemented many initiatives to support private sector engagement in DRM and uptake of business continuity management, originating with a project on strengthening the disaster resilience of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in selected countries of Southeast Asia (United Nations, 2019; Mavrodieva et al, 2019). The Centre also promoted the concept of 'business resilience', during two of its seminal regional forums in 2016 and 2017. These events facilitated the participation of businesses, development partners, and governments (ADPC, 2017a; ADPC, 2016).

The Preparedness Partnership of Cambodia (PPC) is the national chapter of the Asian Preparedness Partnership in Cambodia. It was established with representatives from government-mandated agencies such as the National Committee for Disaster Management, the Cambodian Humanitarian Forum (CHF), and the Federation of Associations of Small and Medium Enterprises in Cambodia (FASMEC) in May 2018. The partnership was built on the foundations laid by the Cambodian Humanitarian Forum, which was formed in 2012 through a United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID BHA) funded program on 'Strengthening Emergency Response Capacity of NGOs in Cambodia'— designed to enhance the leadership capacity of LNGOs. The Forum's network of 120 NGOs has enabled the program to make notable progress in enhancing the capacity and readiness of local organisations in Cambodia to contribute to humanitarian action and disaster response. The forum presented a successful

partnership model for scaling up in the Asian region. It was further expanded under the Asian Preparedess Partnership as a multi-stakeholder platform that also encompasses government agencies and private sector organisations. Similarly to the Preparedness Partnership of Cambodia experience, the Myanmar Preparedness Partnership (MPP) is the national chapter of the Asian Preparedess Partnership in Myanmar. It was formed with representations from the government, the Myanmar NGO Consortium for Preparedness and Response Network (MNGO CPR Network), and the Myanmar Private Sector Disaster Management (MPD) Network.

Following on from the regional Asia Leadership Forum for Business Resilience conducted in December 2017, Cambodia and Myanmar were two of the notable examples where these respective country partnerships recognised a need for greater awareness-raising and sensitisation of the role that the private sector could play in humanitarian action and DRM. With technical support from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, both the Preparedness Partnership of Cambodia and the Myanmar Preparedness Partnership conducted their first dedicated business resilience forums. The events brought together key partners and stakeholders from governments, CSOs, and development partners to explore effective means of engaging the private sector in disaster preparedness and business resilience initiatives.

The forum conducted in Yangon in February 2018 was attended by over 100 participants. The Myanmar Preparedness Partnership was able to build on this momentum, with further support from USAID BHA, under the program 'Strengthening Preparedness for Emergency Response through Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation' from September 2018 to 2019. The national partnership "was able to enhance the multi-stakeholder coordination and partnership by further consolidating and scaling up [its] platform through amplification of information management, joint contingency planning, training curriculum development, and technical support to SMEs" (ADPC, 2021, p. 39). In addition, a National Business Resilience Forum was conducted in Cambodia in June 2018. It was the first dedicated platform organised for relevant key partners and stakeholders to come together and explore an effective way of engaging the private sector. While the overall engagement of businesses in humanitarian action and DRM planning processes and coordination in Cambodia remains low, the Federation of Associations for SMEs' engagement in the multi-stakeholder platform has helped amplify the role of the private sector to some degree. In addition, the Preparedness Partnership of Cambodia continues to raise awareness and provide technical support to the private sector to stimulate more active and tangible engagement (ADPC, 2018a).

Including the private sector in multi-stakeholder platforms regarding humanitarian action and DRM has propelled their coordination and networking with traditional actors. These platforms have also built opportunities for different stakeholders to cooperate in the conceptualisation and implementation of tools that equip enterprises with greater resilience against disaster events. The following section will detail how such tools have been instilled into the business community of Sri Lanka through training events.

Business continuity planning as a tool to enhance the disaster resilience of enterprises

Practitioners have increasingly recognised the importance of business continuity planning and business continuity management as a tangible tool for private sector organisations in contributing to DRM, particularly in the context of Asian countries (Ono, 2015). Business continuity planning has been specifically highlighted as an appropriate tool that can be utilised by SMEs to enhance their resilience to disasters and other disruptive events (ADPC, 2017b).

The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC) in Sri Lanka advocates for the private sector to shift its focus from disaster response and relief efforts towards a disaster preparedness approach (ADPC, 2018a). The Chamber is an active member of the regional Asian Preparedness Partnership platform and its national chapter—the Sri Lanka Preparedness Partnership (SLPP). The private sector and responsible government agencies for disaster management in Sri Lanka have advocated for business continuity planning as a means for commercial enterprises to build their resilience to external shocks, including natural hazard-induced disasters (Fernando et al, 2021).

The Sri Lanka Preparedness Partnership, in collaboration with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, the government of Sri Lanka and with support from Oxfam, organised a national 'Training of Trainers' workshop in July 2018 that sought to proliferate the concept of business continuity and advance cooperative efforts between relevant stakeholders in the country (ADPC, 2018b). The technical component of the business continuity management training was facilitated with support from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre with the materials used having been contextualised for the Sri Lankan context. The event engaged 33 participants from micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), large corporations, and government officials overseeing private sector development and SME promotion, as well as LNGOs engaging in training SMEs.

Utilising the cohort trained at the national level workshop, the business continuity training sessions have also been rolled out at the sub-national level. The events have been tailored to meet the needs of specific sectors, including the agricultural sector and financial institutions, with support from the Sri Lanka Preparedness Partnership (ADPC, 2018b). The adoption of business continuity approaches among institutions in the country is an example whereby regional organisations, with support from local agencies, have facilitated the uptake of tools that can enhance the disaster resilience of private sector enterprises.

The evolution of disaster events has progressively motivated novel approaches and the need for private sector engagement in humanitarian action and DRM. COVID-19 has emphasised the importance of incorporating mechanisms on public health into DRM policies and procedures. The following section will expound on ways of engaging the private sector in partnerships for health-related interventions and the role of businesses in the public response to local emergency and disaster situations in Nepal.

Shifting perceptions of public–private partnerships in the backdrop of COVID-19

The aftermath of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal highlighted the role that the private sector can play beyond simply providing financial support or services as part of the response, recovery, and rehabilitation from disasters (UNOCHA and DHL, 2016; World Economic Forum, 2015). The corporate sector formally collaborated with the government and public sector agencies through PPP for reconstruction efforts in the wake of the disaster (Chatterjee, 2021). This catalysed private sector engagement in other aspects of DRM and emergency preparedness (UNOCHA and DHL; Thapa et al, 2015). The need to engage the private sector in proactive efforts for DRM in Nepal was reflected in the enactment of the country's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2017 that includes increased recognition and participation of the private sector in the overall DRM system. "In part, this was motivated by the experience of previous disaster events in the country: the private sector suffered over 75% of the total estimated damage and losses resulting from the 2015 Nepal Earthquake" (ADPC 2018a, p. 17, which references Government of Nepal, 2015).

More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need for a multi-sectoral response to large-scale disasters while emphasising the crucial role that the private sector now plays in assisting humanitarian action in different countries, including in Asia (Panneer et al, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2020). In Nepal, private sector engagement in the pandemic response and management became critical in mitigating the crisis, as the public health system's capacity was often exceeded at the provincial, municipal, and community levels (Adhikari et al, 2020).

In Nepal, private sector engagement in the pandemic response and management became critical in mitigating the crisis, as the public health system's capacity was often exceeded at the provincial, municipal, and community levels.

The experience of the private sector actors engaged in the Nepal Preparedness Partnership (NPP) has reflected this evolving paradigm. The traditional conception of public and private sectors collaborating on a project, often related to infrastructure concerns, has shifted towards partnerships in which the corporate sector is an active stakeholder engaged in emergency preparedness initiatives from their conception, through to their implementation and completion.

The Nepal Preparedness Partnership platform has facilitated large private sector entities in the country, including Nabil Bank and the Chaudhary Foundation, to work closely with government agencies and NGO networks in collaborating on a system to strengthen multi-hazard emergency preparedness in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. These private sector partners engaged in a joint program to build the capacity of local health workers and humanitarian organisations in strengthening the local health systems. The training sessions were conducted in seven provinces of Nepal with 330 attendees from various sectors. The content focused on local level preparedness for health emergencies including the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were familiarised with government issues and World Health Organisation (WHO) published information, education, and communication materials, as well as government-approved standard operating procedures, guidelines, and protocols. The sessions covered containment and mitigation processes as well as preparedness and response plans. In terms of COVID-19, the workshop detailed the myths and realities of the pandemic and risk communication materials available for accurate information sharing.

The private sector partners in Nepal also engaged in an after-action review of local frontline health workers and humanitarian organisations. It centered on capacity-building initiatives to strengthen local health systems. The event evaluated the role of stakeholders in strengthening community systems and investing in capacity-building initiatives for local health systems by exploring avenues for private sector involvement in projects and support on emergency preparedness

with a focus on health systems. Engaging businesses in response analysis has enhanced the private sector's participation in multi-stakeholder partnerships while guiding the sector on the role it can play towards more holistic disaster resilience rather than merely providing funding for relief and reconstruction following disasters.

Conclusions

This paper highlights the active role that the private sector plays in humanitarian action and DRM, providing examples of businesses implementing their own initiatives and those where traditional stakeholders collaborate with businesses. To maximise private sector involvement in humanitarian action and DRM, businesses need to hurdle several challenges and barriers. They must also work closely with other stakeholders. Moreover, they should integrate disaster risks into their management practices. Finally, there is still a need to determine a definitive business case for the private sector to be a stakeholder in DRM, which is still predominantly seen as the primary responsibility of governments and development partners.

There is still a need to determine a definitive business case for the private sector to be a stakeholder in DRM, which is still predominantly seen as the primary responsibility of governments and development partners.

Challenges and barriers to private sector engagement in humanitarian action and DRM

The case studies featured in this paper detail promising examples of active private sector engagement in humanitarian action and DRM. This includes instances of commercial enterprises implementing their initiatives as well as examples where the traditional stakeholders engaged in the field have been able to engage in positive collaborations with businesses. However, despite these successes, several challenges and barriers remain in engaging the private sector, particularly in the Asian region.

One of the key challenges identified by the Sendai Framework is for the private sector to work closely with other stakeholders in disaster risk reduction, including the government, CSOs, and academia (Abe et al, 2019). It is contended that on the ground, the private sector remains an "under-appreciated actor" in disaster management efforts in many countries in Asia

(Chatterjee, 2021). Furthermore, practitioners from other regions have cautioned that private sector capacities should be leveraged to support and supplement overall disaster management initiatives rather than being regarded as a "panacea" to disaster management challenges such as resource limitation or technical expertise (Van der Berg, 2015). While there have been notable strides towards multi-stakeholder coordination, much can still be done to mainstream cooperation among these sectors. Therefore, the role of regional organisations and international development partners remains crucial as a facilitator to connect governments and NGOs with their private sector counterparts and identify common areas of interest for partnership and cooperation among these stakeholders.

Businesses also need to integrate disaster risks into their management practices (United Nations, 2015). This is especially true for micro and small enterprises that have less resources compared to large companies. Considering their exposure and vulnerability, it becomes more difficult for micro and small businesses to be engaged in humanitarian action and DRM initiatives. Without meaningful integration of disaster risks into their management practices, businesses will be focused on operational issues as they face disruptions. This in turn limits their engagement in development efforts intended for their partners and local communities (ADPC, 2017b).

While the value of private sector engagement in humanitarian action and DRM is now more widely recognised, there is still a lack of consensus about the definitive business case or motivation for the corporate sector to be a stakeholder in areas that are still primarily seen as the primary responsibility of mandated government agencies, development partners, NGOs, and CSOs. Ultimately, businesses of any size are a 'for-profit' endeavour and would need to be certain of the value of continued engagement in disaster management initiatives, whether it be at the global, regional, national, or local level. As such, there is still a pertinent need to establish a coherent and definitive 'business case' for businesses to be involved in humanitarian action and DRM, considering both the need to safeguard their operations in the face of disruptive events as well as to contribute to the overall resilience of the communities and societies in which they are embedded (UNESCAP et al, 2015; ADPC, 2017).

The increasingly prominent role that the private sector plays in humanitarian action and DRM has challenged collective assumptions about which organisations can make meaningful contributions to the overall humanitarian system. In this context, business leaders will need to play a decisive role as 'humanitarian leaders' by advocating the value of businesses alongside traditional humanitarian stakeholders.

References

Abe, Y., Zodrow, I., Johnson, D. A., & Silerio, L. (2019). Risk informed and resilient development: Engaging the private sector in the era of the Sendai Framework. *Progress in Disaster Science, 2,* 100020. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2019.100020

Adhikari, B., Ozaki, A., Marahatta, S. B., Rijal, K. R., & Mishra, S. R. (2020). Earthquake rebuilding and response to COVID-19 in Nepal, a country nestled in multiple crises. *Journal of Global Health,* 10(2). http://10.7189/jogh.10.020367

ADPC. (2016). *Asian businesses build resilience against disasters*. Asian Disaster Preparedness Center http://www.adpc.net/igo/contents/Media/media-news.asp?pid=1064&Topic=70,74#sthash.EoYjq1qr.dpbs

ADPC. (2017a). *Asia Leadership Forum for Business Resilience*. Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC). https://app.adpc.net/resources/asia-leadership-forum-for-business-resilience/

ADPC. (2017b). *Strengthening the disaster resilience of small and medium enterprises in Asia - Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam*. Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. http://www.adpc.net/sme-resilience-asia/

ADPC. (2018). *Engaging the private sector in preparedness for response - Experiences from the Asian Preparedness Partnership.* Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/engaging-private-sector-preparedness-response-experiences-asian-preparedness

ADPC. (2018). *Business continuity management course for MSMEs introduced in Sri Lanka*. Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. https://app.adpc.net/news/business-continuity-management-course-for-msmes-introduced-in-sri-lanka/

ADPC. (2021). *Planting the seeds of Localization: Growing with the Asian Preparedness Partnership*. Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. https://app.adpc.net/?jet_download=4401.

Chatterjee, R. (2021). Private sector: Under-appreciated actors in disaster response and recovery. In: Cook, A.D.B., Gong, L. (Eds.) *Humanitarianism in the Asia-Pacific. SpringerBriefs in Political Science.* Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4874-5_15

Chatterjee, R., & Shaw, R. (2015). Role of regional organisations for enhancing private sector involvement in Disaster Risk Reduction in developing Asia. In: Izumi T., Shaw R. (Eds.) *Disaster Management and Private Sectors.* Disaster Risk Reduction (Methods, Approaches and Practices). Springer, Tokyo. https://10.1007/978-4-431-55414-1_4

Connecting Business initiative. (2021). *Responding to multiple disasters: A case study on the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation's Emergency Operations Center and response to Super Typhoon Goni and Vamco during the COVID-19 pandemic.* https://www.connectingbusiness.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/PDRF%20Case%20Study_%20Responding%20to%20Multiple%20Disasters%20%28FINAL%20ao%2030June2021%29.pdf

Cozzolino, A. (2021). Platforms enhancing the engagement of the private sector in humanitarian relief operations. *Sustainability, 13*(3024), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13063024

Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. (2019). *International Disaster Database.* Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels, Belgium. [Data set] http://www.em-dat.net.

Development Initiatives. (2017). *Global humanitarian assistance report 2017.* https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2017

Fernando, N., Jayasinghe, N., Amaratunga, D., Haigh, R., Siriwardana, C., Herath, H., Ranaweera, P. U. A., & Jayaweera, S. (2021). Settling the Ripples: An examination of Sri Lanka's approach to addressing cascading impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In: R. Senaratne, D. Amaratunga, S. Mendis & P. Athukorala (Eds.) *COVID 19: Impact, Mitigation, Opportunities and Building Resilience: From Adversity to Serendipity. vol. 1.* National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka.

Fuchs, A., & Ohler, H. (2021). Does private aid follow the flag? An empirical analysis of humanitarian assistance. *The World Economy, 44,* 671-705. https://doi.org/10.1111/twec.13021

Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. (2020). *Private sector participation in disaster recovery and mitigation*. Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. https://www.gfdrr.org/en/publication/private-sector-participation-recovery.

Government of Nepal. (2015). *Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA). - Nepal Earthquake 2015 - Executive Summary.* https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/SAR/nepal/PDNA%20Volume%20A%20Final.pdf

Govinsider. (2017). *How the Philippines brought business into disaster recovery.* https://govinsider.asia/smart-gov/philippines-typhoon-haiyan-disaster-recovery-pdrf/

Hotho, J. & Girschik, V. (2019). Corporate engagement in humanitarian action: Concepts, challenges, and areas for international business research. *Critical Perspectives on International Business, 15*(2/3), 201-218. https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-02-2019-0015

Humanitarian Leadership Academy. (2019). *The Role of the private sector in humanitarian action: progress and prognosis.* Humanitarian Leadership Academy. https://www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HSBCandtheAcademy_PrivateSectorHumanitarianAction_April2019_FINAL.pdf

IASC. (2015). *Introduction to humanitarian action: a brief guide for resident coordinators.* Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/rc_guide_31_october_2015_webversion_final.pdf

International Labour Organisation. (2015). *Needs assessment for the private sector in the Philippines: Disaster preparedness, response and recovery.* International Labour Organisation. https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_368162/lang-en/index.htm

International Recovery Platform. (2016). *Guidance note on recovery private sector.* https://www.recoveryplatform.org/assets/Guidance_Notes/Guidance%20Note%20on%20Recovery-Private%20Sector.pdf

Izumi, T. & Shaw, R. (Eds.) (2015). *Disaster management and private sectors: challenges and potentials.* doi: 10.1007/978-4-431-55414-1

Japan International Cooperation Agency. (2017). *Data collection survey for strategy development of disaster risk reduction and management sector in the Republic of Philippines.* Japan International Cooperation Agency. http://open_jicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12285003.pdf.

Johnson, D.A.K., & Abe, Y. (2015) Global overview on the role of the private sector in disaster risk reduction: Scopes, challenges, and potentials. In: Izumi, T., Shaw, R. (Eds.) *Disaster Management and Private Sectors. Disaster Risk Reduction (Methods, Approaches and Practices).* Springer, Tokyo. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-55414-1_2

Lucas, D.L. (2014, March 2). No For Yolanda–and future calamities–the private sector stands ready. *Philippine Daily Inquirer.* https://business.inquirer.net/165194/for-yolanda-and-future-calamities-the-private-sector-stands-ready.

Mavrodieva, A. V., Budiarti, D. S., Yu, Z., Pasha, F. A., & Shaw, R. (2019). Governmental incentivization for SMEs' engagement in disaster resilience in Southeast Asia. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Management,* 1(1), 32–50. https://10.18485/ijdrm.2019.1.1.2.

Medel, K., Kousar, R. & Masood, T. A. (2020). Collaboration-Resilience framework for disaster management supply networks: A case study of the Philippines. *J. Humanit. Logist. Supply Chain Manag. 2020,* 10, 509–553. https://10.1108/JHLSCM-09-2019-0066.

Oglesby, R. & Burke, J. (2012). *Platforms for private sector – Humanitarian collaboration.* Deloitte. http://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/private-humanitarian-sector-collaboration-platforms.html.

Ono, T. (2015). Role of private sectors and BCP in Japan. In: Izumi, T., Shaw, R. (Eds.) *Disaster Management and Private Sectors.* Disaster Risk Reduction (Methods, Approaches and Practices). Springer, Tokyo. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-55414-1_9

Panneer, S., Kantamaneni, K., Pushparaj, R.R.B., Shekhar, S., Bhat, L. & Rice, L. (2021). Multistakeholder Participation in Disaster Management—The Case of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Healthcare.* 2021; 9(2):203. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare9020203

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company. (2020). *2019 sustainability report.* Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company. http://pldt.com/docs/default-source/annual-reports/2020/pldt-2020-interactive-sr.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Razeq, Z. M. (2014). *UNDP's Engagement with the Private Sector, 1994–2011.* Springer, 2014. https://10.1057/9781137449207

Taylor, R., Amankwah, F., & Nalamada, P. (Eds.) (2016). *Engaging the Private Sector and Developing Partnerships to Advance Health and the Sustainable Development Goals.* Washington, D.C. National Academies Press. https://10.17226/23617

Thapa, M.B., Giri, N., & Basnyat, M. (2015). Experience of Nepal: Implication to Risk Reduction. In: Izumi, T., Shaw, R. (Eds.) *Disaster Management and Private Sectors.* Disaster Risk Reduction (Methods, Approaches and Practices). Springer, Tokyo. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-55414-1_18

Trajano, J. C. I. (2016). *Building resilience from within: enhancing humanitarian civil- military coordination in post-Haiyan Philippines.* (NTS Report 2016). Centre for Non Traditional Security Studies (NTS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NTS-Report-Building-Resilience-from-Within-Enhancing-Humanitarian-Civil-Military-Coordination-in-Post-Haiyan-Philippines-final.pdf

Twigg, J. (2002). Corporate Social Responsibility and Disaster Reduction: A Global Overview. *Disaster Prevention and Management.* 11(3) 223-224. https://doi.org/10.1108/dpm.2002.11.3.223.7

United Nations. (2019). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2019.* United Nations. https://gar.undrr.org/sites/default/files/reports/2019-05/full_gar_report.pdf

UNDP. (2017). *Pacific risk resilience programme focus note – the building blocks for successful private sector engagement: engaging the private sector in building resilience.* United Nations Development Programme. https://www.connectingbusiness.org/system/files/2017-11/Focus%20Notes-PrivateSector-23Aug-Web_0_0.pdf

UNDRR. (2020). *Reducing risk and building resilience of SMEs to disasters.* United Nations Office for the Disaster Risk Reduction. https://www.undrr.org/media/48692/download

UNDRR. (2021). *Scaling up Disaster Risk Reduction in Humanitarian Action 2.0: Recommendations for the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.* United Nations Office for the Disaster Risk Reduction. https://www.undrr.org/publication/scaling-disaster-risk-reduction-humanitarian-action

UNDRR. (2019). *Private Sector.* United Nations Office for the Disaster Risk Reduction. https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/partners-and-stakeholders/partnerships-private-sector

UNESCAP, ADPC & Ready Asia Pacific (2015). *Resilient business for resilient nations and Communities.* United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center & Ready Asia Pacific. (2015). https://www.unescap.org/resources/resilient-business-resilient-nations-and-communities-0#:~:text=Resilient%20Business%20for%20Resilient%20Nations%20and%20Communities%20shows%20how%20the,country's%20overall%20resilience%20to%20disasters.

United Nations. (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.* United Nations. https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

United Nations. (2016). *Transcending humanitarian-development divides Changing People's Lives: From Delivering Aid to Ending Need- Commitment to Action.* United Nations. https://agendaforhumanity.org/transformation/35.html#:~:text=Transcend%20humanitarian%2Ddevelopment%20divides%3A%20Humanitarian,of%20the%20achievement%20of%20the

US AID. (2018). *USAID Private Sector Engagement Policy.* United States Agency for International Development. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/usaid_psepolicy_final.pdf

UNOCHA. (2017). *The Business Case: A Study of Private Sector Engagement in Humanitarian Action.* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/PSS-BusinessCase-FINAL_0.pdf

UNOCHA. (2019). *Leadership in Humanitarian Action: Handbook for the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator.* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-05/Leadership%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action%20-%20Handbook%2020052021.pdf

UNOCHA & DHL. (2016). *Combining capabilities: How public private partnerships are making a difference in humanitarian action.* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs & DHL. https://eurodad.org/files/pdf/1546956-history-repppeated-how-public-private-partnerships-are-failing-.pdf.

Van der Berg, A. (2015). Public-private partnerships in local disaster management: A panacea to all local disaster management ills?. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal, 18*(4), 993–1033. https://doi.org/10.4314/pelj.v18i4.08

Vera, C.A., & Brusola-Vera, M.L. (2021). *Local Humanitarian Leadership: The View from Local Actors.* Oxfam Pilipinas. https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621190/rr-lhl-philippines-260521-en.pdf?sequence=1

World Economic Forum. (2008). *Building resilience to natural disasters: A framework for private sector engagement.* World Economic Forum. http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/publications/v.php?id=1392.

World Economic Forum. (2015). *Building resilience in Nepal through partnerships.* World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/reports/building-resilience-nepal-through-public-private-partnerships

Humanitarian practice fit for the digital age

IVANA JURKO

Ivana is a co-founder of Humanitech at Australian Red Cross, where she leads the evidence and influence team. She is also a PhD candidate at RMIT University, exploring the humanitarian implications of frontier technologies.

Image: Increasingly, humanitarian organisations are using biometric data to register people in need and to deliver aid—but without careful consideration, they also risk exposing people to new forms of surveillance or misuse © Shotshop GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo

Abstract

This essay seeks to examine some of the implications of advanced digital technologies on the humanitarian sector. It first situates data and technology-driven transformations in the broader context of humanitarian innovation and reform. It outlines how the increasing scale and complexity of humanitarian needs and operating environments has led to experimentation with new tools and approaches, business models and organisational roles in the sector. These innovations are occurring against the background of the localisation agenda, competition from the private sector, collapsing trust in institutions, and increased scrutiny of charities. The essay then highlights how technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, biometrics, and blockchain are increasing the capacity of the sector to improve humanitarian outcomes for people in crisis through new functionalities and services, greater insights into emerging vulnerabilities and risks, and enhanced organisational performance. Conversely, the essay then explores how these tools and systems are introducing a host of potential harms by exposing vulnerable people and communities to new forms of intrusion, insecurity, and inequality. This includes issues of data protection, cyber security, inherent biases in technological tools, and the reality of the digital divide and exclusion. Lastly, the essay outlines an emerging critical research agenda and active policy debates about responsible, ethical and inclusive design and the use and regulation of technology in humanitarian contexts.

Leadership relevance

The paper canvasses how humanitarian practice is evolving in response to digital and automating technologies in the sector, set against the backdrop of the wider humanitarian reform agenda. There is an emerging body of scholarly literature on the uses of emerging technologies in the humanitarian sector, offering some understanding of the history, extent and impact on humanitarian organisations and affected populations. The essay briefly introduces some of the key literature on the topics of re-imagined humanitarianism, examples of the current uses of data and technology in the sector, and an emergent critical agenda in humanitarian research and practice towards responsible, inclusive, and ethical technology design. The paper reflects on the questions of how the humanitarian ecosystem needs to adapt so that it is can shift power, promote accountability, enable innovation and, vitally, keep people safe.

Background

In Australia and globally, humanitarian organisations are struggling to address increasingly complex needs. The issues are interconnected: more frequent and intense disasters, growing burden of ill-health, rising inequality, political instability, and protracted conflicts are buffeted by cross-cutting pressures of climate change, changing demographics, and urbanisation (DevInit, 2020; IFRC, 2020). While the humanitarian system supports more people than ever, it often falls short of achieving the best humanitarian outcomes for people in crisis (Bennett & Foley, 2016).

The operational challenges in the humanitarian sector are multidimensional. The finance gap limits the ability of the sector to respond to growing needs (DevInit, 2020). The sector is fragmented, characterised by isolated operations, multi-layered decision-making, and institutional and geographic barriers (Bisri, 2016; WEF, 2017). The role and relevance of international humanitarian organisations is being challenged by the private sector and the localisation agenda (Ayobi et al, 2017; WEF, 2019). This is occurring at a time of collapsing trust in institutions, including non-government organisations (NGOs) (Edelman, 2020), and the increased scrutiny and compliance requirements placed on charities (Cortis et al, 2014; Seibert, 2017).

How does the humanitarian ecosystem need to adapt so that it is can shift power, promote accountability, enable innovation and, vitally, keep people safe?

Building on a decade of reform, the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 formalised a commitment to localisation of aid, with the central tenet of transferring more funding and control from international to local humanitarian organisations (Ayobi et al, 2017). Recently, the disclosures of racism in the sector (Parker, 2020), occurring in the context of the Black Lives Matters movement, have re-kindled the calls for decolonisation of aid (Currion, 2020; TNH, 2020). These debates have accelerated during the global COVID-19 pandemic, as international humanitarian organisations repatriated their staff, and movement restrictions in many places challenged the delivery of international aid (Aly, 2020).

Growing humanitarian needs, more complex operating environments, and an ambitious reform agenda, occurring at the time when traditional sources of humanitarian support and funding are diminishing, raise the question of how humanitarian organisations can work better to address these challenges. How does the humanitarian ecosystem need to adapt so that it is can shift power, promote accountability, enable innovation and, vitally, keep people safe?

In response to these questions, the sector has been experimenting with new tools, approaches, and business models (see for example IFRC, 2020). Organisations are implementing collective impact, shared value, and impact investment models in order to diversify funding and deliver sustainable impact (Kuo, 2020; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Smart, 2017). They are trialling different approaches to governance and operations (such as the 2019 restructure of Australian Red Cross' international programs towards better funded local governance) and they are increasingly incorporating emerging technologies, such as blockhain, biometrics, and data science and analytics, into their programs and services (Bernholz et al, 2018; Sandvik, 2017).

In fact, emerging technologies have fast become critical tools for humanitarian work (IFRC, 2019). Using satellite images, drone footage, and crowd-sourced mapping and verification, data science is strengthening early warning systems and improving response efforts to disasters. Data analytics are helping filter and classify social media messages related to humanitarian crises in real time, giving responders on the ground critical information on what is happening in affected communities. Data modelling is helping predict the spread of infectious diseases and map out community vulnerabilities to better prepare for disasters. Biometrics are being used to streamline and speed up registration processes in an effort to allow faster access to aid for people in need. As examples of these activities, see 510.global's data science work[1] (including drones, databases and distributed ledger technologies), Microsoft's AI for Humanitarian Action initiative[2], the Artificial Intelligence for Disaster Response[3] platform used to filter and classify social media messages related to emergencies, disasters, and humanitarian crises, and the UN refugee agency's (UNHCR) Biometric Identity Management System[4]. Blockchain—with its potential to increase trust, transparency and traceability to almost any asset that can be uniquely identified (Casey & Vigna, 2018)—is expanding rapidly with multiple actors in the humanitarian sector developing tools and collaborations for identity, finance, fundraising, and provenance (such as Australian Red Cross' digital identity project[5], and Oxfam's work on delivery of cash programming in the Pacific[6]). Beyond the focus on enhancing frontline

---

[1] See https://www.510.global/what-we-do-3/.

[2] See https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/ai/ai-for-humanitarian-action

[3] See http://aidr.qcri.org/

[4] See https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/550c304c9/biometric-identity-management-system.html

[5] See https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/national-blockchain-roadmap/sectoral-opportunities

[6] See https://www.oxfam.org/en/unblocked-cash-project-using-blockchain-technology-revolutionize-humanitarian-aid

responses, organisations are using data science and 'intelligent' applications to gain insights into operational gaps and inefficiencies, allowing them to improve engagement with communities and supporters, and enable a more nuanced and efficient service delivery (see, for example, Australian Red Cross' data science and analytics team[7] in their marketing department).

Digital transformation doesn't just change how humanitarians do their work; it challenges the fundamental principles of humanitarianism—and especially the principle of 'do no harm'—by introducing new risks into humanitarian operations (ICRC & Privacy International, 2018). While data and technology can enable humanitarians to do their work cheaper, faster and with more precision, enhancing the ability to deploy the right kind of aid at the right time to where it is needed most, these tools and systems can also introduce a host of potential harms by exposing already vulnerable people and communities to new forms of intrusion, insecurity and inequality (Jacobsen, 2015; Sandvik et al, 2017; Young & Jurko, 2020). Some of these harms include breaching privacy obligations by collecting personally identifiable and sensitive information, ethical issues caused by testing poorly understood technologies on people, possibly without their consent, and not considering the needs of populations in often poorly regulated contexts. Given the complexities and uncertainties involved, there is a need to interrogate and test the implications of using emerging technologies in humanitarian settings.

Reimagining humanitarianism: decentralised and local

Despite attempts to improve cooperation and coordination over the years, the humanitarian system remains commonly characterised by isolated operations and centralised structures to the detriment of its collective mission. There is a growing understanding that the current system is no longer fit for purpose, unable to meet existing needs, let alone be ready for the future (Bennett et al, 2018; Bennett & Foley, 2016; IARAN, 2017; IFRC, 2020).

The concept of decentralisation as a way to reform the system gained prominence in the humanitarian sector over several decades (Ayobi et al, 2017; Fowler, 1992). It refers to the shift of administrative responsibility, resources, and decision-making authority from the central headquarters to areas where programs and services are delivered (Ayobi et al, 2017; IARAN, 2017). The approach, now commonly referred to as localisation, gained momentum following the adoption of the 'Grand Bargain' at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, where international donors committed to

more flexible, predictable, and longer term funding while compelling the humanitarian actors to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid (Ayobi et al, 2017; IASC & UN OCHA, 2020). Potential advantages of decentralised systems may include better targeted responses, improved policy formulation, enhanced coordination, and less bureaucracy than centralised structures (Fowler, 1992).

The key demands that the Grand Bargain places on humanitarian organisations are that they better coordinate their actions and reduce duplication. An important focus was placed on providing more support and funding tools for national (local) agencies; in other words, decentralising resources for better humanitarian action (IASC & UN OCHA, 2020). In addition, humanitarian organisations committed to the 'Participation Revolution'—that is, listening to and including people and communities in decisions that affect them. While these are not new ideas, the Grand Bargain was the first time such undertakings were codified in a high-level attempt at humanitarian reform (IASC & UN OCHA, 2020).

Developing a more effective humanitarian system that is localised and people-centric requires challenging the values, assumptions, and incentives that underpin it.

Developing a more effective humanitarian system that is localised and people-centric requires challenging the values, assumptions, and incentives that underpin it (Bennett et al, 2018; Collinson, 2016). While there is no single response model, proponents argue that a better way forward lies in an approach that engages a wider and more diverse set of actors in a complementary way and centred around addressing people's needs (Bennett & Foley, 2016; IARAN, 2017).

Aid theorists and practitioners have long argued that humanitarian impact will not improve as long as the system remains centralised and bureaucratic (Bennett et al, 2018; Bennett & Foley, 2016; Seybolt, 2009). Recognising that tweaks and piecemeal approaches are not enough to address systemic and persistent challenges, ideas of "new humanitarian basics" (DuBois, 2018), "a more modern humanitarian action" (Bennett & Foley, 2016), "network humanitarianism" (Currion, 2018), "a networked way of working" (IARAN, 2017) and a humanitarian system as "a network of networks" (Start Network, 2017) have emerged. Commonly, these new approaches involve concepts of dispersed power and capabilities, decentralised or distributed governance, collaboration, and shared benefits. These works articulate what a more inclusive, diverse and

distributed humanitarian sector could look like, and how it can be achieved. All require 'Western' humanitarian organisations letting go of control.

Uses of advanced digital technologies in the humanitarian sector

Humanitarian uses of frontier technologies[8] fit within the broader context of the reimagining of humanitarian cooperation; one that is delivered through collective innovation, connected decision-making, and rebalancing of power (IARAN, 2017). The COVID-19 global pandemic accelerated some of these shifts as international humanitarian organisations repatriated many of their staff and our personal and professional lives moved largely online (Aly, 2020).

Distributed, open technologies, such as blockchain, were designed to address problems of cooperation (Casey & Vigna, 2018; Tapscott & Tapscott, 2016; Werbach, 2018). Some blockchains have the potential to deliver a more transparent, efficient and secure way of recording transactions across a distributed network (Werbach, 2018). These transactions are verifiable, immutable and can be automated, displacing a need for trusted intermediary institutions to keep a central database of information (Catalini & Gans, 2019; Werbach, 2018). The core components of this technology—shared record-keeping, multi-party consensus, independent validation, tamper evidence and tamper resistance (Rauchs et al, 2018)—are enabling the emergence of new forms of cooperation between individuals and between organisations (Werbach, 2018, 2020).

Building on these claims, blockchain quickly generated significant interest in the humanitarian sector (Galen et al, 2018; GSMA, 2017; Sustania et al, 2017). A seminal sector report, *Revolution in Trust* (Mercy Corp, 2017), outlined the transformative opportunities of blockhain for humanitarian operations and governance. Proponents argue that blockchain is an adaptive infrastructure that can accommodate complex humanitarian needs and address common challenges of non-profit organisations, such as transparency, efficiency, scale and sustainability (Accenture, 2017; Mercy Corp, 2017). Some also suggest that its distributed nature has the potential to disrupt the traditional role and power of international humanitarian agencies and deliver a fairer aid system (Coppi & Fast, 2019; Sustania et al, 2017).

Many humanitarian organisations are working together with technology and sector partners to address common challenges using blockchain platforms and applications in diverse areas of aid and development operations, including cash programming, personal identification, fundraising and ethical supply chains. For example, the World Food Programme distributes material aid in refugee camps using its Building Blocks platform (WFP, 2020); Oxfam Australia and partners have delivered vouchers to crisis affected populations in the Pacific (Hallwright & Carnaby, 2019), and WaterAid America (2020) accepts cryptocurrencies for fundraising. In the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, Australian Red Cross and partners developed a digital credentialing platform for onboarding and deployment of humanitarian staff and volunteers within and across humanitarian agencies (Australian Government, 2020); Norwegian Red Cross and partners are working on identity management for beneficiaries (HIP, 2019); and Danish Red Cross and partners are involved in a Community Currencies project (Santosdiaz, 2020) and the Humanitarian Distributed Platform initiative (Blakstad et al, 2020). By engaging in the process of collective innovation using distributed ledger technologies (DLTs) such as blockchain, humanitarian organisations are looking to build capability, bring in testers and adopters, and share the risks and costs (NetHope, 2018).

Many humanitarian organisations are working together with technology and sector partners to address common challenges using blockchain platforms and applications in diverse areas of aid and development operations, including cash programming, personal identification, fundraising and ethical supply chains.

The significance of DLTs for the humanitarian sector broadly lies in their potential to facilitate innovative ways to tackle social problems, to fundraise and to build trust (Blakstad et al, 2020; Mercy Corp, 2017). As shown by examples above, DLTs are used to develop applications and platforms for social and financial inclusion as well as to enable new ways to give. Significantly, they have the potential to enhance transparency and accountability across parties, as agreed rules, obligations and compliance can be encoded and automated on blockchain (Werbach, 2020).

Current projects in the humanitarian sector, mostly still in pilot stages, show how blockchain is primarily used to augment institutional processes rather than disrupt or disintermediate institutions (Coppi & Fast, 2019). Commonly, these projects are impacting the 'back-end' administrative operations rather than user interfaces.

---

[8] The term 'frontier technologies' refers to "technological advances that have the potential to disrupt the status quo, alter the way people live and work, re-arrange value pools or lead to entirely new products and services" (McKinsey Global Institute, 2013). The term is technology-agnostic because frontiers of technologies change over time.

Many involve partners working together to co-create applications and related governance structures. Little is known about their social outcomes, given the early stages of development, highlighting the need to investigate how these technologies open up the conversation and bring humanitarian actors to work together in new ways (Blakstad et al, 2020; NetHope, 2018).

Another important appeal of DLTs for the humanitarian sector is their potential to redistribute power in support of localised approaches (Coppi & Fast, 2019; Mercy Corp, 2017). Again, there is little evidence of whether this is occurring in practice. There is a need to examine whether these experiments enable humanitarian work to become more locally engaged, for example, by automating financial or compliance processes which can prevent local organisations from participating.

A growing trend in the sector is the use of biometric data to register people in need and to deliver aid. Some humanitarian agencies argue that biometrics can ensure aid gets where it is supposed to go and could make it easier for affected people to get help (Bogle, 2019). The use of biometrics—such as fingerprints or photos—in humanitarian work is not new. The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), for example, has long used biometrics to reconnect families separated by conflict or to issue travel documents (ICRC, 2019). What is different, however, is how biometrics are being combined with other tools, such as blockchain or other types of databases, and a relative obscurity about how these tools and processes work, which together risk exposing affected people to harm.

In a world where more than a billion people have no proof of identity (World Bank Group, 2021), creation of a verified, secure and portable digital identity using biometrics could indeed prove transformative. For instance, a digital identity could help the 80% of refugees in countries of refuge where ID is required to get a phone or open a cash account.[9]

At the same time, there are numerous examples of how these tools can also cause harm.

The possible misuse of biometric data in humanitarian work has been the subject of significant debate in recent years (see, for example, Duffield, 2016; Jacobsen, 2015; Kaurin, 2019; Latonero, 2019; Rahman et al, 2018; Sandvik et al, 2017). Concerns include the risks of harm by creating a permanently identifiable record for a vulnerable person, potential access to people's data by governments or other organisations for non-humanitarian purposes, and the lack of regulations on how biometrics should be used.[10] Humanitarian

organisations must consider the type of data they are collecting, where and how long it will be stored, and who will have access to it—otherwise they risk exposing people to new forms of surveillance or misuse (Rahman, 2019; Veen, 2020).

Humanitarian organisations must consider the type of data they are collecting, where and how long it will be stored, and who will have access to it—otherwise they risk exposing people to new forms of surveillance or misuse.

The approach to biometrics varies across the sector. A recent data partnership between Palantir and the World Food Program to improve food delivery in crises triggered an open letter from privacy and human rights advocates due to fears it may "seriously undermine the rights of 90 million people the WFP serves" (Responsibledata. io, 2019). Oxfam International instituted a moratorium on the use of biometrics in their work while continuing research into potential uses where safe to do so (Rahman et al, 2018). In 2020, the ICRC released a Biometrics Policy to help balance the responsible use of biometrics in its operations—for example, for finding missing persons or forensic work—with the considerable data protection challenges it poses. Humanitech, in collaboration with Australian Red Cross Migration Programs and legal department, is currently reviewing the Australian legal and regulatory implications of the use of biometric data for the purpose of reconnecting families using an international data matching database. More research is needed to prove the efficacy or necessity of biometrics use and how this can be done in ways that keep the details of vulnerable people safe.

Complex automating technologies such as blockhain and biometrics pose challenges to safeguarding people's rights in most circumstances, but the potential for mistake or misuse is heightened in times of crisis.

Complex automating technologies such as blockhain and biometrics pose challenges to safeguarding people's rights in most circumstances, but the potential for mistake or misuse is heightened in times of crisis. The implications of our collective data and technology choices have become more noticeable in the time of COVID-19, with the accelerated use of digital tools in all spheres of life as communities locked down to stop the spread of the virus. Some states, grappling with

[9] The author has explored this topic in other publications—see Young and Jurko 2020, p. 13.

[10] As above.

the impacts on lives and livelihoods, quickly rolled out technological solutions to track and trace infections, and some are considering digital immunology certificates. A rapid evidence review on the use of technology in COVID-19 responses by the Ada Lovelace Institute (2020) aptly highlights the risks involved, including how these systems are vulnerable to privacy abuses, and how they can facilitate exclusion, discrimination and stigmatisation.[11] These risks underscore the importance of examining the role and impact of frontier technologies in humanitarian work.

Evolving humanitarian research and practice

Since the initial optimism about the potential of "digital humanitarianism" (Meier, 2015), there has been a growing critique of the implications of digitalisation on the sector (Duffield, 2016; Jacobsen, 2015; Meier, 2020; Sandvik et al, 2017). Concepts such as "surveillance humanitarianism" (Latonero, 2019), "algorithmic humanitarianism" (Currion, 2016) and "techno-colonialism" (Madianou, 2019) have emerged to describe how these tools are reshaping humanitarian practice and creating new or perpetuating existing vulnerabilities and inequities. Sandvik et al (2014, 2017) and Jacobsen (2015) have been instrumental in establishing scholarly critiques of "humanitarian technology" by interrogating the unintended consequences of humanitarian innovation.

Humanitarian data and technology experiments are trying to intervene in complex environments and relationships. They are situated within the broader cultures of humanitarianism and technology which differ in important ways. Most humanitarian groups have limited or no in-house technology R&D and rely on commercially run infrastructure. This raises the question of compatibility. For-profit technologies have been designed for precision, scale and control. Humanitarian work has high levels of uncertainty, complexity and needs to support people and communities in crisis (Young & Jurko, 2020).

The possible misuse of data and technology in humanitarian work has been the subject of increasing analysis in recent years. Sandvik et al (2017) interrogate new vulnerabilities in humanitarianism created by big data, public-private technology partnerships, shifting relationships between 'helper' and 'helped', and the new actors all this brings into humanitarian work. Scholars also highlight the risk of crises being used for experiments (Jacobsen, 2015; Latonero, 2018; Sandvik et al, 2017).

The humanitarian imperative is to 'do no harm' (Charancle & Lucchi, 2018) and there is a growing awareness that humanitarian innovation can slide into experimentation without accountability or consent, which may expose affected communities to new forms of intrusion, insecurity and inequality (see, for example, Morozov, 2013; Sandvik et al, 2014, 2017). The implications of introducing emerging technologies such as blockchain or biometrics into the sector that supports people in times of vulnerability need to be properly examined so that humanitarian organisations can take measures to avoid putting people in harm's way or to avoid replicating existing inefficiencies or inequities.

Data and technology innovations, such as blockhain applications, cannot be understood outside of the social context in which they are deployed, and they cannot be optimised to ensure they benefit society through technical improvements alone (O'Dwyer, 2018; Werbach, 2020). They are socio-technical systems, inseparable from the social interactions which shape how these technologies are designed, governed and used (Hayes, 2019). There is a need to examine practices that emerge through the interactions of social processes with these technologies in order to understand the opportunities and risks they present.

As the research, training and development on the use and implications of data and technology is largely happening outside of the sector, humanitarian organisations are looking to cross-sector partnerships to build skills and evidence, and to bring their humanitarian expertise and values to the research and development of these tools and systems. New ways of working are emerging, with technologists learning about vulnerability in different contexts and humanitarians learning about new tools, building skills and cutting through technocratic jargon. Australian Red Cross' Humanitech[12], Netherlands Red Cross' 510.global[13], and ICRC's Humanitarian Data and Trust Initiative[14] are examples of how the sector is working with academic and technology partners to build its capabilities to improve the impact and effectiveness of humanitarian action as well as its ability to advocate with authority for responsible practice and governance approaches. The organisations involved in these collaborations focus on how technologies work in contexts of vulnerability, just as much as what they are and what they can do. Further investment in evidence to inform a principled approach to data and technology in the humanitarian sector is necessary to maintain trust in the humanitarian system in the digital age (CHD, 2021).

---

[11] The author has explored this topic in other publications—see Young and Jurko 2020, p.10.

[12] See https://www.redcross.org.au/humanitech

[13] See https://www.510.global/

[14] See https://centre.humdata.org/introducing-the-humanitarian-dataand-trust-initiative/

Conclusion

Digital transformation offers many opportunities to improve humanitarian action, but it also presents significant challenges that need to be properly examined. As Duffield (2013, p. 23) argues, "rather than uncritically embracing this future, humanitarian agencies need to understand what exactly they are buying into". Making the most of opportunities in the sector goes hand-in-hand with the need to develop knowledge, skills and standards on how to use these technologies in ways that protect people's rights. Understanding the consequences, taking measures to avoid risks, and designing systems and processes with the needs of vulnerable groups at the centre will ensure humanitarians 'do no harm' in the digital age.

Understanding the consequences, taking measures to avoid risks, and designing systems and processes with the needs of vulnerable groups at the centre will ensure humanitarians 'do no harm' in the digital age.

The scholarly field of humanitarian technology studies is emergent and fast-moving. This essay demonstrates a knowledge gap in understanding the implications of automated decision-making (ADM) and frontier technologies on humanitarian contexts. We do not yet know the extent of the impact these technologies have on humanitarian practice, how they influence outcomes for particular groups nor what their short-term versus longer term impacts may look like. There is an opportunity to collect and interrogate empirical evidence of how technology tools and initiatives are designed, used and governed in the humanitarian sector, who they benefit, and how organisations behave and change as a result of these interactions.

The mismatch between humanitarian intent and how today's technologies are developed and deployed raises questions about how best to design and use data and technology tools for humanitarian work. Previous studies on the introduction of new technologies in humanitarian work suggest that affected communities need to be involved in design of technology products and strategies for their safe use from the outset (Bourne, 2019; Coppi & Fast, 2019; Mays, 2018). By gathering empirical evidence we can inform strategies, tools, and frameworks for the responsible, ethical, and inclusive design, use and governance of frontier technologies in the sector.

References

Accenture. (2017). *Blockchain for Good: 4 Guidelines for Transforming Social Innovation Organisations*. Accenture. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/pdf-68/accenture-808045-blockchainpov-rgb.pdf

Ada Lovelace Institute. (2020). *COVID-19 rapid evidence review*. https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/evidence-review/covid-19-rapid-evidence-review-exit-through-the-app-store/

Aly, H. (2020). This global pandemic could transform humanitarianism forever. Here's how. *The New Humanitarian*. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/06/08/coronavirus-transform-humanitarianism-aid

Australian Government. (2020). *National blockchain roadmap*. Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources. https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/national-blockchain-roadmap

Ayobi, Y., Black, A., Kenni, L., Nakabea, R., & Sutton, K. (2017). *Going Local: Achieveing a more approproate and fit-for-purpose humanitarian ecosystem in the Pacific*. Australian Red Cross.

Bennett, C., Currion, P., DuBois, M., & Zaman, T. (2018). *Constructive deconstruction: Imagining alternative humanitarian action*. https://www.odi.org/publications/11127-constructive-deconstruction-imagining-alternative-humanitarian-action

Bennett, C., & Foley, M. (2016). *Time to let go: Remaking humanitarian action for the modern era*. Overseas Development Institute Humanitarian Policy Group. https://www.odi.org/hpg/remake-aid/

Bernholz, L. (2018). *Philanthropy and digital civil society: Blueprint 2019; the annual industry forecast*. Stanford University, & Center for Social Innovation. https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/publication/philanthropy-and-digital-civil-society-blueprint-2018/

Bisri, M. B. F. (2016). Comparative study on inter-organizational cooperation in disaster situations and impact on humanitarian aid operations. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 1(1), 8. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-016-0008-6

Blakstad, S., Melkun, C., & Shreeves, R. (2020). *The Next Generation Humanitarian Distributed Platform* (p. 50). Danish Red Cross, Mercy Corps, hiveonline.

Bogle, A. (2019). For refugees, your eyes and your fingerprints now act as your passport. Is that safe? *ABC News*. https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2019-06-21/biometric-data-is-being-collected-from-refugees-asylum-seekers/11209274

Bourne, S. (2019). *User-Centred Design and Humanitarian Adaptiveness*. ALNAP.

Casey, M. & Vigna, P. (2018). *The truth machine: The blockchain and the future of everything* (First edition.). St. Martin's Press, New York.

Catalini, C., & Gans, J. S. (2019). *Some Simple Economics of the Blockchain*. NBER Working Paper No. 22952

Charancle, J. M. B., & Lucchi, E. (2018). *Incorporating the principle of "Do No Harm": How to take action without causing harm. Reflections on a review of Humanity & Inclusion's practices* [Project Evaluation]. Humanity & Inclusion and F3E. https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/donoharm_pe07_synthesis.pdf

CHD. (2021). *Introducing the Humanitarian Data and Trust Initiative – The Centre for Humanitarian Data*. https://centre.humdata.org/introducing-the-humanitarian-data-and-trust-initiative/

Collinson, S. (2016). *Constructive deconstruction: Making sense of the international humanitarian system* [HPG Working Paper]. Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute. https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10734.pdf

Coppi, G., & Fast, L. (2019). *Blockchain and distributed ledger technologies in the humanitarian sector*. Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute.

Cortis, N., Lee, I., Reeve, R., & Simnett, R. (2014). *Australian Charities Involved Overseas 2014*. Centre for Social Impact and Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW. https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/Australian-Charities-Involved-Overseas-2014-Final.pdf

Currion, P. (2016, July 11). Slave to the algorithm. *The New Humanitarian*. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2016/07/11/slave-algorithm

Currion, P. (2018). *Network humanitarianism* [HPG Working Paper]. Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute. https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12202.pdf

Currion, P. (2020). Decolonising aid, again. *The New Humanitarian*. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2020/07/13/decolonisation-aid-humanitarian-development-racism-black-lives-matter

DevInit. (2020). *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2019: Executive summary*. Development Initiatives. https://devinit.org/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2019/executive-summary/

DuBois, M. (2018). *The new humanitarian basics* ('Constructive Deconstruction: Imagining Alternative Humanitarian Action) [HPG Working Paper]. Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute. https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12201.pdf

Duffield, M. (2013). *Disaster-Resilience in the Network Age Access-Denial and the Rise of Cyber-Humanitarianism*. DIIS Working Paper.

Duffield, M. (2016). The resilience of the ruins: Towards a critique of digital humanitarianism. *Resilience*, 4(3), 147–165. https://doi.org/10.1080/21693293.2016.1153772

Edelman. (2020). *2020 Edelman Trust Barometer*. https://www.edelman.com/trustbarometer

Fowler, A. (1992). Decentralisation for international NGOs. *Development in Practice*, 2(2), 121–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/096145249100076731

Galen, D., El-Baz, B., Brand, N., Kimura, I., Bucherle, L., Wharton, K., Davis, R., Lee, J., & Do, N. (2018). *Blockchain for Social Impact: Moving Beyond the Hype*. Stanford Centre for Social Innovation.

GSMA. (2017). Blockchain for Development: Emerging Opportunities for Mobile, Identity and Aid. https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Blockchain-for-Development.pdf

Hallwright, J., & Carnaby, E. (2019). Complexities of Implementation: Oxfam Australia's Experience in Piloting Blockchain. *Frontiers in Blockchain*, 2. https://doi.org/10.3389/fbloc.2019.00010

Hayes, A. (2019). The Socio-Technological Lives of Bitcoin. *Theory, Culture & Society,* 36(4), 49–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276419826218

HIP. (2019). *DIGID - Dignified Identities in cash programming*. Humanitarian Innovation Platform. https://hiplatform.org/digid

IARAN. (2017). *Future of Aid: INGOs in 2030*. Inter Agency Research and Analysis Network. https://www.iaran.org/future-of-aid

IASC, & UN OCHA. (2020). The Grand Bargain (Official website). https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain

ICRC. (2019, October 18). Facilitating innovation, ensuring protection: The ICRC Biometrics Policy. *Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog*. https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2019/10/18/innovation-protection-icrc-biometrics-policy/

ICRC & Privacy International. (2018). *The Humanitarian Metadata Problem—Doing No Harm in the Digital Era*. ICRC & Privacy International.

IFRC. (2019). *Strategy 2030: The Seven Transformations*. Solferino Academy. https://solferinoacademy.com/why-strategy-2030/s2030-the-seven-transformations/

IFRC. (2020). *Strategy 2030 Update Report – Visions for the Organization*. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. https://future-rcrc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/EN-S2030-update-november-2018-003.pdf

Jacobsen, K. L. (2015). *The Politics of Humanitarian Technology: Good Intentions, Unintended Consequences and Insecurity*. Taylor and Francis.

Kaurin, D. (2019). *Data Protection and Digital Agency for Refugees*. [WRC Research Paper No. 12] Centre for International Governance Innovation. https://www.cigionline.org/publications/data-protection-and-digital-agency-refugees

Kuo, E. (2020). *Our 2020 Impact Report*. Impact Investment Group. http://www.impact-group.com.au/2020-impact-report/

Latonero, M. (2018, April). Big Data Analytics and Human Rights. In Land, M. & Aronson, J. (Eds) *New Technologies for Human Rights Law and Practice*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316838952.007

Latonero, M. (2019, 19 July). Stop Surveillance Humanitarianism. *New York Times*.

Madianou, M. (2019). Technocolonialism: Digital innovation and data practices in the humanitarian response to refugee crises. *Social Media and Society*, 5(3), 1–13. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2056305119863146

Mays, R. E. (2018). *Toward Better Design of Humanitarian ICT: A Social Agency-Centered Framework of Humanitarian Information Needs*. University of Washington. https://digital.lib.washington.edu:443/researchworks/handle/1773/43241

Meier, P. (2015). *Digital Humanitarians: How "Big Data" is Changing the Face of Humanitarian Response*. Taylor and Francis Press.

Meier, P. (2020, February 19). Technology for Good is Broken. Here's How We're Trying to Fix It. *IRevolutions*. https://irevolutions.org/2020/02/19/technology-for-good-is-broken/

Mercy Corp. (2017). *A Revolution in Trust: Distributed Ledger Technology in Relief & Development*. Mercy Corp. https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/ledger-technology-relief-development

Morozov, E. (2013). *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*. PublicAffairs.

NetHope. (2018). *Blockchain for Development: Moving from Hype to Reality*. NetHope Solutions Center. https://solutionscenter.nethope.org/webinars/view/blockchain-for-development-moving-from-hype-to-reality

O'Dwyer, R. (2018). *Blockchain Just Isn't As Radical As You Want It To Be*. Longreads. https://longreads.com/2018/02/15/blockchain-just-isnt-as-radical-as-you-want-it-to-be/

Parker, B. (2020). Frontières needs 'radical change' on racism: MSF president. *The New Humanitarian*. https://www. thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/06/24/MSF-racism-black-lives-matter-debate

Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2011). Creating Shared Value: How to reinvent capitalism—And unleash a wave of innovation and growth. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2011/01/the-big-idea-creating-shared-value

Rahman, Z. (2019, July 8). *Digital ID: Where do we go from here?* The Engine Room. https://www.theengineroom.org/digital-id-where-do-we-go-from-here/

Rahman, Z., Verhaert, P., & Nyst, C. (2018). *Biometrics in the Humanitarian Sector*. Oxfam.

Rauchs, M., Glidden, A., Gordon, B., Pieters, G. C., Recanatini, M., Rostand, F., Vagneur, K., & Zhang, B. Z. (2018). *Distributed Ledger Technology Systems: A Conceptual Framework* (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3230013). Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3230013

Responsibledata.io. (2019, February 8). *Open Letter to WFP re: Palantir Agreement*. Responsible Data. https:// responsibledata.io/2019/02/08/open-letter-to-wfp-re-palantir-agreement/

Sandvik, K. B. (2017). Now is the time to deliver: Looking for humanitarian innovation's theory of change. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 2(1), 8. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-017-0023-2

Sandvik, K. B., Gabrielsen Jumbert, M., Karlsrud, J., & Kaufmann, M. (2014). Humanitarian technology: A critical research agenda. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 96(893), 219–242. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383114000344

Sandvik, K. B., Jacobsen, K. L., & McDonald, S. M. (2017). Do no harm: A taxonomy of the challenges of humanitarian experimentation. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 99(904), 319–344. https://doi.org/10.1017/S181638311700042X

Santosdiaz, R. (2020). Implementation of the new global platform for blockchain-based community currencies to boost cash transfer aid: In-depth with the Red Cross and its partners. *The FinTech Times*. https://thefintechtimes.com/implementation-of-the-new-global-platform-for-blockchain-based-community-currencies-to-boost-cash-transfer-aid-in-depth-with-the-red-cross-and-its-partners/

Seibert, K. (2017). Australian charities are well regulated, but changes are needed to cut red tape. *The Conversation*. http:// theconversation.com/australian-charities-are-well-regulated-but-changes-are-needed-to-cut-red-tape-72877

Seybolt, T. (2009). Harmonizing the Humanitarian Aid Network: Adaptive Change in a Complex System. *International Studies Quarterly*, 53, 1027–1050. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2009.00567.x

Smart, J. (2017). *Collective impact: Evidence and implications for practice*. Child Family Community Australia, CFCA Paper No. 45. https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/collective-impact-evidence-and-implications-practice

Start Network. (2017). *Start Network's vision for the future of humanitarian action*. Start Network. https://startnetwork.org/ resource/start-networks-vision-future-humanitarian-action

Sustania, The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, & Coinify. (2017). *Hack the future of aid*. Sustainia, The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Coinify. https://reliefweb.int/report/world/hack-future-development-aid

Tapscott, D., & Tapscott, A. (2016). *Blockchain Revolution: How the Technology Behind Bitcoin Is Changing Money, Business, and the World*. Portfolio.

TNH. (2020). The West's humanitarian reckoning. *The New Humanitarian*. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/ opinion/2020/07/01/black-lives-matter-aid-power-rethinking-humanitarianism-takeaways

UNHCR. (2020). The importance of digital identity in humanitarian contexts. *UNHCR Blog*. https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/ podcast-series-digital-identity/

Veen, M. V. D. (2020). *Rcrc digital consultation 2: data protection & data responsibility*. 510.Global. https://www.510.global/ rcrc-digital-consultation-1-data-protection-data-responsibility/

WaterAid US. (2020). Donate cryptocurrency. https://www.wateraid.org/us/get-involved/giving/cryptocurrency

WEF. (2017). *The Future of Humanitarian Response* (Annual Meeting). World Economic Forum. http://www3.weforum.org/ docs/WEF_AM17_Future_Humanitarian_Response.pdf

WEF. (2019). *Civil Society in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Preparation and Response*. World Economic Forum. https:// www.weforum.org/whitepapers/civil-society-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution-preparation-and-response/

Werbach, K. (2018). *The Blockchain and the New Architecture of Trust*. The MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/ mitpress/11449.001.0001

Werbach, K. (Ed.). (2020). *After the Digital Tornado: Networks, Algorithms, Humanity*. Cambridge University Press; Cambridge Core. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108610018

WFP. (2020). Building Blocks. https://innovation.wfp.org/project/building-blocks

World Bank Group. (2021). *ID4D Data: Global Identification Challenge by the Numbers*. https://id4d.worldbank.org/global-dataset

Young, L., & Jurko, I. (2020). *Future of Vulnerability: Humanity in the Digital Age*. Humanitech, Australian Red Cross.

The 'New Humanitarians': Vernacular aid in Greece

ADI MAYA

Adi is an anthropologist, researcher, and humanitarian Head of Mission. She has worked for small NGOs in several emergency contexts in the past 10 years in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe. Her experience includes working in Lesvos Island and Athens in Greece, where she also conducted field work. She worked shoulder to shoulder with refugees and developed a participatory and inclusive project programming approach. Adi holds a Master of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian Action from the Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies in Switzerland, and a Master in Sociology and Anthropology from Ben-Gurion University in Israel. Her previous research project took place in Ethiopia and was focused on Development and Jewish Faith-based Organisations. Her current interest is in migration, vernacular and embodied humanitarianism, and refugee-led humanitarian NGOs.

Image: A young refugee learns hairdressing in Greece in 2017. He was one of more than 62,300 people stranded in the country at that time © Anna Pantelia / Save the Children

Abstract

Since 2015, the 'refugee crisis' in Greece has turned the Eastern Mediterranean migration route into one of the main entry points to Europe. In response, a grassroots solidarity movement has emerged in the Aegean islands that has become instrumental for boat-rescue at sea, and for camp service provision. These local and international volunteers, as well as refugees, identify as 'New Humanitarians'. This paper presents the emic aspects of the 'New Humanitarians', and focuses on vernacular actors and how they challenge the humanitarian landscape in Greece by examining their principles, practices, and discourse. A key finding is that the 'New Humanitarian' principles that they model revisit the existing ones—i.e. solidarity, hospitality, equality, and agency. Other findings show that the 'New Humanitarians' are reproducing governing technologies imposed by the government and other agencies. They do so while trying to contest mainstream humanitarianism and pleading for much-needed change in the European border regime and refugee management systems.

Leadership relevance

The solidarity movement in Greece and the vernacular actors who participated in this research teach the reader about agency and innovative solutions for service provision. In addition, the discourse and practices of those activists showcase how humanitarians can create more inclusive environments and a hands-on way of working. It lies in their lived experiences as refugees and NGO founders, but also as first and primary responders in the field.

Introduction

The movement of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle and Near East has increased significantly since 2015. Over 800,000 people have passed through the Eastern Mediterranean migration routes, crossed the Aegean Sea from Turkey, and travelled through Greece enroute to Europe. About 90% of arrivals come from the world's top refugee-producing countries—namely Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Other nations represented include Iran, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (International Medical Corps, 2016).

Since the European Union (EU)-Turkey Deal in March 2016 and the closure of European borders, thousands of asylum seekers have been stranded on five Greek islands: Lesvos, Samos, Chios, Leros, and Kos. The islands functioned as detention centres, since geographic restrictions applied upon arrival, and people were unable to continue their journey until their asylum applications were handled, a process that previously took a few years (Save the Children, 2017).

There has been a movement of refugees to Greece for several decades, however the 'crisis' that started in 2015 was a turning point, with the emergence of the solidarity movement and the beginning of a new field of research and interest (Cabot, 2019; Papataxiarchis, 2016). As Rozakou wrote (2017, pp 102-103): "Lesvos became the focal point of reconfigurations of humanitarianism and the emergence of vernacular humanitarianisms".

The emergency in Greece was comprised of two crises (Cabot, 2019)—the refugee flow and the economic recession, which posed challenges to the host community, local authorities, and aid agencies. Rozakou (2017) criticised calling the refugee flow a 'crisis', since the movement to Europe through Greece was relatively new and incomparable with other refugee-hosting countries in Asia, Africa or the Middle East.

The response to the 'refugee crisis' consists of traditional actors such as United Nations (UN) and aid organisations, yet informal grassroots groups and independent volunteers served and continue to serve as key responders in boat rescues, food distribution, and the provision of non-food items. This solidarity movement is distinct from the humanitarian world—it is anti-hierarchical, anti-bureaucratic, and managed according to cultural traits. Members of this movement identify as 'New Humanitarians'.

The 'New Humanitarians' include the local community who took part in the response before the establishment of camps, and whose moral imperative to assist people in need is hospitality, which is part of their culture, tradition, and DNA. Cabot (2019) called this form of aid "Humanitarian Citizenship", whereby common people support both locals and refugees in need. The second group of 'New Humanitarians' is made up of local and international volunteers, known by scholars as 'Solidarians' (Papataxiarchis, 2016; Rozakou, 2017). The third is refugee-led NGOs and associations. The last group is not mentioned in the literature about the 'refugee crisis' or the Solidarity Movement.

This paper's objectives are twofold: to portray the 'New Humanitarians' in Greece, and to rethink the humanitarian principles and humanitarianism. The main question is this—how do the 'New Humanitarians' challenge the humanitarian landscape in Greece? In order to unpack the dynamics and tensions that are created by vernacular aid vis-à-vis professional humanitarians, I will focus on the principles that guide the 'New Humanitarians' in their everyday practices— solidarity, hospitality, equality, and agency—and the ways in which those values shape the response.

The main question is this—how do the 'New Humanitarians' challenge the humanitarian landscape in Greece?

The findings show that the 'New Humanitarias' are reconfiguring humanitarianism to a certain extent, without completely changing the power structures of the aid world. They operate in sites of transnational governmentality (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002) that were created by the Greek authorities in accordance with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and adhere to policies and refugee management frameworks. Despite rejecting the power and governance of the UN and the local systems, and developing 'New Humanitarian' principles, they reproduce governing technologies, by having to work in "refugee-scapes" (Papataxiarchis, 2016). This situation creates unique dynamics—contesting power structures but also being limited by them.

Methodology

This qualitative research included participant observation, in-depth interviews with different actors in Lesvos and in Athens, and informal conversations that reveal the ethos and practices of the 'New Humanitarians'. Papataxiarchis (2016) emphasised the importance of being 'there' in a specific moment in history for the solidarity movement, and I was able to take part in this response and examine it from an anthropological prism as a humanitarian practitioner.

I spent four different periods of time in Greece. I arrived in Lesvos for the first time in April 2017, as Head of Mission. I later went to Greece as an independent volunteer in October 2017, to work with a search and rescue initiative and spent many 'night shifts' boat-spotting on the southern shore of Lesvos. In 2019, I spent three months in Athens, helping out with food distribution for homeless refugees, and shadowed an Iranian refugee and activist who formed his own initiative. I returned to Greece as a researcher in January 2020 to conduct fieldwork and formal interviews with informants I have met during my previous stays—people on the move from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, Greek camp managers, and one of the Directors of the Christian organisation EuroRelief.

To amplify the informants' voices, I chose to adopt the terminology used by the 'New Humanitarians'—an almost Pidgin English dialect which was widely understood by 'Solidarians'. For example, I refer to Lesbos island as Lesvos, and I prefer the terms 'people on the move' or 'refugees', rather than the words 'irregular migrants', or 'people of concern', commonly used by UNHCR.

Humanity and refugee-inclusion

Feldman and Ticktin (2010) argue that the emergence of sentiment is the core of humanitarianism—caring about the suffering of others. This tendency shifted the physical existence of a 'human' to a 'humane' ethical subject. Moral sentiments make us act and help people in need whether they are close to us—the poor, the immigrant, or the homeless—or far from us—those affected by famine, epidemics or war (Fassin, 2012). It is action in the name of a shared humanity and its goal is to assist all human beings regardless of race, class, religion, and ideology. This assistance is provided where and whenever people are perceived as needing help (Fassin, 2010).

In 2015, austerity-ridden Greece's own local population was in need of assistance—not only its refugees.

Humanitarianism is a discourse of needs which focuses on saving lives and has three signifiers: help beyond borders, transnational action as contributing to the greater good, and governance of activities aimed at improving the health and welfare of others who are perceived as incapable of helping themselves (Barnett, 2011). It is the latter description that the 'New Humanitarians' have contested. Cabot (2016a) describes how in 2015, austerity-ridden Greece's own

local population was in need of assistance—not only its refugees. According to her, the situation in Greece was challenging the idea of who receives aid and who provides it. In this research, the 'New Humanitarians' reconfigured helplessness when refugees took the lead and helped themselves while serving others.

Vernacular Humanitarianisms

Brković (2017) coined the term "Vernacular Humanitarianism" for humanitarian aid provided by diverse local actors according to their specific ideas of humanity and humanism, as a reaction to emerging needs that were not sufficiently addressed by the big aid agencies. Vernacular aid has three features: it considers the local histories and traditions that create different types of local responses (as opposed to the Christian European narrative); it can be chaotic, improvised and uncoordinated (as indeed the international agencies' work often is), and it is based on a universal notion of humanity, despite being local (Brković, 2017).

Those characteristics are reflected through 'New Humanitarian' principles—solidarity, hospitality, equality, and agency. Vernacular humanitarianisms have been differently labelled by various scholars; for example, "Solidarity Humanitarianism" (Rozakou, 2017), "Volunteer Humanitarianism" (Sandri, 2017), "Humanitarian Citizenship" (Cabot, 2019), and "Citizen and Grassroots Aid" (Fechter & Schwittay, 2019).

What is similar in these concepts is that the volunteers do not necessarily have the skills to address refugees' needs (McGee & Pelham, 2018; Sandri, 2017). In addition, grassroots NGOs are privately funded, and the response is made close to home, which allows locals to connect to the suffering of not-so-distant 'others' (Fechter & Schwittay, 2019; Sandri, 2017). Moreover, although the motivation to help was not inspired by political activism, volunteers engaged in campaigns calling for a change in asylum policies and treating refugees in a more humane manner (Sandri, 2017).

The differences between these researchers include their definitions of who the 'Humanitarian' is, and the setting in which 'Volunteering Culture' has emerged (Tsoni, 2016). In Greece, due to the absence of the State and the inefficient response of the UNHCR (Rozakou, 2017; Tsoni, 2016), immediate humanitarian assistance was carried out entirely by volunteers despite the improvisational nature of their work (Tsoni, 2016). Papataxiarchis (2016) distinguished between the local Greek response, and the 'foreign' response—and within the 'foreigners', he separated out the tourist-volunteers and NGO workers. However, scholars have not analysed the role of refugees and Greek 'civil servants' in the response. Local aid in Greece is identified with leftist groups and even

with anarchists, in what was named by Cabot (2016a) "Contagious Solidarity".

Governing the "refugee-scapes"

Many researchers associate humanitarianism with governmentality (Barnett, 2011; Fassin, 2010; Feldman & Ticktin, 2010). In the last two centuries, humanitarianism has become institutionalised, internationalised, and has increasingly influenced global governance due to the intervention of states in crises (Barnett, 2011; Fassin, 2010). However, states do not have a monopoly on governance. Any form of intervention, even that with good intentions, is a performance of control. Ferguson and Gupta (2002) called the situation in which NGOs and other international agencies become central to governments of different localities "transnational governmentality". They argue that governmentality can also be found in grassroots coalitions, volunteer and activist networks, and transnational civil society. Following this statement, I suggest examining the 'New Humanitarians' through the lens of transnational governance.

The predominant instrument created by governments, UN agencies, and NGOs to respond to political and ecological instability is the refugee camp. It is a form of containment, but to maintain order in chaos does not solve the problem (Redfield, 2005). Billaud (2020) analysed the mandate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to humanise wars. She describes the symptom that the humanitarian system suffers from: "The limited ability of humanitarians to change the conditions in which they operate in, whereby the goal is not to end wars but to maintain minimal 'humanity', and to 'master disorder'" (2020, p. 97). In that sense, the 'New Humanitarians' are the "alternative masters of disorder".

The commitment of aid actors to maintain the physical existence of people's lives often causes failures to offer more than that. Redfield (2005) described this as "minimalist biopolitics". Agamben (1998) named this state "bare life"—it is the state of being, as opposed to the state of "bios", which is qualified life. The 'New Humanitarians' have enabled qualified life via various methods: by helping themselves and others through a practice called 'working with the people', by implementing an inclusive community-based approach, and by creating supposedly 'equal' scapes. Unfortunately, those actions do not change the "inequality of lives", nor the limbo situation. Therefore, I argue that the "refugee-scapes" (Papataxiarchis, 2016) produce different governing modalities, which cause the 'New Humanitarians' to reproduce governing technologies.

"We are the new humanitarians"

Images of massed refugees represent the archetype of human suffering that triggers humanitarians to take action (Malkki, 1996). In Greece, the infamous, heartbreaking pictures of overcrowded rubber dinghies, and especially the little child Alan Kurdi, who died on a Turkish shore, brought the world's attention to the 'refugee crisis' and triggered the solidarity movement. Most involved in this movement planned to volunteer only for a short period, but those experiences changed their lives, and many have moved to Greece, or continue to come back often, turning humanitarianism into a way of life. Some of them established NGOs, whereas others refused to be officially and locally registered. The novelty in their work is having principles and ways of service provision that are different from professional humanitarians—having direct interaction with the 'target population', and creating working environments where everyone is perceived as 'equal', whether they are refugees, local, or international volunteers. They are the 'New Humanitarians'.

Arash was a photojournalist in Iran, recording atrocities committed by the regime and eventually having no choice but to leave his country. Once in Greece, he formed the 'Our House' project, as well as Café Patogh (a hangout place in Farsi), which operated as a community centre that served mainly Irani refugees and locals in need. The Café offered food to homeless people, responded to COVID-19 during lockdowns, operated a free shower and washing machine scheme, and provided emergency shelter to single women. Arash organised countless hunger strikes and demonstrations resisting the inhumane conditions in the camps, illegal detention in the prison inside Moria camp, and the 'Voluntary Return' deportations program. His perception of independence is different from the mainstream one: "We as activists believe that we don't need papers [formal registration] for our humanitarian activities. When it becomes systematic it changes, when we have power we lose ourselves". Once established and institutionalised, the humanitarian quest is contaminated by bureaucracy and management constraints.

Samir (pseudonym) is a long-term independent volunteer since 2015, and often returns to Lesvos and Athens. He is originally from Iraq, but escaped after the Yazidi genocide committed by ISIS and gained official refugee status in Germany. As he mentioned in our interview:

"I decided to go to Lesvos because I wanted to help on the ground, and I keep going there with different NGOs. If you can be part of change physically, you travel to help. There is a network of refugees in Germany connected to volunteers from all around the world. We were from different countries, working with

the boats in Greece. We helped almost 2,000 boats. The thing that made me work in rescue was to do humanity. I feel that I have to do this, [it is] part of my humanitarian duty".

He embodies his duty of helping others, and showcases that refugees are more than cultural ambassadors in humanitarian operations.

Another example of 'New Humanitarianism' is the NGO, Movement on the Ground, which was founded in response to the crisis in 2015, and has continued to scale-up since then, although their yearly budget is less than modest. The founder, Adil, is a volunteer from the Netherlands, whose family emigrated from Morocco. The NGO is known for providing quality shelter and smart camp management, even in informal sites. Adil talked about their ideology:

"The system needs to change. The humanitarian world is not sustainable... it's an outdated model. We are the 'New Humanitarians'. Our way of work is a blue print. Minimum standards? We give people what they need".

Their philosophy relies on the entrepreneurship of refugees, and their operational model is called "from Camp to campUs", which reads Camp Us, but also Campus, and "outlines the process of transforming refugee camps into dignified, stimulating and safe environments for people on the move". They do not follow the international guidelines and offer an added value to camp living.

Salam is a 'New Humanitarian' who founded an NGO called Team Humanity, which started in 2015 with boat-rescue. His family escaped from Iraq in the 1970s, then lived in Libya for a few years and later on arrived in Moldova. They relocated again and settled down in Denmark, where he grew up. Coming from a multiple-refuge background was the main motivation for him to act. He recounted why he came to Lesvos:

"I had to do something. I arrived in Lesvos on 5th September [2015]. I came to Skala [Sykamnias] and saw all these life jackets, it was the whole coast. Boats were coming, this was insane. There was nobody, no police, no UN officials, no one. I realised I was saving lives... that week changed my life... we needed to call ourselves something—Team Humanity, it was not an organisation or anything, we used our own money. For 3.5 months we weren't registered or received donations".

During this time in 2015, there were as many as 6,000 new arrivals to the Greek Islands per day.

Salam, like other 'New Humanitarians', emphasises the non-establishment and private funding aspect of the movement, which strives for independence, but ends up governed by powerful agents. Despite the countless lives that he saved, he was arrested with other Spanish lifeguards by the Hellenic coast guard in January 2016, and charged with people-smuggling. Their case made headlines and became an example of the politicisation and criminalisation of vernacular actors and the humanitarian objective of saving lives. It also set a precedent in Greek court when they were eventually found not guilty.

"The system needs to change. The humanitarian world is not sustainable... it's an outdated model. We are the 'New Humanitarians'. Our way of work is a blue print. Minimum standards? We give people what they need".

EuroRelief is a grassroots Christian organisation which was formed by volunteers in 2005, and arrived in Lesvos in 2015 to assist with the 'refugee crisis'. According to Andrea, a long-term volunteer (who like many others ended up staying in Lesvos for over two years), EuroRelief started with cooking food for camp residents and scaled up. The organisation is in charge of shelter allocation and the distribution of essential items to vulnerable groups in Moria camp, and after the camp burnt down, in the new settlement Mavrovouni. Andrea spoke about the inherent strain that working in Greece entails: "We are the 'New Humanitarians', so it's a tension that we live with—we are part of the system, but I would find it hard to work for the system".

This Faith-based Organisation (FBO) is a hybrid vernacular actor—on the one hand, the volunteers work closely with UNHCR, the local authorities, and other agencies inside the camps, but they are also acting as 'new humanitarians' in that they are part of the grassroots landscape in Greece and follow the same approach of direct contact with refugees, while maintaining a unique identity within the solidarity movement.

During my last visit in Lesvos, I met with Philippa and Eric, a native UK couple, in the recreational space and distribution centre they had established. They had been based in Molyvos village in the northern part of the island for 20 years before they started responding to the arrival of boats in Eftalou, turning their house into an operations and volunteer centre. They are

known to be uncompromising, direct and critical towards the refugee response, especially with regards to the insufficient action of the state, UN and other aid agencies:

> "We are doing this response since 2015. We thought that by now help would come, but its 2020 and we're still waiting, we're exhausted and tired. The big players and agencies are filling in gaps, Cluster meetings are useless. Small NGOs are adapting and changing, but what they do is firefighting, there is no planning. What we lack is predictions of the crisis".

Philippa echoed the common discourse of vernacular actors, and pointed out the weaknesses of the system as a whole, the international NGOs, as well as the smaller NGOs. The humanitarian space in Greece is ineffective, and lacks clear policies, preparation and predictability. Both Philippa and Eric are supporters of 'Safe Passage', which according to the solidarity movement, is a policy that ought to be implemented across Europe. It would enable migrants and asylum seekers to gain work permits, so that they could travel without risking their lives being smuggled through borders or at sea. According to the 'New Humanitarians', all people should be able to move freely beyond borders, and to enjoy the same freedom of movement and rights. It is a solution to the worsening sanctions, to the safety of migrants, and to ensuring human rights for people on the move. It does not, however, deal with conflict, military aggression or with governance and containment.

Towards 'New Humanitarian' principles

The humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence play a significant role in the charter of humanitarianism, although they became widespread in the 1960s, many years after the Dunantist organisations were created (Barnett, 2011). However, the solidarity movement developed a new set of principles which included more comprehensive moral sentiments and new ways of working.

The Island of Solidarity

Lesvos is commonly known as the 'Island of Solidarity', where one can feel a sense of belonging. Solidarity is a universal overarching theme, whereas other principles are more local. It encompasses feelings such as trust and care, and themes such as unity, humanity, and responsibility. It also includes operational aspects of community building. According to Arash, care overcomes lack of funds and the state's inaction:

> "Even as refugee I act with my empty hands. I have no money, no contacts, you just need to care. People say we don't have to have responsibility to each other, and that the government should do it, but they don't

care. I don't need bureaucracy, I just need to feel responsibility".

"Even as refugee I act with my empty hands. I have no money, no contacts, you just need to care. People say we don't have to have responsibility to each other, and that the government should do it, but they don't care. I don't need bureaucracy, I just need to feel responsibility".

The moral sentiments that inspired him to become a humanitarian correlated with the values at the core of the humanitarian project—caring about the suffering of 'others' (Fassin, 2010).

Solidarity and the need to be together function as 'pull factors' for both international volunteers, as well as for refugees—many of the volunteers go back to Greece because they want to be part of this humanitarian community, and many refugees go back to Lesvos after spending some time in urban places in Greece. As Arash mentioned:

> "The reason I started with this is to make a community, bring people together, to create friendships. There is loneliness in the big city, so I am making people feel less lonely. It's hard to be together in a city of five million people. In Lesvos you had a community, people were together".

His aim is not only to provide essential items, but to build a community. In Athens, it was an attempt to cure loneliness, which affected peoples' mental health and wellbeing. This prerequisite is not normally addressed by humanitarians, but it shows that humanitarianism should not necessarily just aim at covering the basic needs of people on the move. The social aspect of being a refugee—that is, the loss of familiar communal structures—should also be taken into consideration.

Solidarity is known as 'standing with refugees' in the common language of the 'Solidarians', or as 'supporting the local community'. It showcases the interconnectedness of aid providers and recipients. Samir talked about this theme in our conversation:

> "What we try always is to stand with each other, to support other refugees or volunteers, it doesn't matter. We don't call them 'refugees', we call them 'humans'. There is no discrimination or difference, [we are] also helping Greeks and locals, supporting local business".

The concept of togetherness and connection is dealt with caution. As Andrea reported in our interview:

> "Our motto is treating people with dignity, and our main value is solidarity, being with the people, and making them feel that they are seen, that they are not forgotten. We reach out to people, and we develop a personal connection. We are close to the people, and at the same time we need to keep distance".

According to her, solidarity is conveyed through direct and close contact with 'people', however she also presents a safeguarding policy of maintaining distance to prevent attachment and harm.

"The first line of hospitality"

The second principle is of local hospitality. The camps in Lesvos and around Athens represent different views of governance—Greek authorities call them 'Hospitality Centres' or 'First Reception Centres', while the UNHCR uses the term 'hotspots'. This terminology denied the limbo-like situation of refugees, and the restrictive nature of camp living. The 'Solidarians' often use the term 'concentration camps'.

Stavros, a former Greek military officer, was the First Commander of the Hospitality Centre for Asylum Seekers from the Municipality of Lesvos. According to him, accepting and helping refugees is influenced by tradition and by a genetic disposition:

> "We can't forget our history, there is population move between here and Turkey, and it has always been like that. It is part of our DNA to support other people, it's not just about human rights. There is a difference between government camps and UN camps, between people who are 'operationals' [Greek camp managers], and 'technocrats' [UN staff]".

The 'technocrats' don't have a moral compass to direct their work and they operate on behalf of a different mandate—a legal one instead of a moral one, whereas refuge and accepting refugees is part of the apparatus of Lesvos. It is not a principle without precedent. The war with Turkey resulted in a massive population exchange around the Aegean Islands, and in 1921, there were one million Greek refugees. Out of them, some 30,000 Greeks sought refuge in Syria.

The criticism of the UN system contrasts with the fact that Greece is known for its bureaucratic procedures, legislative complications, and for geopolitical pressure to control border crossings into Europe and the movement of people within the country (Cabot, 2012). Thanassis (pseudonym), another camp manager that I interviewed, mentioned that "Greece is the kingdom of bureaucracy", and that appointing more staff to deal with asylum procedures or improving camp conditions is held back due to bureaucratic matters such as signing more contracts.

"We can't forget our history, there is population move between here and Turkey, and it has always been like that. It is part of our DNA to support other people, it's not just about human rights. There is a difference between government camps and UN camps, between people who are 'operationals' [Greek camp managers], and 'technocrats' [UN staff]".

The notion of hospitality is central to understanding Greek culture as a host country of refugees, and especially the biopolitics that this philosophy involves. Hospitality is mobilised by local authorities to contain and govern the 'refugee crisis', and reconfigures forms of power, but doesn't change them. Hosting is not allocated equally—there are "worthy guests" (Rozakou, 2012)—educated people from urban environments who fled conflict. The "less desired" refugees are economic migrants from lower income countries, families with small children, medical cases, or political asylum requests. The local point of view produces inequality since it juxtaposes hosts and strangers, but also differentiates between varied strangers and how they are perceived (Kiryakidou, 2021).

According to the local perspective, the Aegean Islands are perceived as the 'first line of hospitality'. This cultural value serves a dual purpose—it is a mechanism to accept refugees into the country, but is also the first line of 'defence' and a governing method. It created ambivalent feelings—on the one hand, people in Mytilini did not appreciate that the island changed its demographics. As Thanassis told me in 2020 while Moria camp was highly over-populated: "Moria camp alone is another Mytilini—Sparta was a city of 20,000 people!" On the other, this complaint contradicts the local moral obligation to help Syrian refugees. Locals did not hesitate to help refugees and children coming out of the water, serving them food and drinks, and thus fulfilling their social roles as women or as fishers who are obliged to follow the maritime rule of assisting people in distress (Papataxiarchis, 2016). Saving lives even granted some citizens in Skala Sykmnias a Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 2016, whereas other vernacular humanitarians were criminalised.

"In the name of equality"

The third principle is equality. Equality entails non-hierarchal discourse, belief in justice and inclusion, and is practiced through working together with people

from varied nationalities, regardless of whether they are officially registered or not. According to this perception, there are no hierarchies of aid distinguishing between 'expats' or 'local staff' (Fassin, 2010). This practice is different from the common concepts of 'participation' or 'localisation'. In addition, refugees and migrants can fill any role in the response, whereas in other settings, refugees would usually be employed as cultural mediators or interpreters, and undocumented people would not even be considered as suitable candidates. However, equality is multi-faceted and hard to achieve in humanitarian settings.

Various scholars have discussed the dual nature of the intersection between sentiment and material inequality, and how inequality in humanitarianism generates hierarchies of lives (Fassin, 2010; Feldman & Ticktin, 2010). Barnett (2011, p. 6) described humanitarianism as a "feel-good ideology that helps maintain global inequalities". Fassin (2007) claimed that there is a contradiction between the goals of this sector and how it operates: "Humanitarianism is founded on an inequality of lives and hierarchies of humanity" (Fassin, 2010, p. 239). Even when humanitarian action is inspired by ideas of human association, it reproduces hierarchies among human beings (Feldman & Ticktin, 2010). The humanitarian hierarchies in Greece determined not only who was entitled to receive help, but also who was considered a 'humanitarian' and whose actions were outlawed.

The humanitarian hierarchies in Greece determined not only who was entitled to receive help, but also who was considered a 'humanitarian' and whose actions were outlawed.

Hierarchy prevailed even among the volunteers, since the 'volunteering culture' created symbolic hierarchies related to the type of work that volunteers did (i.e. search and rescue, shore watching, food or clothing distribution, and legal or medical aid), the length of stay, and the organisational culture of the NGO or initiative they were linked with (Tsoni, 2016).

The hierarchies of humanity create a distinction between 'expatriates' and 'nationals'. Expatriates are the ones who come almost exclusively from Western countries, whereas Nationals are local agents who are considered as plain employees (Fassin, 2007). Who are the 'Nationals' in this context? The refugees? The Greek volunteers? Greek officials? The host community who is also in need? Are refugees with official status, especially the ones who travel to Greece in order to volunteer considered as expatriates? The majority of the 'New Humanitarians' are volunteers, and are different from other professional humanitars and 'expatriates' who get deployed in the deep field for a temporal mission in lower income countries (and thus embody the classic power structure rooted in humanitarianism). And yet, the call for equality when some people are in limbo, while others can move freely may produce power blindness.

The imagery of community that the solidarity movement nurtured was characterised by transnational individuals who talk about statelessness and borderlessness, however those notions contradict the freedom of movement of European nationals and volunteers, a right that is revoked from refugees who are static.

Moreover, creating agency opportunities for refugees to actively take part or lead different humanitarian projects reproduces inequalities between camp residents and the ones who have the necessary resources and ability to travel to engage in vernacular projects, and to dedicate their time to helping others.

The making of change-makers
The last principle is agency, which is performed by role modelling—that is, volunteering or forming independent initiatives and collaborations. The meaning of agency was to treat refugees as 'people with skills'. Thus, engineers, electricians, teachers, personal trainers, and cooks were able to find a creative outlet for their talents and capabilities and to serve others via many projects.

The idea of agency and change-making, coupled with activism (direct and online) contrasts the notion of minimalist biopolitics (Redfield, 2005), and proves that one can help others with very minimal resources while being in a refugee state and facing homelessness. Vernacular actors show how the narrative of "bare life" (Agamben, 1998) is reconfigured by refugees. It is resistance to the governing methods used by Greece in the camps, and a reclamation of responsibility through solidarity and care. Nonetheless, there is an inherent tension in vernacular aid, since acting instead of the government and filling in gaps replaces a more formal response and reproduces biopower (Cabot, 2019). The response should not rely only on activists, since the solution to refugee-homelessness is linked to asylum and refugee laws in Greece.

Agency relies on participation and the creation of more change-makers and networks of refugee-humanitars. It enables people to be busy, to gain new skills and knowledge, to meet and connect with like-minded peers, and makes people feel important and dignified by working shoulder to shoulder with other international volunteers. The people who were kept busy during the draining limbo-waiting had positive coping mechanisms, better social networks, and it gave them meaning and a

reason to wake up in the morning. Adil talked about the importance of participation:

> "We use a participatory method, and we believe in agency. People are involved in decision making, [they] work as volunteers in levelling the ground, creating areas, spacing tents, graveling, creating a sewage system".

This form of participation is utterly different from the common power distribution. According to UNHCR, "a community-based approach is a way of working in partnership with persons of concern during all stages of UNHCR's program cycle" (UNHCR, 2008, p. 14). In this model, the agency is the owner of the program cycle, and "persons of concern" are consulted, however might not be the ones delivering the solutions.

In the 'Movement on the Ground' model, as well as in other grassroots groups, refugees and camp residents created communal and safe-spaces, managed workshops, taught in schools, led teams and monitored budgets. This way of working (paid and unpaid) required a higher level of trust than one usually encounters in the field in a traditional professional humanitarian setting. It raises the question whether this model should become a standard in other humanitarian settings?

Agency showed that camp-living can become a meaningful and dignified experience, that people can be self-reliant not only with regards to cash-based interventions, and that the 'beneficiaries' can play a dual role as 'humanitarians'. It created a more equal humanitarian system, and enabled people on the move a more "qualified life", depending on their level of engagement and leadership within the solidarity movement.

Conclusion

The 'New Humanitarians' contrast mainstream humanitarianism and the power distribution between expat-foreigners and locals. They demonstrate dialectic tensions—they are vernacular actors that are influenced by traditional humanitarianism, but at the same time are different and innovative. They reconfigure aid by creating adhoc methods to deliver services, by developing a different discourse, new principles and ethos, and by how they interpret and demonstrate solidarity according to local values. Despite their clear anti-establishment agenda, the independent funding, the fast response, and the novelty of redefining who is a humanitarian and who can reclaim not only this title, but also this power, the 'New Humanitarians' can only partially challenge the notion of "bare life" in camps (Agamben, 1998), or enable a full social existence and qualified life for camp residents (Rozakou, 2017).

The ethnographic material left a few questions unanswered—what does the future hold for the 'New Humanitarians'? Will the new principles become prevalent in mainstream humanitarianism? Will we see more types of vernacular aid? Will vernacular actors develop protocols, procedures and other bureaucratic mechanisms? Or as Dunn (2017) noted, will some of those grassroots organisations disappear and cease to exist, like many other refugee associations?

Some of the 'New Humanitarians' depicted here engage in advocacy in either the Greek parliament or in the European Union parliament. Yet, little is done by the State and other powerful actors to eliminate the loss of lives in the Aegean Sea, to change the asylum procedures in Greece, or to find alternative solutions to the refugee camps. In that sense, vernacular actors (as well as professional humanitarians) have limited influence on official matters, and they cannot address the root causes of forced and voluntary migration, nor change the incarcerating reality for refugees and the European border regime.

As argued earlier, vernacular actors unintentionally reproduce governing technologies used by institutionalised actors to contain the "refugee-scapes" (Papataxiarchis, 2016). Nevertheless, grassroots humanitarian aid doesn't fit exactly into the governmentality of the State (Sandri, 2017). The voice presented here is aimed at uncovering the weakness of the Dunantist objective of "humanising wars". As Billaud (2020, p. 97) wrote: "Humanitarian operations therefore seek to remain a temporary response, not the basis for a new regime". In addition, the new bottom-up principles are unlikely to become mainstream, unless vernacular actors become more established, or actively take part in harmonisation and alignment processes.

In the meantime, the municipalities in Greece have further contained the new camps in the islands, and turned them into highly restricted and closed facilities. Those efforts go hand-in-hand with posing more sanctions on grassroots NGOs and outlawing their sea-rescue operations. Increasing the governmental measures and creating draconian asylum procedures is perhaps not the solution, as Samir concluded:

> "No one can control the borders. As long as there are wars—in Syria, in Iraq, in Africa— there will be people on the move, and people will be coming. It will not stop. We just hope that people will find a way to arrive safely".

References

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford University Press.

Barnett, M. (2011). *Empire of Humanity: A history of humanitarianism*. Cornell University Press.

Bendixsen, S., & Wyller, T. (Eds.). 2019. *Contested Hospitalities in a Time of Migration: Religious and Secular Counterspaces in the Nordic Region*. Routledge.

Billaud, J. (2020). Masters of disorder: Rituals of communication and monitoring at the International Committee of the Red Cross. *Social Anthropology, 28*(1), 96–111.

Brković, Č. (2017). Introduction: Vernacular Humanitarianisms. *Allegra Lab*. https://allegralaboratory.net/vernacular-humanitarianisms/

Cabot, H. (2012). The governance of things: Documenting limbo in the Greek asylum procedure. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review, 35*(1), 11–29.

Cabot, H. (2016a). 'Contagious' Solidarity: Reconfiguring care and citizenship in Greece's social clinics. *Social Anthropology, 24*(2), 152–166.

Cabot, H. (2016b). 'Refugee voices': Tragedy, ghosts, and the anthropology of not knowing. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 45*(6), 645–672.

Cabot, H. (2019). The European refugee crisis and Humanitarian Citizenship in Greece. *Ethnos, 85*(5), 747–771.

Dunn, E.C. (2012). The chaos of humanitarianism: Adhocracy in the Republic of Georgia. *Humanity, 3*(1), 1–23.

Dunn, E.C. (2017). Vernacular #Humanitarianism, adhocracy, and the problem of emotion. *Allegra Lab*. https://allegralaboratory.net/vernacular-humanitarianism-adhocracy-and-the-problem-of-emotion/

Fassin, D. (2007). Humanitarianism as a politics of life. *Public Culture, 19*(3), 499–520.

Fassin, D. (2010). Inequality of lives, hierarchies of humanity: Moral commitments and ethical dilemmas of humanitarianism. In I. Feldman, & M. Ticktin (Eds.), *In the name of humanity: The government of threat and care* (pp. 238-255). Duke University Press.

Fassin, D. (2012). *Humanitarian Reason: A moral history of the present*. University of California Press.

Fechter, A.M., & Schwittay, A. (2019). Citizen Aid: Grassroots interventions in development and humanitarianism. *Third World Quarterly*, *40*(10), 1769–1780.

Feldman, I., & Ticktin, M. (2010). Introduction: Government and humanity. In I. Feldman, & M. Ticktin (Eds.), *In the name of humanity: The government of threat and care* (pp. 1-26). Duke University Press.

Ferguson, J., & Gupta, A. (2002). Spatializing states: Toward an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality. *American Ethnologist, 29*(4), 981–1002.

Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and punish: The birth of a prison*. Penguin.

International Medical Corps. (2016). *Mental health and psychosocial support situational assessment: Needs, services, and recommendations for support to refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants in Greece*. https://www.mhinnovation.net/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/IMC%202016%20Greece.pdf.

Kyriakidou, Maria. 2021. Hierarchies of Deservingness and the Limits of Hospitality in the 'Refugee Crisis.' *Media, Culture & Society* 43 (1): 133-149.

Malkki, L.H. (1996). Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology, 11*(3), 377–404.

Malkki, L.H. (2015). *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism*. Duke University Press.

McGee, D., & Pelham, J. (2018). Politics at play: Locating human rights, refugees and grassroots humanitarianism in the Calais Jungle. *Leisure Studies, 37*(1), 22–35.

Myers, S., & Aoun, I. (2017). *A tide of self-harm and depression: The EU-Turkey Deal's devastating impact on child refugees and migrants*. Save the Children. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/10441/pdf/tide_selfharm_depression.pdf

Papataxiarchis, E. (2016). Being 'there:' At the frontline of the 'European refugee crisis' – Part 1 and Part 2. *Anthropology Today, 32*(2), 5–9 & *32*(3), 3–7.

Redfield, P. (2005). Doctors, borders, and life in crisis. *Cultural Anthropology, 20*(3), 328–361.

Rozakou, K. (2012). The biopolitics of hospitality in Greece: Humanitarianism and the management of refugees. *American Ethnologist, 39*(3), 562–577.

Rozakou, K. (2017). Solidarity #Humanitarianism: The blurred boundaries of humanitarianism in Greece. *Etnofoor, 29*(2), 99–104.

Sandri, E. (2017). 'Volunteer Humanitarianism': Volunteers and humanitarian aid in the Jungle refugee camp of Calais. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(1), 65–80.

Tsoni, I. (2016). 'They won't let us come, they won't let us stay, they won't let us leave'. Liminality in the Aegean borderscape: The case of irregular migrants, volunteers and locals on Lesvos. *Human Geography, 9*(2), 35–46.

UNHCR. (2008). *A Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations*. https://www.unhcr.org/47f0a0232.pdf

UNHCR. (2016). *Volunteers who saved lives on Lesvos nominated for Nobel Peace Prize*. https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/10/57f7732d4/volunteers-saved-lives-lesvos-nominated-nobel-peace-prize.html

Verwey, M. (2016). *Joint Action Plan on the Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/december2016-action-plan-migration-crisis-management_en.pdf

Catastrophe squared: COVID-19 vaccine inequity in humanitarian crises

SIMRAN CHAHAL

Simran is a Project Administrator at the University of Melbourne's Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity. Since completing her Master of Humanitarian Assistance at Deakin University's Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, she has been working in the medical research sector to link public health and disease response, as part of teams working on Poliomyelitis, COVID-19, and sexually transmitted infections.

Image: Muna, a Family Health Care worker for Save the Children in Somalia, teaches families about how to keep safe from COVID-19 and the importance of vaccines © Sacha Myers / Save the Children

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused physical, social, and economic devastation all around the world. While more manageable case numbers and immunisation efforts seem to indicate that the world has come a long way in controlling the virus, there is great inequity in vaccination numbers around the world. Low-income countries have only received 14 doses per 100 people—13-fold lower than the 182 doses per 100 people in upper-middle income and high-income countries. This paper highlights the disparity of COVID-19 vaccination rates in high income countries versus those afflicted with crises and raises the need for linking pandemic response with humanitarian assistance.

Leadership relevance

In the humanitarian sector, it is of vital importance to adapt assistance programs and policies to the changing trends in the world. In recent years, a big push has been given to localisation of humanitarian aid. However, this push has not been reflected in access to vaccines, and a strong case can be made for leadership among the humanitarian community to redress this injustice.

Introduction

With over 6.3 million deaths worldwide and counting (Worldometer, 2022), the COVID-19 pandemic is not just a virological disease that has affected the physical health of people, but a global cataclysm of tremendous social and psychological upheavals. The economic shocks caused by lockdowns, and the resulting business shutdowns have exacerbated rising food insecurity. People living in poverty have been disproportionately affected by these outcomes (Devenit, 2021). Lockdowns and curfews affected cultivation-reliant rural communities in Africa, who have suffered a decrease in agricultural output and consequent food insecurity (UNHCR, 2022c). COVID-related lockdowns also closed many schools, affecting 2.19 million children (UNOCHA, 2022a), with many students unable to get back on track with their normal educations since schools began reopening.

Overall, the pandemic has led to an increase in the number of people around the world experiencing humanitarian crisis and requiring humanitarian assistance. In these areas, the risk of the disease is even higher, with the control of the pandemic being less of a priority than basic humanitarian aid. In 2020, of the 34 countries experiencing protracted crises, 25 were at high risk of COVID-19 (UNOCHA, 2022b). This paper will show that these 25 countries, along with others experiencing situations which require aid, are among those with the lowest vaccination rates in the world.

In 2020, of the 34 countries experiencing protracted crises, 25 were at high risk of COVID-19.

Many ongoing humanitarian assistance and relief programs were disrupted by COVID induced international travel restrictions. These were programs that were providing crucial basic assistance in vulnerable countries most in need of such support. The disruptions to logistical chains caused by COVID-19 halted these programs, including those providing critical health assistance, putting already vulnerable populations at an even higher risk of communicable diseases, including, but not limited to COVID-19. Immunisation campaigns that were part of humanitarian response operations prior to the onset of the pandemic have also been affected in a lot of countries. HumData recorded the number of immunisation campaigns affected due to COVID induced travel and logistical restrictions and funding cutdowns (UNOCHA, 2022b). Among these, Bivalent Oral Poliovirus, Type II Poliovirus, measles, and Rubella vaccine campaigns have been affected the most (UNOCHA, 2022c). In October 2020 for example, 30 countries had fully or partially postponed their measles vaccination programs due to COVID-19 (Drexler, 2021). In some places, campaigns that were suspended in early 2020 following the declaration of the pandemic are yet to be reinstated (UNOCHA, 2022c). This is especially concerning, as children all around the world are at risk of diseases such as Polio if even a few cases remain (WHO, 2019).

When immunisation against the pandemic started in late 2020 and early 2021, vaccines reached low and lower-middle income countries last. Public health initiatives in general, and vaccination programs specifically, are already filled with logistical, financial and personnel challenges. But they are even more difficult to execute in areas with humanitarian crises, which have higher logistical constraints, violence, and restricted access, making it challenging for health workers to carry out their duties and meet their program objectives. Now, the COVID-19 vaccine effort is facing these same hurdles.

By comparing COVID-19 vaccination numbers in countries around the world, we can assess inequity in the rate of vaccinations in countries experiencing humanitarian crises and conflict situations, look at the challenges of implementing vaccination programs in these areas, and suggest some policy recommendations to combat this.

Methodology

The ReliefWeb country classification was used to identify countries experiencing crises and conflicts. Currently, 54 countries are classified as facing humanitarian situations by ReliefWeb (ReliefWeb, 2022). This classification refers to countries where there is "a disaster with significant humanitarian impact and ongoing response and/or recovery and reconstruction operations" (Ritchie et al, 2022). Subsequently in this paper, these countries will be referred to as 'HS Countries'.

Vaccination rates for all countries were compared to assess differences or similarities by using different grouping categories. 202 countries were used for the analysis (Ritchie et al, 2022). HS country vaccination rates were compared with vaccination rates in other countries using the following categories: income (low income, lower-middle income, upper-middle income, and higher income countries, based on the World Bank country income classification levels); type of COVID-19 vaccine administered (mRNA or Viral Vector); geographical location; and whether the country is accepting or hosting refugees.

For the purposes of completeness and to ensure as much standardisation as possible, the rates of vaccination have been chosen to reflect completed COVID-19 vaccine dosages, i.e., the minimum number of required vaccine doses for that regimen (for example, one dose is required for Johnson & Johnson, whereas Pfizer needs two).

COVID-19 vaccination in countries afflicted with humanitarian crises

Figure 1 shows that the world average for people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 is currently just over 60% (Ritchie et al, 2022). The 'Our World in Data' calculator was also used to derive vaccination rates in the 54 HS Countries (Figure 2). This average comes in at just 31.2%, with wide variability within the different income categories. From the 32 HS Countries that are low and lower-middle income, the average vaccination rate against COVID-19 is 20.77%. In contrast, the vaccination rate in the 13 upper-middle- and high-income HS Countries is 46.9%. There are 10 HS Countries where the vaccination rate is above the world average and seven of these are upper-middle- and high-income countries. This points to inequitable vaccine rates in low versus high economic settings.

Figure 1: World average for people fully vaccinated against COVID-19. (Source: Our World in Data)

Share of people who completed the initial COVID-19 vaccination protocol
Total number of people who received all doses prescribed by the initial vaccination protocol, divided by the total population of the country.

Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data
Note: Alternative definitions of a full vaccination, e.g. having been infected with SARS-CoV-2 and having 1 dose of a 2-dose protocol, are ignored to maximize comparability between countries.

Figure 2: Vaccination rates in 54 countries with current humanitarian situations. (Source: Our World in Data)

Share of people who completed the initial COVID-19 vaccination protocol
Total number of people who received all doses prescribed by the initial vaccination protocol, divided by the total population of the country.

Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data
Note: Alternative definitions of a full vaccination, e.g. having been infected with SARS-CoV-2 and having 1 dose of a 2-dose protocol, are ignored to maximize comparability between countries.

A study that observed excess mortality from COVID-19 in 2021 and 2022 states that the highest mortality rates due to the pandemic were found in lower income countries (UNOCHA, 2021). Within lower income countries, it was shown that the difference between the estimated excess mortality and reported COVID-19 deaths was highest in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (UNOCHA, 2021). Overall, vaccination rates in low-income countries are 13 times lower than upper-middle- and high-income countries (Jansen van Vuren et al, 2022).

Compared to 166 vaccine doses per 100 people in the UAE, most African countries had only administered <10 doses per 100 people in 2021

Of the 54 HS countries, 49 are accepting refugees, and 30 have UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals (UNOCHA, 2021). Of these, 24 are African nations. The vaccination rate in this latter group is only 13.9%. Compared to 166 vaccine doses per 100 people in the UAE, for example, most African countries had only administered <10 doses per 100 people in 2021 (Sen-Crowe et al, 2021). Of the 10 countries in the world with ongoing armed conflicts (World Population Review, 2022b), nine are HS Countries. COVID-19 vaccination rates in these countries are as low as 10.2%. These figures are summarised in Table 1. Figure 3 represents the geographical distribution of the 54 HS countries, and their vaccination rates against COVID-19.

These numbers point to the alarming differences in COVID-19 vaccination rates in countries experiencing humanitarian crises from those that are not. The next section will discuss some of the factors contributing to this.

Table 1: COVID-19 vaccination rates in countries affected by humanitarian situations by income, geography and conflict*

Classification	Number	Vaccination rate (as % of population)
All countries	202	58.59%
Countries with Humanitarian Situations (HS countries)	56	31.20%
HS low and lower-middle income countries	32	20.77%
HS upper-middle- and high-income countries	13	46.90%
African HS countries	24	13.90%
HS countries with armed conflict	9	10.20%

*As of April 2022

Figure 3: Vaccination rates in countries with humanitarian situations. (Source: Simran Chahal)

Vaccination rate as total % of population
0.08   79.31
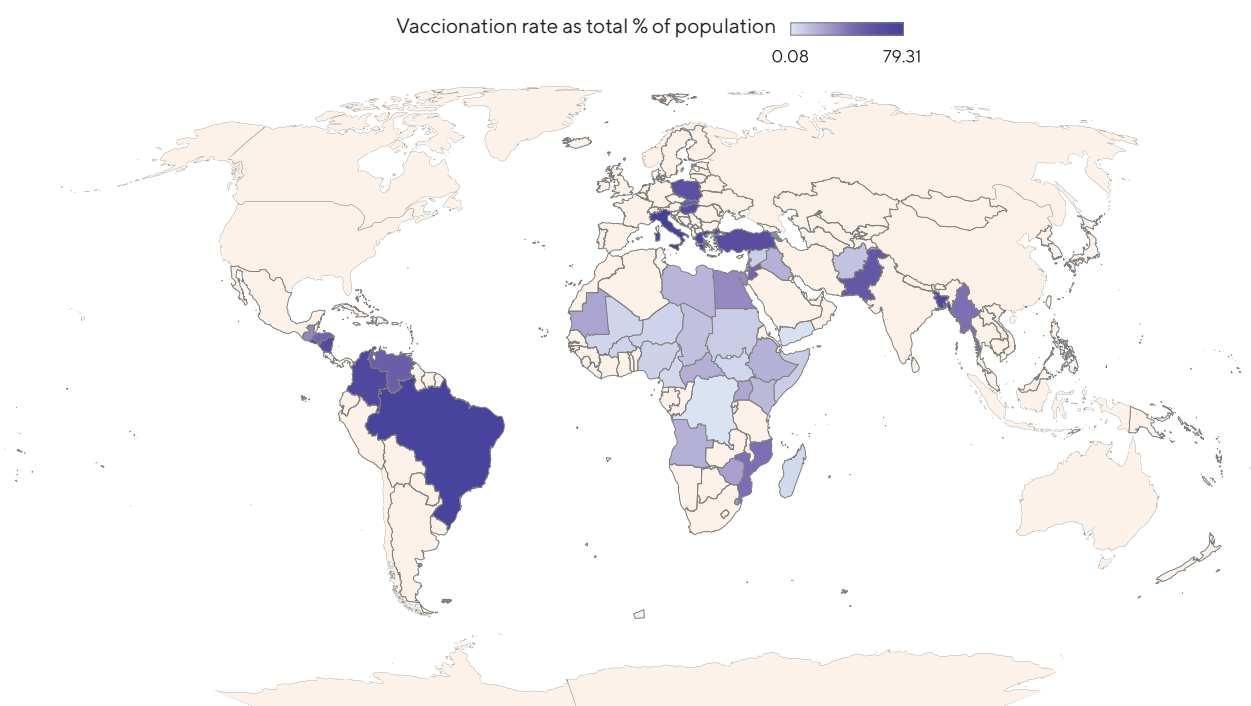
Causes and hindrances to vaccination

It is evident that vaccination numbers in countries experiencing humanitarian crises are significantly lower compared to countries which do not face such issues. There are several factors hindering vaccination access specifically, and humanitarian assistance overall. This section discusses the factors acting as significant barriers to the effective implementation of not only COVID-19 vaccination programs, but health and humanitarian efforts in conflicted regions in general.

Restricted access

The basic hindrance comes in the form of restricted access—when humanitarian actors and aid workers are unable to get to areas requiring aid because the pathways are blocked. Violence and political control by groups are often the major reasons access is restricted for aid workers—this can either be to support or enforce specific messages, or to demand something in return for access. For example, armed insurgents could seek material help in the form of money or food supplies from aid agencies, or intangible help in the form of support for their ideas. Sometimes the access block can also be set up by governments themselves contending that it is unsafe for aid workers to access areas because of instability, violence, and terrorism. Whatever the reason might be, it stops health and aid workers from accessing vulnerable populations and in-need communities, preventing successful implementation of crucial schemes.

Cold-chain requirements

While violence and restricted access directly affect a government's ability to execute public health programs, vaccination programs also come with highly complex logistical burdens. For countries with humanitarian situations, this is further complicated as most are low-income countries with overstressed, underfunded healthcare systems (Okereke et al, 2021).

Recent research has shown that poor coverage of vaccinations for vulnerable populations and inequity of vaccine access are interlinked and impacted by cold-chain requirements (Jansen van Vuren et al, 2022). mRNA vaccines such as Pfizer and Moderna require very cold storage temperatures, and because of this they are mainly beneficial to upper-middle- and high-income countries. Only 20% of low-income countries have opted for mRNA vaccines as they pose high financial and logistical burdens in terms of expensive storage and transport costs (Jansen van Vuren et al, 2022). Freezers with the ability to maintain temperatures below -60C° are not only costly to purchase upfront but are expensive to operate and maintain. Special vehicles are also needed for vaccines to be stored in such freezers,

which are expensive and largely unaffordable for lower income countries and those afflicted with humanitarian crises. This is in stark contrast to the 96% of high-income countries which have been administering mRNA vaccines (Jansen van Vuren et al, 2022).

Poor coverage of vaccinations for vulnerable populations and inequity of vaccine access are interlinked and impacted by cold-chain requirements.

Internal displacement and international refugee movements

Population displacement further adds to the challenge of ensuring that adequate numbers of the population are vaccinated. While people regularly move across international borders to seek refuge, there are also many people who are displaced within the borders of their own countries. Currently, there are an estimated 48 million internally displaced people around the world. As of mid-2021, 4.3 million people are stateless (UNHCR, 2022b). Of the 54 HS countries, 49 host refugees, while 28 of them also have internally displaced people (UNHCR, 2022a).

A high percentage—39%—of the world's refugees are hosted in five countries—Turkey, Colombia, Uganda, Pakistan and Germany (UNHCR, 2022b). Four of these (except Germany) are HS countries used in our analysis.

There is more pressure on resources when refugees move because they often move to neighbouring countries—from one developing country to another one (World Population Review, 2022a)—and the least developed countries are often those accepting the most refugees (Ibid.). Eight out of the top 10 countries hosting the highest numbers of international refugees are HS countries. Unfortunately, HS countries are not in the best position to host refugees, as it causes immense pressure on already limited monetary and infrastructural resources. Of the 10 countries with the lowest Human Development Index (assessed as of end-2019), eight are HS countries today—Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, and South Sudan (UNDP, 2021).

As observed in section three, COVID-19 vaccination rates in countries hosting refugees are significantly lower than not just the world average, but also low-income countries. This adds further stress to systems, while causing problems for refugees and displaced people who are unable to get vaccinated and may be viewed by local populations with suspicion and as disease-carriers. Further complications may be caused when displaced

people are unable to stay in one place for long and are excluded from local medical records or vaccination programs. They may also be ineligible for host-country vaccination programs because they received a previous vaccination in their home country that is not recognised by the host/transition country, or was not recorded in a format—electronic or otherwise—accepted by or accessible to the host-country's health administrators. Host/transition countries may also administer different and incompatible vaccines to a person's home country.

COVID-19 vaccination rates in countries hosting refugees are significantly lower than not just the world average, but also low-income countries.

COVID-19 misinformation

Adding to COVID-19 mismanagement in the 24 HS countries in Africa is misinformation about the pandemic. With no proper information dissemination measures in place, there is uncertainty as to whether people are getting access to accurate COVID-19 information (Okereke et al, 2021). There is also a lot of difficulty in accessing accurate COVID-19 data from all regions (UNOCHA, 2021).

Overall, there has been a decline in information on the pandemic in rural Africa. This lack of information, combined with low education rates, means many people are not able to understand how the virus, its vaccines, and clinical trials work (Okereke et al, 2021). If there are no means by which people can understand the disease itself, there is little opportunity to increase their awareness about it. False beliefs and rumours around COVID-19 are also adding to the misinformation. For example, in Sudan, many people believe that the virus will not spread in hot conditions and therefore have not been following any social distancing or protective measures (Okereke et al, 2021). At the peak of the pandemic, there was also widespread circulation of a belief that the genes of people in Africa naturally increase immunity to the disease (Reuters, 2020).

Political instability

The prevalence of humanitarian conflicts is highly correlated with political instability. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that more than 50 million people live in territories fully controlled by armed nonstate authorities (Drexler, 2021). In many of these places, there is a high level of mistrust of government authorities, including health officials in charge of vaccination programs. Religious and community leaders often hold a lot of sway in these

areas, and over the course of the pandemic there have been instances where religious leaders deny scientific facts, and many people choose to believe them over government health officials (Okereke et al, 2021).

Vaccine theft and corruption

The challenge of vaccine theft and corruption presents itself as another factor hindering the execution of efficient COVID-19 vaccine programs. Corruption can take place in the manufacturing, allocation, and distribution of vaccines, and has been in existence since before the time of COVID-19 (UNODC, 2021). Bribery, nepotism, favouritism, and lack of proper due diligence mean that the already limited supply of vaccines is further reduced. This is a vicious cycle, as corrupt practices can reduce countries' chances of getting crucial health funding, as many funders want to avoid allocating money if they are suspicious or unsure of positive outcomes.

Theft of aid supplies and relief items has long been a common problem associated with the administration of humanitarian programs (Anderson and Wallace, 1999). Items can be stolen by militant groups for financing their own efforts, or by civilians in need of goods. This has also happened in the specific context of COVID-19 vaccines. In the earlier days of vaccine production, theft from the supply chain was a looming threat (UNODC, 2021).

Even where vaccine supply has been developed, slow and inefficient distribution has been a contributing factor to low vaccination rates in Africa. The continent was five months behind much of the world in commencing its immunisation program, with the program only starting in late-March 2021 (Sen-Crowe et al, 2021).

Policy recommendations

This section discusses some of the possible remedies that can inform current practice and work towards improving vaccination rates in areas that currently register as low coverage.

People affected by displacement face more hindrances than normal in getting access to COVID-19 vaccinations. These include being forced to move from the place where they got their first dose before they could get their second dose, or incompatible vaccination records. This paper recommends creating a dedicated quota of vaccines for refugees and forced migrants and developing paper vaccination records in an international format that they can take with them. The benefits from this would be twofold: it would be easy to access displaced people's previous vaccination records for host countries, while also helping migrants avoid the language barrier.

Research is being conducted to see if getting multiple doses of different COVID-19 vaccines has any impact on the immunity from the virus or any negative health effects. Once sufficient research allows governments to act on this more readily, it will become easier for displaced people and refugees to complete their vaccination regimen after they move to a new place, easing the process of starting afresh.

This localisation agenda needs to be given a big push in the global COVID-19 vaccine campaign, especially around distribution, allocation, and pricing decisions.

Humanitarian financing also needs to occur in a more coordinated manner. Efforts have been going on in recent years to improve the localisation of humanitarian aid and the involvement of crisis-affected people in aid and development programs. This localisation agenda also needs to be given a big push in the global COVID-19 vaccine campaign, especially around distribution, allocation, and pricing decisions. The UNHCR is working to include displaced people and refugees into national vaccine allocation and distribution plans (UNHCR, 2022c), and to protect the rights of displaced people to seek asylum even amid lockdowns and border closures.

In order to counter misinformation around COVID-19 and to aid in debunking myths connected to the pandemic, it is important to raise awareness in the local languages of every area. World Health Organisation (WHO) information sheets should be trimmed down into easy-to-understand one-pagers that can be put up at health clinics, schools, public transport hubs, maternity centres, and aged-care facilities, where they can reach the maximum number of people with the correct message. WHO regional offices must work with governments and country-heads to initiate question and answer sessions, briefings, and town hall meetings where people can raise and discuss their doubts about the vaccines. As with many humanitarian programs, incorporating the importance of handwashing, face masks and social distancing into school curriculums can help in ensuring that the correct message on best practices to manage COVID-19 reach all households in case an outbreak occurs.

Overall, there is an urgent need to link COVID-19 public health programs with humanitarian initiatives, to lead holistic responses in countries afflicted with humanitarian crises. This paper recommends linking the two outcomes together with localised schemes to strengthen community bonds, enhance capacity building practices, and address the core issues of health and aid.

References

Anderson, M.B. & Wallace, M. (1999). *Challenges for Food Aid in Conflict Situations*. WorldHunger.org. https://www.worldhunger.org/articles/global/armedconflict/anderson.htm#Theft:%20A%20key%20problem

Development Initiatives. (2021). *The Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 202*2. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global-Humanitarian-Assistance-Report-2021.pdf

Drexler, M, (2021). *The Troubled History of Vaccines and Conflict Zones*. NPR. https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/08/29/1031007332/the-troubled-history-of-vaccines-and-conflict-zones

Jansen van Vuren, P., McAuley, A.J., Kuiper, M.J., Singanallur, N.B., Bruce, M.P., Riddell, S., Goldie, S., Mangalaganesh, S., Chahal, S., Drew, T.W., Blasdell, K.R., Tachedjian, M., Caly, L., Druce, J.D., Ahmed, S., Khan, M.S., Malladi, S.K., Singh, R., Pandey, S., Varadarajan, R. & Vasan, S.S. (2022). Highly Thermotolerant SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine Elicits Neutralising Antibodies against Delta and Omicron in Mice. *Viruses.* 14(4):800. https://doi.org/10.3390/v14040800

Okereke, M., Ukor, N. A., Ngaruiya, L. M., Mwansa, C., Alhaj, S. M., Ogunkola, I. O., Jaber, H. M., Isa, M. A., Ekpenyong, A., & Lucero-Prisno, D. E., III. (2021). COVID-19 Misinformation and Infodemic in Rural Africa, The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, 104(2), 453-456. https://www.ajtmh.org/view/journals/tpmd/104/2/article-p453.xml

ReliefWeb. (2022). *Humanitarian Situations*. https://reliefweb.int/countries?view=ongoing

Reuters staff. (2020). False Claim: African Skin Resists the Coronavirus. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-coronavirus-ethnicity-idUSKBN20X27G.

Ritchie, H., Mathieu, E., Rodés-Guirao, L., Appel, C., Giattino, C., Ortiz-Ospina, E., Hasell, J., Macdonald, B., Beltekian D. & Roser, M. (2020). *Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)*. OurWorldInData.org. https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus

Sen-Crowe, B., McKenney, M. & Elkbuli, A. (2021). Disparities in global COVID-19 vaccination rates & allocation of resources to countries in need. *Annals of Medicine and Surgery*. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34336193/

UNHCR. (2022a). Refugee Data Finder. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=Jn5sA7

UNHCR. (2022b). Refugee Population Statistics Database. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/

UNHCR. (2022c). Coronavirus Emergency. https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/coronavirus-outbreak/

United Nations Development Program. (2021). *Human Development Report 2020. The Next Frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene*. https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2020

UNOCHA. (2021). *Inter-Agency Coordinated Appeals: Overview for 2022.* https://gho.unocha.org/appeals/inter-agency-coordinated-appeals-overview-2022

UNOCHA. (2022a). *COVID-19 Data Explorer: Global Humanitarian Operations: School Closures*. https://data.humdata.org/visualization/covid19-humanitarian-operations/?layer=school_closures

UNOCHA. (2022b). *Global Humanitarian Overview 2022*. https://gho.unocha.org/

UNOCHA. (2022c). *COVID-19 Data Explorer: Global Humanitarian Operations: Immunization campaigns impacted due to COVID-19*. https://data.humdata.org/dataset/immunization-campaigns-impacted

UNODC. (2021). *COVID-19 Vaccines and Corruption Risks: Preventing Corruption in the Manufacture, Allocation and Distribution of Vaccines.* https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/COVID-19/Policy_paper_on_COVID-19_vaccines_and_corruption_risks.pdf

Wang, H., Paulson, K.R. et al. (2022). Estimating excess mortality due to the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic analysis of COVID-19-related mortality, 2020-21. *The Lancet.* Vol 399 (10334), pp 1513-1536. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02796-3

World Health Organisation. (2019). *Poliomyletis*. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/poliomyelitis

World Population Review. (2022a). *War Torn Countries 2022*. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/war-torn-countries

World Population Review. (2022b). *Refugees by Country 2022*. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/refugees-by-country

Worldometer. (2022). *Coronavirus case numbers*. https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/

Women's education and empowerment in the Philippines: A community solution

AMELYN LARO

Professor Laro is the Program Head and Fellow of the Bachelor of Science in Social Work at the Southern Philippines Agri Business and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology, Davao Occidental. She has been the Philippine delegate to international workshops and conferences in Canada, Korea, Kazakhstan, the USA, Sri Lanka and Hongkong. She is an active alum of several prestigious international organisations including the Community Solutions Program, ASIAN Gender Trainers Network Program and Voluntary Service Overseas Bahaginan.

Image: Women in the Philippines face many challenges, including discrimination at work and in school while pregnant © Carlo Gabuco / Save the Children

Abstract

The Advocacy on Women's Education and Empowerment (AWE) Project is a community action program based in the Philippines that was implemented after participation in the 2016 Community Solutions Fellowship for Global Leaders—a professional leadership development program for community leaders across the world that involves a four-month fellowship with a nonprofit organisation or local government agency in the United States. The inspiration for the AWE project was the Girls Getting Ahead in Leadership (GGAL) program of the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE) in Minnesota. The AWE project empowers young women through a series of capacity building exercises, beginning with personal self-awareness, leadership development, conflict management, peace circles and gender and human rights. This provides opportunities for female social work students and young social workers to reach their full potential as gender and human rights advocates and leaders in the Philippines. This paper aims to highlight the role of social workers in gender and human rights advocacy at the local and international level, details the experiences, lessons and challenges of running a project which builds the capacity of young women, and promotes the role of higher educational institutions in building the skills and competence of future leaders.

Leadership relevance

Social workers are natural leaders in the field of humanitarian work. There are many social workers who are highly visible in times of disaster as camp counselors, extending relief services and psychosocial interventions to individuals, groups or communities. The values of service, human rights and advocacy are all essential elements of effective social work practice. Moreover, the profession adheres to notions of human dignity, social justice and humanitarian leadership. It is expected that social workers will take leadership responsibility because as professionals their primary aim is to create change at a micro or macro level, and they can be strong advocates for making positive changes in society.

Introduction

An inclusive and gender-equitable education contributes significantly to sustainable development and should be a part of every higher educational institution. By promoting an inclusive, just and equitable world, all women, men and especially girls will lead empowered and dignified lives (UNESCO, 2018). A study on higher education for women in Asia revealed that "co-ed institutions should also work toward gender equity, including promoting leadership opportunities for female students", and that by doing so, there will be possibilities for change in the social, political and economic potentials of the next generation of women (Ostrom & Rao, 2020).

Yet despite several international and national policies adopted by the Philippine government to address gender and human rights, there are still continuous violations of human rights and abuses against women in the country.

Despite several international and national policies adopted by the Philippine government to address gender and human rights, there are still continuous violations of human rights and abuses against women.

Academic institutions play a vital role in addressing gender disparity and in 2015 the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines mandated the establishment of policies and guidelines on Gender and Development (GAD), a development perspective that recognises the equal status and situation of women and men in society (Albaldein, 2016). This emphasised the country's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BfPA), putting much significance on gender awareness, gender sensitivity and the institutionalisation of gender policies and standards in higher education institutions (HEIs). The mandate recommended that higher educational institutions offer support to academics who promote gender equality and women's human rights (Pulmano, 2016) and that lack of understanding about basic individual human rights and the lack of necessary skills to promote these rights must be addressed by higher educational institutions.

The Holy Cross of Davao College is a Catholic higher education institution founded by the Religious Order of the Virgin Mary Sister in 1951. The college offers a Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW), which is envisioned to play a key role in the formation of competent, service-oriented, highly committed, principled and productive citizens through instruction,

research and community extension. The BSSW program undertakes community extension services that foster self-reliant, empowered, sustainable and gender responsive communities. Through the years, the BSSW program has initiated several activities which promoted gender sensitivity in the campus, including foras on Gender and Peace-building and Human Rights and Disasters, as well as a 'Colors for Peace' art exhibition by women artists from Mindanao.

The BSSW program adheres to the new global definition of social work agreed upon by the International Association of Social Workers General Assembly in July 2014, which defines social work as "a practice-based profession and as an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work" (IFSW, 2014).

It is within this framework that the AWE (Advocacy on Women's Education and Empowerment) project was launched as part of the SWIP (Social Work Innovative Projects) of the BSSW Program in 2017. The project was proposed by myself, Professor Amelyn L. Laro, a social work faculty member at the Holy Cross of Davao College, after my placement as a Community Solutions Program Fellow under the US State Department Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs for Gender and Human Rights. The fellowship required participating fellows to extend their knowledge and expertise to their own organisations upon returning to their home countries.

The AWE project was conceptualised based on education, gender and human rights concerns in the Philippines. The vision of the project was to provide opportunities for personal and professional development for young Filipino women who were studying to become social workers. The project also created a 'Continuing Professional Education' program for new social workers in Mindanao in partnership with the Social Welfare Learning Network of the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Region XI. The end goal of this program was to build a core group of young women leaders and advocates in Mindanao.

The AWE project was conceptualised based on education, gender and human rights concerns in the Philippines.

This paper aims to describe the impact of the AWE Project after its one-year implementation by reviewing reports submitted by the field instruction students who implemented and documented the sessions conducted

from January to December 2017. Specifically, this study focused on the following:

1. Highlighting the role of social workers in gender and human rights advocacy at the local and international level.

2. Sharing experiences of running a project which builds the capacity of young women leaders, and understanding the lessons and challenges that were encountered.

3. Promoting the role of higher educational institutions in building the skills and competencies of future leaders.

This paper also focuses on the interlinkages between social work and humanitarianism and how the AWE project has worked to build the potential of female social work students and young social workers to become more responsive to the needs of their clients in times of displacement and disaster. During disasters, women and girls in particular are badly impacted, leaving them more vulnerable. Synoba (2020, p. 190) mentions that there is an urgent need to use the knowledge and skills of social workers in the provision of psychological and social support to victims of disaster while delivering humanitarian assistance. Future social workers must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to also function as humanitarian workers and AWE project participants understood that in preparing themselves for this profession that they will also take leadership during times of disaster.

Implementation of the AWE project

The AWE project was funded by the Holy Cross of Davao College Bachelor of Science in Social Work Community Extension Program and implemented from January to December 2017. The project was split into two tracks—AWE for female student leaders and AWE for female social workers. The project was also partly supported by the Department of Social Welfare and Development Social Welfare Learning Network Region XI and operated in collaboration with the National Association of Social Workers Inc.

As the Community Extension focal person of the college, I was in charge of the operation of the project, from the conceptualisation and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. The BSSW Program Head supervised the implementation and smooth operation of the project. Prior to the implementation, a workshop was conducted to forge partnerships with other social work faculties,

and internal and external stakeholders. Internal partners included students, teachers, and other members of the extended college community. External partners were barangay officials, Agency Field Supervisors and other agencies that extended their technical and financial assistance. The Fourth Year Field Instruction Interns were chosen through the community extension services (CES) program of the college and were directly assigned as session facilitators and put in charge of documentation and reporting.

The AWE learning sessions aimed to help the participants in several ways. Firstly, to develop and enhance basic skills in advocacy, communication, leadership and conflict management. Secondly, to promote a deeper understanding about human rights and gender-related concepts and issues. Thirdly, to learn how to prepare and implement Community/Agency Advocacy Plans (CAPs), in which they would address topics on gender and human rights. Lastly, to organise a pool of advocates for gender and human rights. There were several speakers invited to share their knowledge and expertise on each topic, usually coming from the Social Welfare Learning Network of the Department of Social Welfare and Development Region XI.

The project was divided into two different tracks—young women professionals and female student leaders. The first cohort included 15 young registered social workers with a track record in leadership who were highly recommended by their Head Agency or Agency Field Instructors. They were chosen based on their involvement with women and children and their strong interest in improving their knowledge on advocacy, leadership, communication, and conflict resolution. They were required to submit a CAP as part of their return service to their own organisation.

The second track involved training and workshops for female student leaders enrolled in Community Education and Training (Service Learning) courses. These social work students were from Muslim, Christian and Indigenous groups. They attended a series of learning sessions on advocacy, leadership, communication, conflict resolution, gender and human rights. After the sessions they were required to adopt a partner community where they conducted their advocacy as part of the Service Learning Component. Once in their chosen community, they disseminated the concepts they learned from the training and workshops. After this activity, the students were required to submit a reflection paper and activity completion report and were also invited to be part of a pool of resource trainers for gender and human rights and other topics in the college.

Lessons and challenges

The role of social workers in gender and human rights advocacy

Mohamed (2020) remarks that "the social work profession shares a close relationship with human rights because it adheres to values such as respect, dignity, and self-determination—values that are strongly embedded in the code of ethics for all practitioners", while Doninelli (2011) states that, "social workers have advocated for gender equality and participated in struggles for social change as individuals active in the women's movement, [and as] development workers tackling structural inequalities". However, in the Philippines only a few social workers fully understand that social workers are also gender and human rights workers.

In the Philippines only a few social workers fully understand that social workers are also gender and human rights workers.

Even though one study on abuse of women and children in the Philippines reported that 75% of abuse was perpetrated by husbands and live-in partners (Chez, et al, 2002), and another reports that "one in four Filipino women aged 15-49 has experienced physical, emotional or sexual violence by their husband or partner" (PCW, 2017), the social work curriculum has limited in-depth discussions or studies about human rights education. There are few social work educators with the knowledge of or expertise on the integration of gender and human rights.

The 2017 study also discussed the 'culture of silence' surrounding violence against women, stating that "many of the victims are ashamed to relate their experiences while others tend to dismiss their ordeal as a result of their lack of faith in the country's justice system caused by frustrations over the lack of results in filing complaints" (PCW, 2017). Girls are systematically disadvantaged across the South Asian region because of structural inequalities and low social status (UNICEF Report). This shows how essential it is for new social workers to fully grasp the concept of human and gender rights before they can teach empowerment to their clients. Social workers must learn that the essence of social work is a fundamental belief in human worth and dignity.

There are also close connections between social work, gender and humanitarianism and the potential for social workers in the Philippines to work more effectively during times of displacement and disaster, especially in relation to vulnerable women and girls. One study

conducted in 2007 by the London School of Economics states that out of 141 countries from "1981 to 2002, natural disasters and their subsequent impact, on average, killed more women than men or killed women at an earlier age than men related to women's lower socio-economic status" (Neumayer & Plümper, 2007, cited in Patel, 2019). In 2015, Pittman et al. noted that advanced social workers are uniquely prepared for international relief and development leadership careers, but in reality the social work curriculum is lacking career development plans that connect the skills of social work to the international relief and development job market.

It was at this intersection between relief and development, social work, and gender and human rights that the AWE project operated—building capacity to augment the needs of humanitarian relief agencies and better prepare social workers for the demands of disaster contexts.

It was at this intersection between relief and development, social work, and gender and human rights that the AWE project operated.

In one of the AWE workshops, the participants were instructed to cite examples from their region, city, or area where women's issues have been marginalised by segregating them through special legislations, administrative departments or agencies. Then they were asked to think of some of the ways in which they observed that women in the country experienced conflict between the universality of human rights and cultural and religious traditions. These young social workers identified various concerns, including issues of access to education among Indigenous women, and early, forced and arranged marriages among young girls.

In several group activities, the participants expressed that termination of employment due to pregnancy in school and work settings was still a prevalent concern. They encountered cases of domestic violence and elaborated on issues around religious and cultural practices that are not responsive to the needs of women, including lack of access to basic health services in poor and rural communities.

Another group of participants, mostly from Non-Government Organisations, identified prevalent issues encountered by women in their agencies. One stated that women's qualifications were sometimes questioned. Another participant said that she experienced a lack of due process in her case against her employer, after her employment was terminated without notice after she fell pregnant out of wedlock. Many participants also

mentioned the stereotypical depiction of women in advertisements and the media.

A lack of education for young women from Indigenous groups remains a problem. Participants from Indigenous backgrounds expressed how cultural practices around early and arranged marriages affect the dreams and aspirations of young girls. Some of the women from Indigenous sectors were not able to access basic health services. There are continuous problems of "domestic and gender violence [that] manifest differently across communities: prevalence and incidence rates, attitudes to domestic violence and help-seeking, culturally rooted types of abuses, and traditional norms for women and men, vary from one culture to another" (Asia Pacific Institute, 2018).

Participants from Indigenous backgrounds expressed how cultural practices around early and arranged marriages affect the dreams and aspirations of young girls.

A group of participants representing local government units identified the following issues. First was the termination of female employees due to pregnancy in school settings and private companies. Second was the lack of recognition of the Solo Parent ID which provides benefits to single mothers. Third was that despite being the family breadwinner, some women are still dependent on their husbands in terms of decision-making in their own homes. These issues emphasise that there are "other dimensions of inequality which cover freedom, personhood, dignity, mobility, autonomy, choice and options, space to express ideas and orientations, rights and access, decision-making capacities in relation to the allocation of resources, and the ability to control one's own body and life choices. Many of these human rights and choices are denied to women even in developed countries" (UNDP, 2016).

The participants also looked into the impact of disaster on women and highlighted several challenges. Many observed that there were no gender sensitive comfort rooms for women in most areas during disasters. There are also few or limited rooms in the evacuation areas intended for breastfeeding mothers. These concerns are supported by studies that have found that "disasters have had an impact on the lives of women all around the world. Generally, women are looked at in disasters only as victims despite the fact that the majority of victims in disasters are women and children" (Gokhale, 2008).

Several young social workers who had handled cases during disasters said they have also found gender issues in camp management for Internally Displaced Persons. This reiterates that "the inclusion of gender-mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is an important development. It signals a broad realisation that both gender-informed analysis of disaster impacts and the preparation of gender-responsive actions are critical to reducing disaster risk for all members of society" (Howe, 2019). It is also interesting to note that during the AWE workshops there were discussions on providing protection to women during disaster. Most agreed that limited opportunities for stress debriefing are extended to women victims of disaster. "Pre-existing, structural gender inequalities mean that disasters affect women and girls in different ways than they affect boys and men. The vulnerability of females increases when they are in a lower socioeconomic group, particularly in the Global South" (Disaster Philanthropy, 2020).

During the AWE sessions participants mentioned that there is no clear action on these existing issues in their respective agencies. One participant said that "as a social worker we cannot do anything and we feel helpless also because this is already part of the norms in our existing agencies". Another participant expressed that she realised that there are still many existing issues around gender and human rights, even when policies and programs for gender are in place. Furthermore, one participant stated that there are authorities who overuse their power and abuse the rights of women in her agency.

By providing a venue where these young professionals could express their experiences and views about issues on gender and human rights they were able to surface their roles and functions.

The AWE sessions on gender and human rights clearly showed that there are still existing issues for women in different fields in both private and public agencies. Some organisations explicitly showed their biases against women through a lack of sensitivity to women's needs. The participants recommended that there should be more sessions on gender sensitivity. In addition, they advocated for strict implementation of rules and regulations for gender and development. Social workers also play an important role in highlighting these issues as they are the direct contact of clients in the field. They are the ones who extend services and are on the frontline of addressing the needs of women and children

in the community. By providing a venue where these young professionals could express their experiences and views about issues on gender and human rights they were able to surface their roles and functions. They also enumerated some of the steps that they will take to be able to address these concerns. By revisiting the global definition of social work and also some policies and mandates on gender, these young social workers have learned more about their crucial role in society and appreciated the importance of their profession.

Lessons and challenges from building the capacity of young women leaders

As a small program in a small college there are many lessons we can draw on when considering implementing community extension services projects. Our program had meagre resources for big activities such as the AWE project, however we mobilised various resources in our college in order to manage—especially by tapping the potential of our Field Instruction students to serve as co-facilitators and direct implementers of the project. We have learned how to work with different stakeholders in the campus and we also used the knowledge and financial assistance of the Department of Social Welfare and Development Region XI Learning Network. Furthermore, we were assisted by the National Association of Social Work in Education Inc.

Our learnings have proven invaluable and have increased both our understanding of extension work and acquitted the social responsibility and knowledge transfer required to ensure that this extension work improved lives in the community, as per Mojares' definition (2015). As Stoeker (2014) says, "without good research to understand how on-the-ground Extension educators are interacting with service-learners, and want to interact with them, it will be very difficult to advance the practice of higher education service-learning with Extension".

We have also learned how to involve our Field Instruction Students in the whole process of project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. We have learned the value of co-facilitating with our students and empowering them through ownership of the results of the project. According to our participants, their participation in the AWE sessions have helped them become more effective advocates. As facilitators, we were impressed by their interest in deep learning about issues around gender, peace, conflict resolution and human rights in the context of Mindanao. Since our participants came from multicultural backgrounds (Indigenous, Christian and Muslim), they also brought with them multiple perspectives.

The AWE project was an opportunity to bring everyone together to discuss and debate about issues and problems in society through a method called the 'Circle of Peace'. AWE participants taught us to open a space for diversity, difference, and tolerance, and recognise that our experiences shape our thinking and our leadership styles. At the end of the project they shared their evaluations and it was heartening and inspiring to see them turn into young leaders who can speak and clearly express what they want and what they hope for the future for themselves and for humanity. What follows are two of the more notable pieces of feedback from the AWE participants:

> "I don't really have the courage to speak in a crowd until I joined this project. AWE project has provided various activities which really helps me to boost my confidence and since I am currently the Designated Section Head in my work. AWE Workshop has imparted in me… techniques and teaching [that] has never gone in my mind".

> "The project acknowledges the strength and capabilities of being woman. [Being involved] in this kind of advocacy is such an opportunity and privilege to learn new knowledge. [It provides the opportunity to] breakthrough that we can use not just inside this institution but … [in] the communities".

The role of higher educational institutions in building the skills and competencies of future leaders

The *Philippine Higher Education* Act of 1994 emphasised that the state shall ensure the development of responsible and effective leadership. A higher educational institution "is one of the most important means of empowering women with knowledge, skills and self-confidence" (Sharma & Sharma, 2021), which is essential for leadership development and moulding future humanitarians. Since 2010, the Commission on Higher Education in the Philippines has been pushing to mainstream the gender and development agenda. The Holy Cross of Davao College does not have a designated GAD office because unlike state colleges and universities the College does not have regular budget for GAD-related activities. However, the Bachelor of Science and Social Work Program Community Extension Services implemented GAD-related activities since gender and human rights concepts are highly integrated in the social work profession.

AWE created a milestone for a new generation of female leadership and women who know and understand their roles in society.

AWE created a pool of young women alumni and enabled them to become advocates for gender and human rights.

AWE also organised a circle of young female leaders sharing power and energy to build a more just, peaceful and humane society. AWE created a milestone for a new generation of female leadership and women who know and understand their roles in society. AWE supported women who are advocates of gender equality and human rights. As young social workers they are powerful agents of social change and transformation and have helped proved the adage: 'educate a woman, educate humanity'.

Conclusion

There should be more community extension projects focusing on building leadership and the capacity of young women. This study calls for the higher educational institutions' community extension programs to implement such projects and intensify their advocacy on gender and human rights as a backbone of their teaching. There is a need to encourage the active involvement of students, faculty and even non-teaching personnel to include GAD in their agendas and provide materials and human resources for projects allocated by colleges for GAD initiatives. Higher educational institutions should promote gender sensitivity and gender responsiveness in their curriculum, instruction, research and extension programs. There is also a need to conduct more innovative GAD projects and activities that promote the humanitarian aspect of social work to better serve local communities in times of need.

References

Acebes-Escobal, B.C., Nerida, M.C., Chez, R.A. (2002) Abuse of women and children in a Philippine community. *Int J Gynaecol Obstet*. 76(2):213-7. doi: 10.1016/s0020-7292(01)00551-3.

Asia Pacific Institute on Gender Violence. (2018). *Domestic and Sexual Violence in Filipino Communities.* https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/dvfactsheet-filipino/

Asian Development Bank. (2013). *Gender Equality in the Labor Market in the Philippines.* https://think-asia.org/bitstream/handle/11540/796/gender-equality-labor-market-philippines.pdf?sequence=1

Banun, A. (2016). *Human development, disparity and vulnerability: women in South Asia* (2016 UNDP Human Development Report Background Paper). United Nations Development Programme. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/latest_edited_banu_template_gl_1_august.pdf

Bardauskiene, A. (2018). *Mckinsey Global Institute Report the Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Asia.* https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-asia-pacific

Commission on Higher Education. (2015) *Memorandum Circular Order 1 Series of 2015.* https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CMO-no.-01-s.-2015.pdf

Department of Budget and Management-National Economic Development Authority-NCRFW. (2004) *Joint Circular.* JC 2012-01.pdf (dbm.gov.ph)

Department of Health. (2020). *What is Violence Against Women (VAW)?* https://www.doh.gov.ph/node/1414

Disaster Philanthropy. (2020). *Race and Intersectional Equity Statement.* https://disasterphilanthropy.org/about/race-intersectional-equity-statement/

Dominelli, Lena. (2011). Claiming Women's Places in the World: Social Workers' Roles in Eradicating Gender Inequalities Globally, in Lynne M. Healy, and Rosemary J. Link (eds), *Handbook of International Social Work: Human Rights, Development, and the Global Profession.* https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195333619.003.0009

Howe, B. (2019). *A gender-responsive approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning in the agriculture sector Guidance for supporting rural women and men to build resilience in the face of disasters.* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6531e.pdf

International Federation of Social Work. (2014). *Global Definition of Social Work.* https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/).

Medina, B. (2019). *Community Engagement of State Universities and Colleges in The Philippines: Towards Socially and Culturally Responsible Research and Extension Initiatives.* International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications. 3(4): 20-25. http://www.ijarp.org/published-research-papers/apr2019/Community-Engagement-Of-State-Universities-And-Colleges-In-The-Philippines-Towards-Socially-And-Culturally-Responsible-Research-And-Extension-Initiatives.pdf

Mohammed, I. (2020). Human Rights and Social Work Values. *The New Social Worker.* https://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/practice/human-rights-and-social-work-values/

Mojares, J. & Baconguis, R. (2015). Extension Functions of Higher Educational Institutions. *USM R&D Journal.* 23. 13-26.

Olson-Strom, S., Rao, N. (2020). Higher Education for Women in Asia. In: Sanger, C., Gleason, N. (eds) *Diversity and Inclusion in Global Higher Education.* Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1628-3_10

Patel, A. (2019). Disaster Management & Women: Perspectives and Practices. *Odisha Review:* 138-142. http://magazines.odisha.gov.in/Orissareview/2019/Jun-July/engpdf/Disaster-Management-%20Women-138-142.pdf

Philippine Commission on Women. (2020). *Violence Against Women.* https://pcw.gov.ph/violence-against-women/

Pittman, S., Sugawara, C.L., Rodgers, M.E., & Bediako, A. (2015). Social Workers in International Relief and Development: A Natural Fit. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Best Practices in Global Development.* 1(1). https://knowledge.e.southern.edu/ijbpgd/vol1/iss1/3

Pulmano, R. (2016). Implementation of the Gender and Development Program of State Universities and Colleges in Region III: An Evaluation. Tarlac City Philippines. *International Journal of Education and Research.* 4(5) https://www.ijern.com/journal/2016/May-2016/15.pdf

Sharma, P. & Sharma, M. (2021). Role of Higher Education in Women Empowerment. *Psychology and Education Journal* 58(2): 9056 – 9062.

Stoeker, S. (2010). *Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Strengthening Development Cooperation.* UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination. https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/10-50143_(e)_(desa)dialogues_ecosoc_achieving_gender_equality_women_empowerment.pdf

Strachan, G., Adikaram, A., & Kailasapathy, P. (2015). Gender (In)Equality in South Asia: Problems, Prospects and Pathways. *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management.* 2. 1-11. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277950280_Gender_InEquality_in_South_Asia_Problems_Prospects_and_Pathways

UNICEF. (2020). *Gender equality.* https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/gender-equality

UNESCO. (2014). *Monitoring of the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (8th Consultation).* https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227859

Vasudha, G. (2008). *Role of Women in Disaster Management: An Analytical Study with Reference to Indian Society.* The 14th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering. https://www.iitk.ac.in/nicee/wcee/article/14_10-0049.PDF

The relationship between aid and neo-colonialism in the aid industry

CARLA VITANTONIO

Feminist, humanitarian professional and author Carla Vitantonio works as the Country Representative for an international NGO in Cuba. Over the last 10 years she has worked with governmental and non-governmental organisations in North Korea, China, Myanmar, Thailand and Cuba. She has written two books on the impact of patriarchy and postcolonialism on aid.

Image: Nityananda, 5, uses slate and chalk to write words in Nepali using an alphabet card as part of a project to support children to continue learning from home during the pandemic in Nepal © Save the Children

Abstract

Based both on research and on direct field experience, this article analyses the use of language as a tool of power within the aid industry. First, it underlines the deep relation between languages and cultures (or subcultures), then it presents historic examples on how language was purposefully used by colonisers to achieve dominance and, at times, to destroy pre-existing local practices. It then discusses more recent cases of language use by dominant groups, that stem from patriarchal and postcolonial relations. Finally, it analyses some of the practices related to language within the aid industry, showing how they mirror colonial and patriarchal beliefs, and suggests possible alternatives.

Leadership relevance

The historical link between the aid industry and neo-colonialism is the subject of an increasing amount of analysis. Numerous actors are requesting a shift of perspective and a change of paradigm, and humanitarian leaders must not only be prepared to answer, but take a stand, because from this change the new face of aid will emerge. Language is a tool, and as such it can be used for different purposes. In our sector, language is an especially relevant tool, as actors coming from different contexts, countries and cultures interact daily. For this reason, it is paramount that humanitarian leaders gain awareness on the topic and advocate for a use of language that challenges colonial and patriarchal norms. This article gives a point of view and provides some possible solutions for a change.

The views and the opinions expressed in this article represent those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of any of the organisations the author is affiliated with. This paper is an extended version of a shorter piece published by the [Development Policy Centre](#).

Background

Throughout our work on patriarchy, power and privilege, we intersectional feminists learn that the first step towards change is the acknowledgement and recognition of our own power and our own privilege (Batliwala, 2019). Only through this process can we analyse with lucidity the situation we are embedded in, and eventually propose strategies that can challenge the status quo. We also learn that most of the time there is no magnificent strategy in front of us, no sudden intuition, no eureka moment, but a series of small— and sometimes apparently meaningless—steps that could, together, solidly build the change. Following this encouraging insight, I propose this short article which brings attention to language as a tool of power in the aid industry. This idea is carved into my wider study on the link between international aid and neo-colonialism, and my experience as an international aid worker.

I will first provide some examples of how language around the world was used by colonising actors and the patriarchy to exert power and oppression. I will then bring this statement to the world of international aid through a few cases, and finally I will mention some actions that could challenge this practice and therefore contribute to break the neo-colonial pattern that too often lies below aid dynamics and practices. As Bourdieu (1977) reflects:

> "Language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power. A person speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished. Hence the full definition of competence as the right to speech, i.e. to the legitimate language, the authorised language which is also the language of authority. Competence implies the power to impose reception".

Language as a tool of power and oppression in history

As a young humanitarian professional, I spent five years of my life in the Korean peninsula. In South Korea (Republic of Korea or ROK) and North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea or DPRK),[1] I had the pleasure to spend time with senior citizens who had a direct memory of the colonial experience. The Japanese occupation of Korea, which started in 1905, was still alive in those minds, and so was the difficult, violent, and debated liberation process, which led to the still existing division of Korea. All the people I met still recalled, among other things, how brutal it was to

be obliged to renounce their native language—Korean— in official realms, in favour of Japanese. In fact, during the 40 years of occupation of the Korean peninsula, the Japanese rulers implemented a meticulous plan for the progressive substitution of the Korean language with Japanese. Not only was every official conversation and document to be in Japanese, but all existing Korean printed material was destroyed. Teaching Korean folk songs, history and geography was forbidden in schools, and all Koreans were strongly invited to choose a Japanese name. The objective of the coloniser was clear: to destroy the idea of a Korean ethnicity and to make Koreans good subjects for the emperor. In the words of Hozumi Yatsuka (as cited in Shinomiya Burton, 1994, p. 35), who served as an advisor in the drafting of the First Korean Education Order[2], "Education in Korea can be considered a success if it simply and first of all plants the idea of respect for the Emperor; secondly, fosters the idea of maintaining order and sticking to the rules; and finally, imparts the knowledge and skills necessary in daily life and for the raising of one's family". The idea of language as a powerful tool for submission was patently very clear to the conquerors. And in fact, Korean language soon turned out to be the secret language of several insurrections that took place during colonial times. The pain and the outrage felt by the people I met— otherwise peaceful grandparents of my Korean friends and colleagues—was often still so strong and alive that they were startled and concerned by the fascination that young Koreans (especially South Koreans) felt and feel for Japan and its language. Japanese was, for those survivors, still the language of colonisers, those colonisers who had tried to systematically destroy part of their identity.

All the people I met still recalled, among other things, how brutal it was to be obliged to renounce their native language—Korean... in favour of Japanese.

Observing the different development of the Korean language between the North and the South was also an eye opener for me. The Southern part of the Peninsula has lived in cohabitation with US culture and people for 60 years—there are about 30,000 US soldiers in ROK, many living there with families and children (USFK, 2022). ROK has experienced the long lasting economic and cultural support plan enforced by the US in Korea, which meant access to US mass production, scholarships to US universities, cultural exchanges, financial joint ventures and much more. As an obvious consequence,

---

[1] The official and neutral names of the two Koreas are DPRK and ROK. Some Koreans find the labels 'South Korea' and 'North Korea' offensive, as it implicitly recognises a division that, to all effects, was never agreed upon. However, for the sake of readability, in this article I will use both terms.

[2] The Korean Education Order was promulgated by the Japanese in 1911. It was the first compendium of norms aimed at imposing Japanese language and culture in Korea.

the Korean language in South Korea has changed, with many objects and concepts named after the English word. Examples include 볼펜 *bolpen* (ballpen), 에어컨 *eeokeon* (air conditioning), and even more interestingly, 슈퍼마켓 *syupeomaket* (supermarket), usually pronounced in its koreanised short version 슈퍼 (super), which sounds roughly like *syupeo*.[3]

In DPRK, where the US presence in the South was interpreted as a disguised colonisation bringing corruption and decadence to the original Korean customs, language was kept 'pure', and a Korean word was used for each one of the same concepts. The modification—in South Korea—of the language in favour of the American guests, was and is seen in the DPRK (and to be honest, in some parts of ROK society too) as a proof of the invasive nature of the US presence.

The direct experience I gained in the two parts of Korea was for me the first proof of the connection between language and power. Language is a tool, and as a tool it can be used in many different ways. Governments and international stakeholders play an important role in choosing how to use such a tool.

The countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that were, some five centuries ago, conquered by the Spanish Empire, further clarifies the power of language in international relations (including coercive occupation and colonisation).

The case of all the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that were, some five centuries ago, conquered by the Spanish Empire, further clarifies the power of language in international relations (including coercive occupation and colonisation). The brutality of the Spanish colony and the destruction of indigenous cultures does not need to be proven in this essay. It is a fact that nowadays the official language in all these countries is Spanish. Yet it is a Spanish language that developed and flourished, whose accents and pronunciation changed because of the influence of indigenous cultures and the habits of local phonatory organs, a Spanish language that got richer and richer with inputs from the vocabulary of native populations and of the many migrations that followed (Wong García, 2020). Still, it might surprise some to know that the institution regulating the language is the Real Academia Española (RAE), which has its main centre in continental Spain. Despite more than two centuries of successful

liberation movements, the role and attitude of the RAE towards the development of language in America did not change between the Literary Spanish Latin American Congress held in Madrid in 1892, and when these attitudes were reinforced one century later, at the congress held by the RAE and the Cervantes Institute[4] in 1992. It's worth mentioning that the congresses took place on the anniversary of the arrival of Cristoforo Colombo to America, which was and is celebrated as a milestone for the Spanish empire even well after its dissolution (Miranda, 1994).

On both these occasions, the use of Spanish in America was clearly interpreted as a way to spread civilization against 'barbarity' (Vega Rey y Falcó, 1992, in Vasquez, 2008), and the only authority in terms of legitimacy was declared to be the RAE, with its newly created local offices—still existing in the 21st century. The main task of the RAE was and is to keep the integrity of Spanish, in order to avoid with language what had happened with the Spanish empire, that is to say its destruction and fractioning (Carrasco Labadia, 1992, in Vasquez, 2008).

A further proof of the colonial and patriarchal attitude of the RAE is its reaction towards the request of many Spanish speaking people and scholars to introduce more inclusive variants into the language, i.e., a 'neutral form' that could be equivalent to the English 'they' in order to allow persons identifying as non-binary to feel recognised and included. When asked to deliberate, the RAE wiped the topic away saying that the masculine should encompass all genders and that one should not confuse grammar with machismo (RAE, 2020).

It would take a whole other article to at least mention all the painful contradictions and power dynamics that lie beneath the use of *Castellano* in Spain's former colonies. Far more thorough research would be needed to analyse how and why the way towards recognition of the atrocities of the Spanish colonisers is still very distant. It would be challenging, as it should take into consideration several factors, including the fact that Castellano, once the language of the occupiers and of the wealthy, became, in more recent times in Northern America, the language of the poor, the exploited, the emarginated—that is to say, the language of the Latino communities in the United States of America. It would be challenging because due to the brutality of the Spanish colonisers in Latin America and the Caribbean, little is left of many indigenous cultures, and *Castellano* is today the native language of the vast majority of people in this part of the world. In Cuba for example, *Castellano* is the one and only official language, and basically all the

---

population express themselves in this language, with the exception of groups using Haitian creole, spoken by a minority of descendants from Haiti, and Lucumí, the main language spoken in the practice of the Yoruba religion.[5]

Language as a tool of power in the aid industry

In this essay though, I am focusing on the use of language as a tool of power in the field of international aid, and I will therefore move on to mention some of the current practices that I consider deserving of observation and analysis in a logic of decolonisation. This is not in order to denounce, but because, as a writer and international aid professional, I consider that changing the way we use language to be an interesting and relatively easy way to trigger a change in some of the many colonial practices still in place in the sector. It is not my job to judge, but I feel I must observe and from experience and practice, propose possible solutions and alternatives.

Today, the fight for the rights of non-binary people is central in many places of the world. In several countries of the Global North, it is centred on the need to adapt language to the existence of people who do not identify themselves with the binary dichotomy he/she. As European languages are also spoken in several countries of the Global South, this becomes a global trend, which challenges the position of organisations working in aid. Moreover, an increasing number of studies link the binary interpretation of gender to colonialism, patriarchy, and Eurocentrism (Menon-Sen, 2021).

I am conscious that for some this could seem a minor problem, but it is not. Many know that people speaking Eskimo language have about 15 lexemes referring to what in English is simply known as *snow* (Woodbury, 1991). This means that where English speaking people simply see snow, others can see a full variety of different objects, and will therefore relate with this object in a different way, according to what they see. People speaking Eskimo experience snow differently and can refer to it differently. Would we dare tell them that they can choose just two of these lexemes as a set, and include all the others in one or the other, using an approximate criterion? I don't think we would, but it is what many suggest for the question of gender: according to some, LGBTQIA+ people should include themselves in one or the other category—male and female—according to what they feel the closest.

Besides the implicit violence of such a statement, one must recognise that, from a legal perspective, it is difficult to be a rights holder if there is not even a word that can identify us. Moreover, history has told us that when rights are limited to certain categories, they are not rights, but privileges. One should not underestimate the fact that, from the perspective of those who hold power, recognising a category means giving this category rights and duties, and that this is possibly one of the knots of the resistance for those who do not accept a moulding of language to make it more inclusive.

But if this comparison still looks too far away from international assistance, I will provide a different one. As of today, United Nations (UN) and international non-government organisations' (INGO) offices, as well as bilateral governmental offices, are places where the language of the country where these organisations work finds little space (and in many cases no space at all).

___

As of today, United Nations and international non-government organisations' offices, as well as bilateral governmental offices, are places where the language of the country where these organisations work finds little space (and in many cases no space at all).

___

More and more often, especially after the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, we speak about localisation. However, languages from the Global North, especially English and French, have become (for obvious reasons linked to the colonisation of Africa and Asia), the Esperanto[6] of our sector—with one big difference. While Esperanto was originally built to unify the people of the world and destroy cultural barriers, the use of English and French divides and deepens the gap. It is basically impossible to work in the sector if we don't master at least one of these languages. In international recruitment processes, the language spoken by donors is 'a must', while proficiency of the local language is usually considered 'an asset'.

___

[5] Some researchers also mention basins of Mandarin, English, Catalan, and other languages derived from minority African cultures. I did not find any official Cuban document stating the exact lists of those languages.

[6] Esperanto is an "Artificial language constructed in 1887 by L.L. Zamenhof, a Polish oculist, and intended for use as an international second language. Zamenhof's *Fundamento de Esperanto*, published in 1905, lays down the basic principles of the language's structure and formation. Esperanto is relatively simple for Europeans to learn because its words are derived from roots commonly found in the European languages, particularly in the Romance languages. Orthography is phonetic, all words being spelled as pronounced. Grammar is simple and regular; there are characteristic word endings for nouns, adjectives, and verbs" (www.britannica.com).

Moreover, the personal experience of the author proves that most of those who master English or French with an accent typical of the Global North often show patronising and dismissive attitudes towards aid workers who speak English with a national accent, regardless of the fact that it could be their native language. I have directly witnessed Belgian colleagues complaining about the French accents of colleagues from Congo, and, even more surprisingly, about the Indian accents other colleagues have while speaking English—which is for many Indians a native language. More than once I have had to smile politely to colleagues who were joking about my "funny Italian accent *ué mammamia mafia bunga bunga*". In such an environment, local languages are secretly whispered in the corridors of international offices located in the Global South, and promptly abandoned when international staff approach.

Local languages are secretly whispered in the corridors of international offices located in the Global South, and promptly abandoned when international staff approach.

Even more concerning is the fact that most of the donors engaged in both development and the humanitarian sectors produce guidelines that are in their own language, usually a language spoken in the Global North. These guidelines are generally issued at the very last minute, they need to be applied as soon as possible (most of the time, a deep study of those documents is needed to apply for grants) and are the main point of reference for project design and implementation. Guidelines in the local language are not provided, money for translation is rarely considered among eligible costs, calls for proposals need to be answered in the donor's preferred language and NGOs (both national and international ones) are left alone to deal with the impossible task of translating into a 'neutral' language issues that are not translatable.

No language is neutral, and all language is the expression of a culture. It is therefore almost impossible to perfectly translate one concept from one language to another, especially if complex issues like the ones usually tackled by this sector are involved. Back to our example with Eskimo, to even only vaguely translate the 15 lexemes used for 'snow' we must use wordy periphrases that often miss the point, because the direct link between the signifier and the signified (semiologists would say the denotation) is broken.

The choice of one language over the other is not a neutral choice, as the story of the Japanese occupation of Korea teaches us, and it is part of an agenda setting mechanism which too often excludes, or leaves behind,

those who should be the subject of the action (we can clearly see the link with my previous example on the relation between law and recognition of inclusive pronouns). I am conscious of the many nuances of this statement. In the above-mentioned example of former Spanish colonies, for example, *Castellano* is often now the main language spoken by the population, and for this reason its use is not perceived as violent, while the use of English and French that some donors keep imposing in other countries is indeed widely considered a neo-colonial behaviour. Binary division does not apply to reality.

Actions that could challenge the current use of language

In this essay I gave various examples of how language is an important tool in the exertion of power in the colonial realm. This statement applies to the aid industry, as our sector is one of the products of colonisation and decolonisation. The deliberate choice of using the language of old and new colonisers in former colonies contributes to making the recipients of aid passive and voiceless, voiceless because even when speaking, they would not be understood. Obliging recipients to be passive is the same as not considering them as full right holders.

How can we change this?

Since the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, donors have emphasised the importance of an inclusive project cycle. As most donor guidelines stress, project *beneficiaries* (the italics are mine, I think that the word *beneficiary* itself transforms project participants into passive and voiceless objects of action) should be included in all phases of the project, including design. Some donors arrive at the point of asking about the number of participant consultations held for the creation of the project. This legitimate request is however contradicted by the examples mentioned in the previous paragraphs. I am conscious that a radical and structural change in the paradigm of the sector needs to take place, but at the same time it's difficult for this to happen all at once. There are however some actions that could bring an effective shift with no major risk (apart from the loss of a power monopoly for certain stakeholders).

One possibility would be for donors to seriously examine and foresee more flexible processes, thus relieving aid agencies from completely bearing the burden of strict financial cycles, and only issuing calls when guidelines in local languages are available. Including time for translation in the editing time, rather than adding translation to the already very long list of tasks that applicants face when entering a relationship with a donor, is something not only feasible but realistic.

There is in fact no real need to restrict funding cycles to a single fiscal year, and in general, donors have all the power to decide their own cycles. For example, the Belgian Development Cooperation (DGD) issues a strategic framework for funding every five years. A couple of months for adequate translation could easily be spared in this timeframe.

I am aware that this would be a significant undertaking for a few transitional years, but change is an essential part of international assistance, all actors would quickly adapt, and the quality of the proposals would increase.

Donors and international agencies could also start to more broadly accept documents (mainly proposals and reports) produced in local languages; this would trigger a positive effect on recruitment, as knowing the donor's language would not be so important anymore. Educated and expert people that have been excluded from the industry because they haven't mastered English or French could find their place in the sector, and with them, new forms of expertise and ownership could be introduced. Aid agencies would likely soon stop using their spaceless Esperanto or, more realistically, English and French would coexist in a non-hierarchical fashion in the offices of international agencies.

A further, quicker, and perhaps more intermediate possibility is to provide aid agencies with time and budget for appropriate translations. This would allow stakeholders to share the supposed burden of making things more accessible in the chain of international assistance (although I am convinced that accessibility and inclusion should be considered a duty by all stakeholders).

This would not sort out the power imbalance but could at least mitigate it.

But before taking any step, a deep, honest, internal analysis on methodologies, power and privilege needs to take place within the Global North's actors.

A deep, honest, internal analysis on methodologies, power and privilege needs to take place within the Global North's actors.


Language is one of the core elements that determine identity and culture, and as such it is an extremely complex matter. For this reason, the author acknowledges that there is no perfect solution to the issue of language use and abuse in the aid sector. However, as aid professionals, all stakeholders have the duty and the opportunity to search for imperfect solutions that, although precarious and fragile, could break through and open new possibilities of communication outside the colonial pattern.

References

Batliwala, S. (2019). *All about power*. Crea. https://www.creaworld.org

Bourdieu, P. (1977). The economics of linguistic exchange. *Theory and Methods*. 16(6): 645–668

Caprio, M.E. (2009). *Japanese assimilation policies in colonial Korea 1910 – 1945*. University of Washington Press

Encyclopedia Britannica. (2022). Esperanto. *Encyclopedia Britannica* https://www.britannica.com/topic/Esperanto

Instituto Cervantes. (2022). *Informacion*. https://www.cervantes.es/sobre_instituto_cervantes/informacion.htm

Menon-Sen, K. (2021). Challenging Patriarchal Binaries: Infusing Feminist Politics Into Learning Spaces. *Gender at work*. https://genderatwork.org/portfolio-item/challenging-patriarchal-binaries-infusing-feminist-politics-into-learning-spaces/

Miranda, L. (2014). *El Discurso Neocolonialista de la RAE, el Instituto Cervantes y otras Instituciones Españolas,* Lima

Rahman, A. (2022). Accent and language diversity within international aid workplaces. *Devpolicy.* https://devpolicy.org/accent-and-language-diversity-within-international-aid-workplaces-20220309/

Real Academia Española. (2021). Informe lenguaje inclusivo. https://www.rae.es/sites/default/files/Informe_lenguaje_inclusivo.pdf

Shinomiya Burton, A. (1994). *Japanese Language Planning in Korea 1905-1945*, Simon Fraser University

United States Forces Korea. (2022). https://www.usfk.mil

Vasquez, G. (2008). Spanish language, cultural legacy or political-economical project? *Revista Signos*. Buenos Aires

Wong García, E. (2020). *Para darle a la lengua* (audio podcast). https://podtail.com/en/podcast/para-darle-a-la-lengua/

Woodbury, A.C. (1991). *Counting Eskimo words for snow: A citizen's guide*. University of Texas at Austin
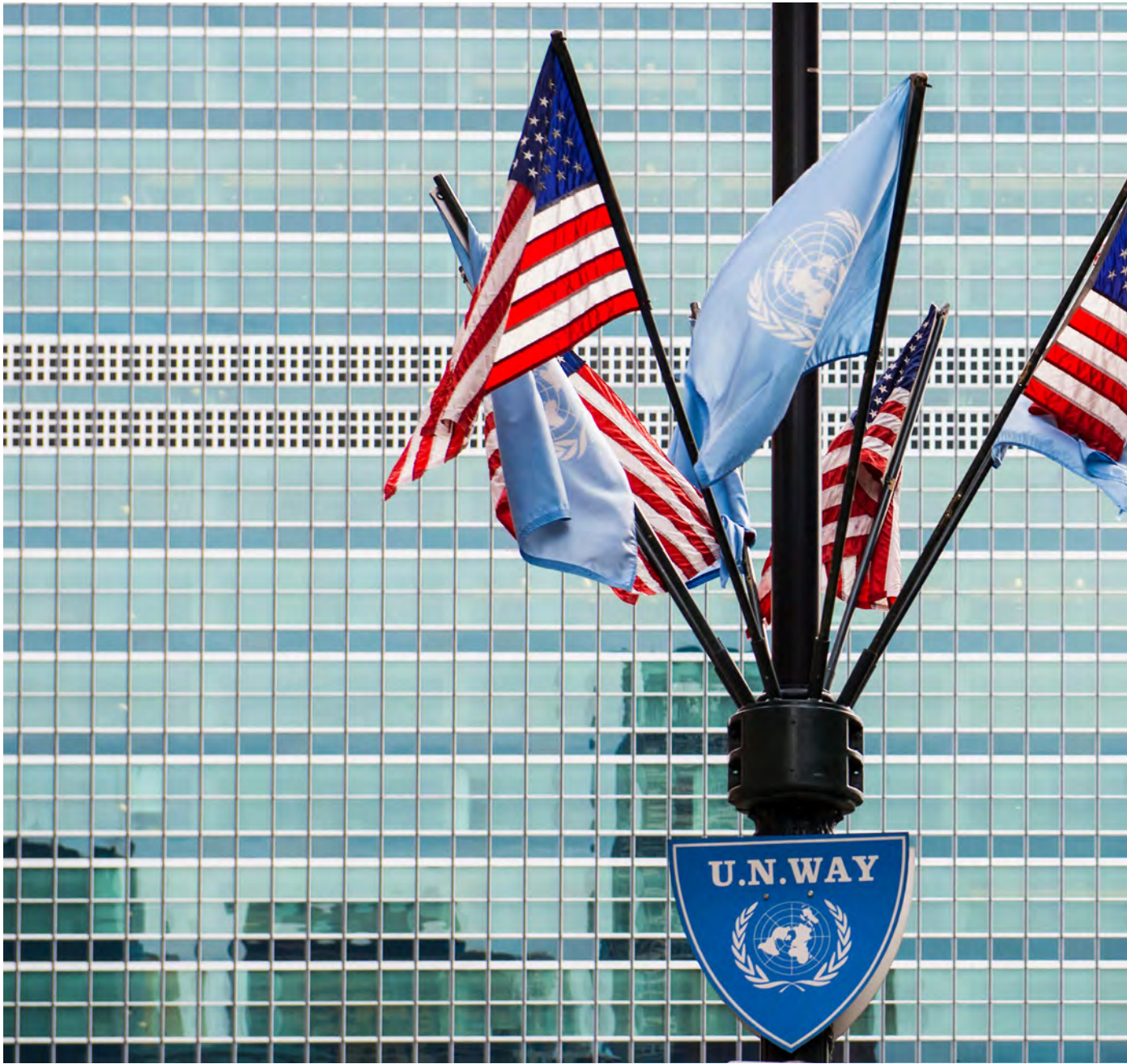
Through the looking glass: Coloniality and mirroring in localisation
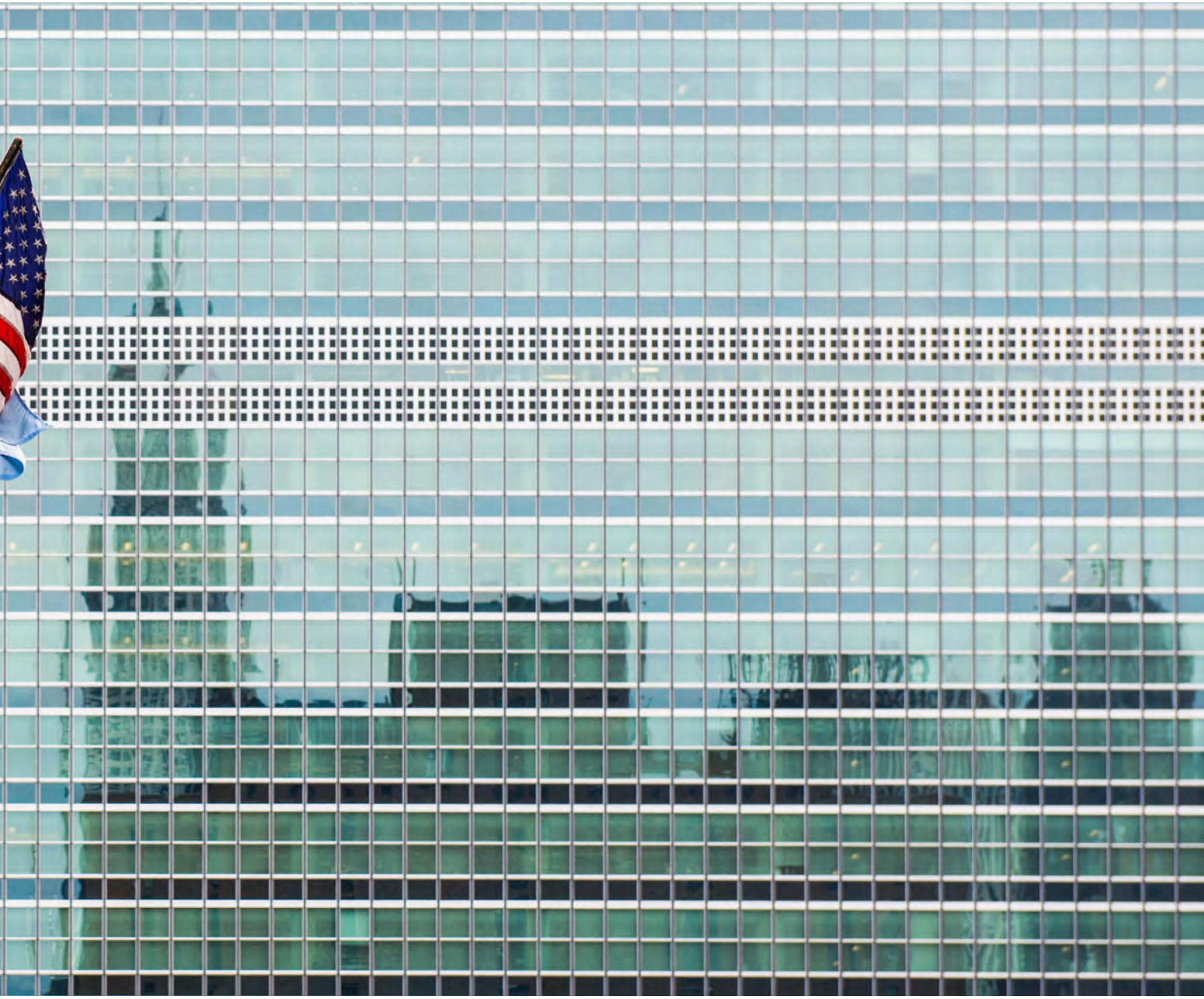
NAZANIN ZADEH-CUMMINGS

Nazanin is a Lecturer in Humanitarian Studies at Deakin University and the Associate Director of Research at the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership. She earned her PhD in 2019 from the City University of Hong Kong. She holds a joint MA in International Humanitarian Action from Ruhr-Universität Bochum/Université catholique de Louvain, and an MA (Hons) in International Relations from the University of Edinburgh. Nazanin's current research projects explore humanitarian aid in North Korea, humanitarian training and education, and transitional justice.

Image: The UN building in New York reflects the Manhattan skyline © Alamy Stock Photo

Abstract

What assumptions underpin the concept of 'localisation' as employed by the mainstream, international humanitarian sector? This paper offers a partial answer to this multi-faceted question. It first considers the meaning(s), or lack thereof, of localisation. It presents coloniality and 'mirroring' as two concepts important to understanding the limitations of localisation. It then considers locally led aid in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea), using the example of the Eugene Bell Foundation (EBF). The paper argues that assumptions around the actors involved in local response, as well as assumptions around the existence of NGOs and the normative belief that non-state actors could and should play major roles in response, demonstrate the limits of localisation.

Leadership relevance

This paper encourages humanitarian leaders, particularly those based in wealthy, resource-rich, influential countries (often with a history of colonisation), to consider the relationship between coloniality and localisation, and how assumptions around what local contexts look like or how they are structured can limit humanitarian transformation. It informs leadership by adding to the dialogue on localisation.

Introduction

It has been over six years since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul. Efforts to confront the mainstream, Western-based humanitarian sector's status quo and to shift more power to local actors predates the WHS, but the lead-up consultation, the event itself, and its outcomes enshrined 'localisation' as a major aspect of the mainstream humanitarian sector's reform agenda.

In that time, some modest gains have been made, but structures that create and perpetuate inequity, as well as fortify a top-down system, endure. Despite analysis that the COVID-19 pandemic could force the sector into change and herald a new era of locally-led international humanitarian action (Roche & Tarpey, 2020), these hopes have not translated into lasting transformative change. A key outcome of the WHS—the Grand Bargain—laid out commitments by humanitarian agencies and donor states. These included a supposed commitment to channel 25% of funding directly to local actors. In 2020, 4% of funding met this goal and in 2021, only 2% (Metcalf-Hough et al, 2022). Yet the term 'localisation' is everywhere—from humanitarian practice pieces, to blogs, mainstream news stories, press releases, academic articles, and training materials.

What assumptions underpin the concept of 'localisation' as employed by the mainstream, international humanitarian sector? This paper offers only a partial answer to this multi-faceted question. It first considers the meaning(s), or lack thereof, of localisation. It presents coloniality and 'mirroring' as two concepts important to understanding the limitations of localisation. It then considers locally led aid in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea), using the example of the Eugene Bell Foundation (EBF). The paper argues that assumptions around the actors involved in local response, as well as assumptions around the existence of NGOs and the normative belief that non-state actors could and should play major roles in response, demonstrate the limits of localisation.

I anticipate several potential reactions to this paper as it lands in readers' inboxes, loads on browsers, or otherwise ends up in the hands or on the screens of humanitarians around the world. The first is a slight groan and sigh, as the reader thinks: "Yet another paper about localisation, and yet again it's from a white author sitting behind a desk in a wealthy, coloniser state" (to save readers a Google search, the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership and Deakin University are based in Melbourne, Australia, on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people). This is a reaction intimately familiar to me, said white author, because I have—fairly or unfairly—reacted this way myself.

The second reaction I envisage is mild interest and a quick scroll, performed by a reader thinking, "Another paper on localisation—let's see if this one actually has anything interesting to say". I hope not to disappoint this reader, who I also know well because I have had this same reaction to new papers on the topic. But I must also warn them that this is a working paper, small in scope and in the infancy of its ideas, and that I welcome any feedback, critique, and reactions.

Thirdly, I imagine a reader who thinks that because those that hold power are moving at such a glacial pace to reform and change the system, not enough can be written about challenging the status quo. This, too, has been a thought of mine when I see work in this field, even though I sometimes feel as though I've heard the word localisation so many times it has become a meaningless sound.

Finally, I imagine a fourth, non-reader, who is so fed up with the endless chatter on localisation that they don't care to open the paper. I understand this choice, too, particularly when it comes from those who are tired of the talking and just want to see things change.

This paper is my attempt ... to unpack localisation's underlying assumption of the desirability of humanitarian aid led and implemented by non-governmental organisations.

These four reactions—from those that welcome this paper to those that think it is just another voice in a farcical chorus that is all talk, and little action—are far from the only reactions readers will have to this paper. But I present them to say: firstly, that I want to introduce my own positionality as an American writing from Australia in an academic job; secondly, that my intentions with this paper are to consider elements to localisation that I have found frustrating but that I have sometimes struggled to articulate. This paper is my attempt at this articulation, at my beginning to unpack localisation's underlying assumption of the desirability of humanitarian aid led and implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Any success I have at this attempt is thanks to the work of the skilled writers, thinkers, and practitioners that I cite throughout this paper. I use quotes liberally, largely because many of these writers lay out their arguments and thoughts in wonderful phrasing that warrants full preservation in their retelling.

The next section considers the meaning of localisation, and how coloniality and a series of assumptions that I call 'mirroring' manifest in harmful understandings of

locally led aid. The following section looks at the DPRK as an example where these assumptions are challenged—in particular, the assumption that international humanitarian actors have local counterparts in the form of NGOs that can slot into the international system. A conclusion offers some final remarks. This working paper is, as its form suggests, very much a work-in-progress, and the author invites dissenting views, clarifications, and pieces of wisdom that further or oppose its argument.

Defining localisation (or not!): Coloniality and 'mirroring'

In his report for the 2016 WHS, then UN-Secretary General Ban Ki-moon does not use the term 'localisation' but does urge the humanitarian system to "commit to as local as possible, as international as necessary" (United Nations General Assembly, 2016, p. 30). This simple, elegant phrasing is often used to succinctly describe localisation. However, research from my colleagues Kelly et al. (2021) highlights how this framing represents a failure in listening and action, and how the WHS represented a moment of listening rather than a continuing commitment. Additionally, there is not a consensus definition of the concept of localisation, nor of what localisation means in practice. This paper does not have the scope to do a full review of different definitions nor to propose a definition. Others have already done far better at these tasks than I could (see, for example, Robillard et al., 2021, p. 13-14; Bagiuos et al., 2021, pp. 8-16; Ayobi et al, 2017). Additionally, and as many have pointed out previously, localisation is not a singular, static concept. It is context-specific, as Ayobi et al. (2017, pp. 13-17) explore through drawings produced in group visioning exercises in the Pacific. The drawings use local objects and symbols to communicate an understanding and vision of localisation—a kalia (canoe) depicts respect for traditional approaches and survival mechanisms in Tonga, while a taxi symbolises community-driven work with support from passengers sitting in the back seat in Australia. Localisation has also come to hold multiple meanings, with the term acting as a "container to hold the many critiques of the marginalisation of the Global South within the international humanitarian response" (Kelly et al., 2021). It is not an end, but a process to the destination of locally-led practice (Baguios et al., 2021).

This paper focuses on two concepts directly from or derived from localisation literature and related literature. The first is coloniality, or the power structures that privilege Euro- and North American- centric ways of knowing, being, and understanding. These structures endure, oppress, and shape. The second I call 'mirroring'—the limited assumption that local actors are akin to government and NGOs. This assumption also presumes that these actors are structured and act in ways that neatly slot into the mainstream international humanitarian system.

Coloniality

In their survey of definitions of localisation, Robillard et al. (2021, pp. 13-14) argue four main points: that there are differing definitions; that many actors dislike the term or find it meaningless; that the lack of a common concept creates barriers to actually 'doing' localisation and to holding those that should be acting accountable; and that some actors are comfortable with differing definitions and wary of semantics getting in the way of meaningful discussion. On the second point about disliking the term, they feature a quote from a retired UN official who said in an interview, "The very term localisation is a neo-colonial term because localisation is drawn from the perspective of outsiders about locals, and how paternalistically we can help them to become the main drivers and local actors" (in Robillard et al., 2021). The power of the paternalistic, outside perspective is illustrated by refrains to 'strengthen local capacity' or to 'capacity build,' which Jayawickrama (2018) noted is "based on a fallacious assumption that perpetuates the notion that local actors and the affected population do not have the capacity, or the ability, to take control of their lives".

Coloniality is "an invisible power structure, an epochal condition, and epistemological design, [that] lies at the centre of the present Euro-North American-centric modern world" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). It is "the perpetuation of colonial systems and technologies of domination into the present" (Rutazibwa, 2018). Coloniality can and does continue and evolve long after colonialism. In other words, a people oppressed under a colonial government who gain sovereign rule are not automatically freed from enduring coloniality. This paper understands coloniality as a pervasive force throughout the modern, mainstream humanitarian system. Power is a major component of failures to localise. A 2021 Peace Direct report (p. 14) explains that the dearth of meaningful steps to surrender power to local actors has led to "many activists now [arguing] that localisation has become little more than a technocratic exercise, leading some groups to call for an end to the term being used".

Humanitarian aid does and can do good, but it is impossible to consider localisation without considering the sector's ability and propensity to use hegemonic power structures to the detriment of those who fall outside these paradigms and those who actively resist the Eurocentric, North American-centric world. While colonisation tried to change societies, cultures, systems, and environments by force, the mainstream humanitarian system is, by contrast, "built on tenets of care and compassion that are meant to assist, not lead, in rebuilding the lives of affected populations"

(Jayawickrama, 2018). Or, as Baguios titled a 2020 article, "Aid may be inherently racist and colonial, but altruism is not—that's a cause for hope". These words do not excuse the humanitarian system, but instead serve as a reminder that humanitarian aid should be an expression of compassion, respect, and care.

Mirroring

In Robillard et al.'s (2021, pp. 15-16) unpacking of the term 'actor,' they argue that the word usually refers to governments and to formal, organised NGOs, but that there are many other types of actors that respond to humanitarian emergencies. These include, but are not limited to: non-organised volunteer groups, faith communities, educational institutions, media, and grassroots associations. Robillard et al. (2021, p. 16) posit that the term 'actors' usually focuses on governments and NGOs because "it is more challenging for the formalised and professionalised international humanitarian system to identify and work with groups that may have very different structures, values, and priorities". This suggests the desirability of the local mirroring the international, where local actors, systems, and levels of formalisation neatly reflect and slot into the international, Western-based humanitarian system.

Because current concepts suppose the existence of NGOs in a local context, this assumes that environments 'worthy' of localisation should not only have political structures that allow for NGOs but that these NGOs should use the same degree of structure and formalisation that the international system does. In a later section, I consider the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea)—a country that does not fit this assumption. The DPRK is in some ways an extreme example, but it is unfortunately not unique for political actors to constrain civil society space. While in the DPRK this means it is impossible for humanitarians to work with local NGO counterparts in the way that NGOs are understood in the international humanitarian system, in other contexts it means that NGO counterparts cannot organise and formalise their work in the way the international system desires and demands. Al-Abdeh and Patel (2019) present the case of Women Now, a women's organisation working in Syria and neighbouring countries. Even before the conflict in 2011, Syrian government restrictions meant it was virtually impossible for groups focused on women's rights and/or human rights to register as NGOs. Women Now registered in France in 2012 and has also registered in countries neighbouring Syria. This results in challenges in operating freely in Syria, securing adequate funding for operations, and dealing with donors who impose their own agendas (Al-Abdeh & Patel, 2019).

Current approaches also struggle to adequately imagine the relationships between international humanitarian aid actors and state governments. DuBois (2018) points out that the mainstream sector's interpretation of localisation as transferring resources to NGOs "largely [circumvents] localisation's oldest and clearest directive—the primacy of state responsibility". Mainstream humanitarian actors, he further argues, must reconfigure the way they work with and relate to state governments—and to do so, they must gain a better understanding of governments' political positions and challenges (DuBois, 2018). Baguios (2021) proposes that localisation shouldn't be about localising the humanitarian sector, but instead about supporting local solutions by "fertilising the soil of state-led humanitarian solutions". International NGOs, he argues, must not hide behind calls for principled—meaning neutral and independent—work as an excuse to not engage with governments.

Because current concepts suppose the existence of NGOs in a local context, this assumes that environments 'worthy' of localisation should not only have political structures that allow for NGOs but that these NGOs should use the same degree of structure and formalisation that the international system does.

The Dunantist, or classical, paradigm of aid, is named for Red Cross founder Henri Dunant. In this paradigm, humanitarian crises are exceptional times that create humanitarian needs, for which international humanitarian agencies provide aid guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence (Hilhorst, 2018). These principles are known collectively as the "humanitarian principles". Dunantist approaches have faced challenges—for example, debate about the humanitarian principles has called for their replacement with new, more fit-for-purpose principles (Clarke & Parris, 2019) and highlighted the linkage between neutrality and white supremacy (Adeso, 2020). However, the paradigm is still powerful, and renders national authorities as 'invisible', untrustworthy, and/or as objects that require capacity building (Hilhorst, 2018, p. 4).

Other paradigms don't necessarily address the issue of relationships with national governments. The resilience paradigm, described by Hilhorst (2018) as one that situates needs within capacities and focuses more on national and local actors supporting active, resilient survivors, works well with neoliberal decentralised governance. This passes responsibility from the state onto non-state and private actors, and—alarmingly—onto populations surviving crisis themselves (Hilhorst, 2018,

p. 6). A parallel phenomenon can exist in authoritarian contexts, where civil society groups are both tolerated and co-opted by the state to provide services without the threat of challenge to state authority (Teets, 2013).

When I use the term 'mirroring' in this paper, it refers to the limited assumptions that a) 'local actors' means governments and NGOs, b) NGOs in a context are formalised and organised in ways that align neatly with the mainstream system, and c) neoliberal governance models that pass responsibility onto non-state actors and people surviving crisis are legitimate and desirable. Mirroring rewards states, organisations, and individuals that are able to reflect the mainstream international humanitarian system's models and ignores or punishes those who do not.

Mirroring rewards states, organisations, and individuals that are able to reflect the mainstream international humanitarian system's models and ignores or punishes those who do not.

The next section considers humanitarian aid to the DPRK. The DPRK challenges mirroring because of its lack of civil society. Humanitarian organisations have made meaningful impacts and supported locally led work from North Korean government counterparts, though working in an extreme authoritarian context brings clear challenges and limitations to humanitarian support. The section uses the example of the Eugene Bell Foundation (EBF) to show how one NGO worked with government counterparts in health. It also highlights what NGO-local relationships within the restricted environment of the DPRK can teach the mainstream humanitarian sector more broadly.

Localisation and the DPRK

International humanitarian organisations began working in the DPRK in the mid-1990s. The country was experiencing famine, known as the Arduous March. It was also undergoing a political transition as the regime transferred from Kim Il Sung, who ruled from the DPRK's founding in 1948 until his death in 1994, to his son Kim Jong Il. The regime cited "natural disasters" for the crisis but, while geographic hazards certainly caused issues, the root of the famine was mired in political and economic decision-making. Estimates of famine deaths vary significantly. In a 2001 report to UNICEF, DPRK estimates proclaimed 220,000 excess deaths (Associated Press, 2001). Demographic analysis by Goodkind and West (2001), in contrast, concluded that there were between 600,000 and one million excess deaths from

1995 to 2000. Judith Cheng-Hopkins, then-regional director for Asia with the World Food Programme, described the Arduous March in 1998 as "a famine in slow motion. People cope year after year, and probably a lot drop off. But the totality is very hard to gauge" (quoted in Rosenthal, 1998). Since the post-famine era from the early 2000s, North Koreans have contended with chronic food insecurity as well as weak healthcare systems and widespread human rights abuses.

Delivering humanitarian aid to the DPRK is incredibly challenging, though not without opportunity for meaningful, impactful programming (Banfill et al. 2021). As of writing, the DPRK's borders have been closed since January 2020, as part of the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, even before the pandemic, humanitarians faced difficulties operating within the restrictive authoritarian environment, where movement is controlled, and the Kim regime is the perpetrator of widespread human rights abuses. Contemporary difficulties included navigating complex sanctions regimes (Zadeh-Cummings & Harris, 2020); designing programs that address long-term, systemic needs; low levels of funding; data availability; and finding scope for work that both international organisations and their DPRK counterparts found impactful, feasible, and realistic. Additionally, without an international humanitarian presence inside the country due to the COVID-19 response, the ability to collect data and understand the situation on the ground has been further limited. However, there are fears of a worsening humanitarian situation in the country. Noland's analysis, published in August 2022, of available evidence related to quantity, price, and satellite imagery led him to conclude that "North Korea is experiencing its worst food crisis since the great famine of the 1990s" (Noland, 2022).

The DPRK is rarely the subject of localisation discussions. There are some special interest groups in the country that claim to be NGOs—for example, the Korean Federation for the Protection of the Disabled (KFPD)[1] describes itself as "the only non-governmental organisation related to the disabled that is approved by the [DPRK] government" (KFPD, n.d.). However, as Hastings et al. (2021) argue, civil society as a space relative to others (e.g., state, markets) that may include an arena for debate and contestation, is limited. State-employed institutions for social organisation "not only serve as tools for surveillance and indoctrination, but also crowd out the emergence of organic civil society networks—the neighbourhood committee, the labor union, the professional association—which form to place demands upon the state, or to address the needs of their members independently of the state" (Hastings et al., 2021). The DPRK is thus a poor candidate for the

---

[1] The KFPD has had notable and impactful partnerships with humanitarian organisations such as Humanity & Inclusion (formally Handicap International).

type of mirroring dominate forces in the international humanitarian system prefer.

Without a consistent, on-the-ground presence or even the regular, quick channels of communication that much of the world is now accustomed to, [non-Korean] NGOs [in the DPRK] must trust their local partners to implement and lead projects.

However, since the mid-1990s, non-resident, non-Korean NGOs working in the country have demonstrated the power of positive working relationships and trust, as well as the potential for locally led response centring North Korean wellbeing. Without a consistent, on-the-ground presence or even the regular, quick channels of communication that much of the world is now accustomed to, NGOs must trust their local partners to implement and lead projects when international staff are not on-site or in-country. Since international NGOs cannot be a constant presence to force, or lure with the prospect of funding, local partners down routes that the local partners are not truly interested in, successful projects need a mutual belief in their potential to be effective and impactful. This paper considers EBF as an example. EBF began its work in the DPRK in 1996, with food aid during the famine. Two years later, the NGO began supporting North Korean health facilities. Since 2007, EBF has been working to fight multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) in the DPRK. This involves working with the Ministry of Public Health (MPH) across 12 MDR-TB treatment centres.

What is notable about the EBF's approach, and how does it relate to localisation? First, EBF's entry into MDR-TB work came only after several years of engagement with the DPRK. It was not the case of an international NGO arriving with a pre-formulated plan and merely seeking an implementing partner. A 2018 article quotes a humanitarian regional director in the Middle East as saying, "I see most NGOs, and their main approach seems to be to come with a program in mind, and then find local partners to help implement it" (in Tipper, 2018). This approach is not about true partnership. It instead is one form of what Khan (2021) warns against when she writes, "We do not want your international experts to come and resolve our crisis for us, let alone delay the response". These quotes highlight the deployment of coloniality, where outsiders with access to power and resources determine local courses of action. Such work demotes local actors from leaders and counterparts to contracted service providers.

EBF's model, by contrast, almost flips that approach. Local actors—namely the Ministry of Public Health— approached EBF to help implement programs. In a 2009 newsletter, EBF Chairman Dr Stephen W. Linton explained, "From the beginning of [EBF's] medical work in 1997, when the Vice Chairman of the Ministry of Public Health formerly invited Eugene Bell to provide tuberculosis-related assistance, we have walked 'step-by-step' with our North Korean partners. Perhaps most importantly, each step we have taken has been a step together. From the beginning, we have tried to support, rather than replace, North Korea's hardworking medical caregivers" (EBF, 2009).

Second, before the DPRK closed its borders in January 2020 in response to COVID-19, EBF medical delegations only visited the country biannually. International organisations working in diverse contexts should ask themselves how they would continue programs if the organisations were forced to support partners remotely. If the programs would likely fail, or if the local partners would come to act essentially as sub-contractors, then these organisations need to ask themselves if they have truly fostered partnership, if they are supporting local efforts or if they are imposing priorities, and if they are fully trusting their local counterparts.

This is not to suggest that the EBF or any other international NGO does or should always follow a North Korean government actor's programming ideas. Of course, working with government—or to recall a phrase quoted earlier in the paper, "fertilising the soil of state-led solutions" (Baguios, 2021)—brings its own challenges. This is abundantly clear in a context like the DPRK, where opponents of aid accuse it of propping up the regime. Globally, Roepstorff (2020, p. 292) questions "to what extent local humanitarian actors represent a (national) elite rather than the affected people"—a salient consideration in any context, including the DPRK. But, as Baguios (2021) writes, "given that government actors are not homogenous—with different levels, ministerial/departmental mandates, and approaches—the possibility of working with them in a principled way should not be blankly ruled out". He is writing generally, not about a single specific state, but the sentiment holds true for the DPRK as it does for other contexts.

Conclusion

This paper explored three threads of localisation. First, it looked at coloniality in the context of localisation. Even where formal colonisation has ended, coloniality endures. Next, the paper considered the assumptions of the sector around what it means to be a local actor. It highlighted the assumption that local structures reflect international humanitarian systems, or 'mirroring'. Finally, the paper looked at a case that challenges this assumption. The DPRK does not have civil society organisations in the way that dominant understandings of localisation require, but organisations like EBF have still found ways to engage in ethical, locally led, impactful responses.

References

Adeso. (2020). *Adeso and IFFP Webinar Series Part 1—Decolonising Aid (Part I): Humanitarian 'neutrality' and 'White Supremacy'* [YouTube video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB7CHGhBKyc

Al-Abdeh, M., and Patel, C. (2019). 'Localising' humanitarian action: reflections on delivering women's rights-based and feminist services in an ongoing crisis. *Gender & Development, 27*(2), 237–252.

Associated Press. (2001, 16 May). N. Korea Discloses Famine's Heavy Toll. *Los Angeles Times*. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-16-mn-64171-story.html.

Ayobi, Y., Black, A., Kenni, L., Nakabea, R., and Sutton, K. (2017). *Achieving a more appropriate and fit-for-purpose humanitarian ecosystem in the Pacific* [Report by Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, Humanitarian Advisory Group, and Fiji National University, commissioned by Australian Red Cross]. Australian Red Cross. https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ARC-Localisation-report-Electronic-301017.pdf.

Baguios, A. (2020, 4 July). Aid may be inherently racist and colonial, but altruism is not—that's a cause for hope. *Aid-Reimagined*. https://medium.com/aidreimagined/aid-may-be-inherently-racist-and-colonial-but-altruism-is-not-thats-a-cause-for-hope-c77e7a33b899.

Baguios, A. (2021, 17 December). Localisation Re-imagined: Fertilising the soil of state-led solutions. *ALNAP*. https://www.alnap.org/localisation-re-imagined-fertilising-the-soil-of-state-led-solutions.

Baguios, A., King, M., Martins, A., and Pinnington, R. (2021). *Are we there yet? Localisation as the journey towards locally led practice: models, approaches and challenges*. Overseas Development Institute. https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/ODI-SH-Localisation-Report-Oct21-Proof06.pdf.

Banfill, J., Barrett, J., Vitantonio, C., and Zadeh-Cummings, N. (2021). Opening Doors in the DPRK. *The Humanitarian Leader*. https://doi.org/10.21153/thl2021volno0art1314.

Clarke, M., and Parris, B. W. (2019). Vale the Humanitarian Principles: New Principles for a New Environment. *The Humanitarian Leader*. https://doi.org/10.21153/thl2019volno0art1032.

DuBois, M. (2018). *The new humanitarian basics* [Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper]. Overseas Development Institute. https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12201.pdf.

Eugene Bell Foundation. (n.d.). *Approach*. Retrieved 7 October 2022 from https://www.eugene-bell.org/our-work/approach/.

Eugene Bell Foundation. (2009). *Eugene Bell Foundation Annual Report 2009*. https://issuu.com/eugenebell/docs/2009_eugene_bell_foundation_annual__282d251bd4f079.

Goodkind, D., and West, L. (2001). The North Korean Famine and Its Demographic Impact. *Population and Development Review, 27*(2), 219-238.

Hastings, J. V., Wertz, D., and Yeo, A. (2021). *Market Activities & the Building Blocks of Civil Society in North Korea*. National Committee on North Korea. https://www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/all-briefing-papers/special-report-market-activities-building-blocks-civil.

Hilhorst, D. (2018). Classical humanitarianism and resilience humanitarianism: making sense of two brands of humanitarian action. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action, 3*(15).

Jayawickrama, J. (2018). "If You Want to Go Fast, Go Alone. If You Want to Go Far, Go Together": Outsiders Learning from Insiders in a Humanitarian Context. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies, 5*(2).

Kelly, M., Pardy, M., and McGlasson, M. A. (2021). *Listening and Localisation*. Centre for Humanitarian Leadership. https://centreforhumanitarianleadership.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Listening-and-Localisation.pdf

Khan, T. (2021, 31 March). When Defensive Becomes Offensive. *La Mehdood*. https://lamehdood.wordpress.com/2021/03/31/when-defensive-becomes-offensive/.

Korean Federation for the Protection of the Disabled. (n.d.). *Background, Mission and Task*. Retrieved 10 October 2022 from http://naenara.com.kp/sites/kfpd/index.php?lang=e&page=About.

Metcalf-Hough, V., Fenton, W., Saez, P., and Spencer, A. (2022). *The Grand Bargain in 2021: an independent review*. Overseas Development Institute. https://odi.org/en/publications/the-grand-bargain-in-2021-an-independent-review/.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2015). Decoloniality as the Future of Africa. *History Compass, 13* (10), 485-496.

Noland, M. (2022). *North Korean Food Insecurity: Is Famine on the Horizon?* [Asia Pacific Issues paper no. 154]. East-West Center.

Peace Direct. (2021). *It's Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation*. https://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid_Second-Edition.pdf.

Robillard, S., Atim, T., and Maxwell, D. (2021). *Localization: A "Landscape" Report*. Feinstein International Center. https://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/localization-a-landscape-report/.

Roche, C., and Tarpey, F. (2020, 23 March). COVID-19, localisation and locally led development: A critical juncture. *Dev Policy Blog.* https://devpolicy.org/covid-19-localisation-and-locally-led-development-a-critical-juncture-20200323/.

Roepstorff, K. (2020). A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action. *Third World Quarterly*, 41(2), 284-301.

Rosenthal, E. (1998, 10 December). In North Korean Hunger, Legacy is Stunted Children. *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/10/world/in-north-korean-hunger-legacy-is-stunted-children.html.

Rutazibwa, O. U. (2019). What's There to Mourn? Decolonial Reflection on (the End of) Liberal Humanitarianism. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs, 1*(1), 65-67.

Teets, J. C. (2013). Let Many Civil Societies Bloom: The Rise of Consultative Authoritarianism in China. *The China Quarterly,* 213, 19-38.

Tipper, J. (2018, 9 April). Why 'localisation' shines a spotlight on ignorance—and what NGOs can do to counter it. *ALNAP.* https://www.alnap.org/blogs/why-%E2%80%98localisation%E2%80%99-shines-a-spotlight-on-ignorance-%E2%80%93-and-what-ngos-can-do-to-counter-it.

United Nations General Assembly. (2016). *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility—Report of the Secretary General for the World Humanitarian Summit (A/70/709).* https://reliefweb.int/report/world/one-humanity-shared-responsibility-report-secretary-general-world-humanitarian-summit.

Zadeh-Cummings, N., and Harris. L. (2020). Impact of Sanctions against North Korea on Humanitarian Aid. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs, 2*(1), 44-52.

Submit your pitch

THE HUMANITARIAN LEADER: A NEW VOICE FOR HUMANITARIANS

An independent and bold voice for people working in the aid system, the *Humanitarian Leader* provides a platform for humanitarian professionals to test ideas and insight gained in humanitarian contexts in an academic setting.

Our writers work with professional editors throughout the publication process, with 10 papers published online every year and collated in an annual print edition. We are currently accepting pitches in both French and English for the 2023 *Humanitarian Leader*—which will be bilingual for the first time.

We are interested in papers that challenge our collective assumptions about the humanitarian system.

We welcome submissions that deal with concepts of humanitarian leadership and ideas useful to humanitarian decision-makers that interact with our core understanding of the humanitarian system. All submissions must inform humanitarian leadership.

You can submit your pitch online at: https://cfhl.info/THLsubmissions