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MASTER THESIS

Titel der Master Thesis / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Evaluation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its capacity to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing at the operational levels in the field “

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2021 / Vienna 2021

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
Postgraduate programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 992 884

Universitätslehrgang lt. Studienblatt /
Postgraduate programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Master of Arts in Human Rights

Betreut von / Supervisor:

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Abstract

This master thesis aims to explore the structure of Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and evaluate its ability to collaborate and share knowledge at operational levels with other humanitarian organizations in the field. This will include taking into consideration the formal structure of IASC, the entities associated with IASC as well as its working method. This research explores the various efforts and reforms that have been made within IASC in order to promote a joined humanitarian response to crises and disasters. This thesis will also explore the existing gaps and challenges that have arisen in policy creation and how they are applied in practice. A survey using both qualitative and quantitative approaches was conducted with 139 humanitarian workers about effectiveness-perception among UN and non-UN staff working with humanitarian assistance around the globe.

Keywords: United Nations / Humanitarian System / Inter-Agency Standing Committee / Knowledge Management / People in the Field / Multi-stakeholder Partnership

Abstract (Deutsch)

Diese Masterarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Ständigen interinstitutionellem Ausschuss der Vereinten Nationen (englisch Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IASC) und untersucht, inwieweit es diesem gelingt, Zusammenarbeit und Austausch von Wissen auf operativer Ebene zu gewährleisten. Die Analyse beschäftigt sich mit der formalen Struktur des Ausschusses und der verbundenen Einheiten ebenso wie mit seiner Arbeitsweise. Am Ausgangspunkt der Recherche werden alle Bemühungen und Reformen berücksichtigt, die eine gemeinsame Reaktion auf Krisen und Katastrophen sicherstellen sollen. Die Arbeit setzt sich in weiterer Folge aber auch mit den Lücken zwischen politischen Maßnahmen und praktischer Umsetzung auseinander. Um diese näher zu untersuchen, wurde eine qualitativen quantitative Umfrage durchgeführt, bei der 139 Personen außerhalb und innerhalb der Vereinten Nationen ihre Sicht bezüglich der Effektivität der humanitären Einsätze der Vereinten Nationen dargelegt haben.

Keywords: Vereinte Nationen / Humanitäres System / Interinstitutioneller Ständiger Ausschuss / Wissensmanagement / Menschen vor Ort / Multi-Stakeholder-Partnerschaft

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASG	Assistant Secretary-General
CLA	Cluster Lead Agency
DERC	Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator
DSA	Data Sharing Agreement
EDG	Emergency Directors Group
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRA	Humanitarian Reform Agenda
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISO	International Standardization Organization
ISP	Information Sharing Protocol
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPAG	Operational Policy and Advocacy Group
RSG	Representative of the Secretary-General
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SP	Strategic Priorities
UN	United Nations
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN-Habitat	The United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

Much of the scholarship within the humanitarian sphere has focused on the lack of coordination and cooperation during humanitarian operations. This is of significance as humanitarian organizations are often responsible for a wide range of actions including building camps, supplying water or negotiating between different armed groups during conflict situations¹. However, a centralized authority has been lacking amongst the different groups operating within the humanitarian sphere. This is largely due to intergovernmental organizations such as UNICEF and UNHCR as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as World Vision and Oxfam following their own authority structures and agendas. Supranational bodies, who also play an important role within humanitarian action, such as the European Union or governments such as the United Kingdom and the United States, are also driven by their own agendas within the humanitarian sphere and own forms of governance. This can result in the duplication of efforts and over spending which leads to a lack of efficiency and consequently may lead to delays in achieving humanitarian goals and missions.

One method for overcoming these challenges can be through the establishment of a centralized authority within the humanitarian sector to ensure that there are less overlaps and duplication of work. There can be challenges however, with bringing together the various humanitarian actors as they may have to compete for resources or have opposing agendas and values. These differences can be exacerbated by cultural and social differences that result in different policies and method of achieving goals. This may result in them being unwilling to follow a central command as they have their own national or organizational interests. Thus, the establishment of the IASC as UN body, has thus had a significant role in overcoming some of these challenges that have arisen as a result of the decentralization within humanitarian action.

¹ Hall, N. A, 'Catalyst for cooperation: The inter-agency standing committee and the humanitarian response to climate change', *Global Governance*, vol. 22, 2016, pp. 369-387. 2016.

The IASC was first created in 1991, when the United Nations General Assembly resolution established a new senior UN position, the emergency relief coordinator. The purpose of the IASC is to bring together the executive heads of 18 UN and non-UN organizations in order to ensure the coherence of preparedness and response efforts in humanitarian operations as well as formulate policy, and come to agreements on what humanitarian actions should be prioritized². A General Assembly resolution in 1993 defined the IASC's mandate as being to serve as the 'primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination,' under the emergency relief coordinator, to act in an 'action-oriented manner on policy issues related to humanitarian assistance,' as well as help to establish a well-organized effective United Nations response to humanitarian emergencies³. The IASC's structure and working methods are thus primarily comprised of the principals found within humanitarian organizations and aims to be efficient, outcome-oriented, accountable and flexible in order to facilitate collective and timely humanitarian action. Each IASC member organization however, also has its own specific governing body to which it is also accountable⁴.

This thesis will therefore explore the IASC's working methods and structure as well as their role in coordinating the various organizations involved with humanitarian operations and whether they have been efficient in achieving unity amongst the various humanitarian actors. This will involve exploring the IASC's responsibilities such as strategic and policy decisions, supporting major operational decisions, negotiation, advocating for common principles as well as approving the work plans of the IASC groups. How the IASC works to achieve common goals among members in order to be more efficient will also be a focus in this thesis as will what factors contributed to this according to the participants who have worked with the IASC. While the IASC has had success in their missions, there are still existing gaps and challenges which need to be addressed and these will also be explored within this thesis.

² IASC, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/the-inter-agency-standing-committee>

³ UN General Assembly, Res. 48/57 (14 December 1993), <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r057.htm>

⁴ IASC, *IASC structure and working method*, 2019.

Knowledge and knowledge management are also key components of any successful humanitarian mission and is therefore also an important aspect to be considered in IASC's work. Knowledge Management ultimately allows the sharing of knowledge to avoid committing mistakes or repeating specific actions that don't work as well as sharing where certain practices have worked well. Thus, ensuring that an organization has sustained and effective knowledge management strategies is essential in effective programming. This will thus be explored in this thesis and how it plays a significant role in relation to the IASC's work.

The IASC offers an important contribution to the humanitarian community in bringing together various humanitarian groups to ensure that their missions and goals are being effectively achieved. However, no such missions, such as that of the IASC, can be achieved without difficulties and challenges and it is therefore essential that reviews and evaluations of the IASC's work are made in order to ensure to the continual production of good and effective work. This is the primary motivation of this thesis, to explore the effectiveness of the IASCs work based on the opinions who of those who have worked directly within the United Nations or with any of their partners organizations and have experienced first-hand the direct impact of the IASC's work. Ultimately, this thesis aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the successes and failures of the IASC's work to contribute to the IASC's mission of achieving more unity between those who wish to make this a better world for all to live in.

Methodology

The focus of this thesis is to investigate whether IASC is fostering internal and external collaboration and knowledge sharing in joined responses to humanitarian crises. The first step of this research was to conduct structured and semi-structured interviews to identify gaps in the work of the IASC and to better understand the IASC functioning. The United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Marck Lowcock, was contacted with a request to support⁵. Mr. Lowcock assigned the IASC Humanitarian Officer which supported part of the questions' validation and proposed some staff for detailed interviews.

The second step was to conduct an online survey. The platform Humanitarian ID⁶ was used as the main source to contact 5,893 humanitarian workers that were contacted using an email marketing tool. In total, 139 responses were collected through an extensive questionnaire that aimed to evaluate policy development, collaboration, and knowledge sharing in relation to the IASC. The questions for this survey were designed based on information from two Secretary-General reports, one related to Knowledge Management and the second to Inter-Agency Cooperation. A third source was a Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Requested by the IASC Principals Steering Group — an internal document provided by OCHA for this study. These documents give a panorama of the current situation inside the United Nations and touch upon the two main focuses of analysis in this thesis which are the autonomy and collaboration.

To respect the identity and privacy of the participants, choosing whether to be identified by name within the thesis or not was voluntary however, a profile was created for each participant solely for the purpose of data analysis. The information gathered for the profiles included years of experience as a humanitarian worker, the organization they worked for, the UN geographical regions, the number of times they had engaged in IASC

⁵ First contact made on 20 August 2019. A positive answer was received on 27 August 2019 offering support the research.

⁶ Humanitarian Id. <https://auth.humanitarian.id/> (consulted in 10 January 2020).

activities, why they attended the meetings (share information, receive information, as an observer, or represent the organization), and if they participated in creating IASC documents (guidelines, handbooks or good practices). An additional set of questions was available only for those who participated in IASC local or regional meetings. Based on the different combinations between the general questions and the profile, was possible to elaborate different data analysis. A document with 109 pages containing 267 graphics was created exclusively for the analysis.

The respondents were asked give their opinions on about different topics. The options “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neutral”, “disagree”, “strongly disagree” and “I have no opinion” were given to create a score. The methodology selected to support the evaluation of the answers was the Net Promoter Score (NPS) which is a widely used metric for marketing research. The NPS uses a score from zero to 10 to evaluate the customer experience. The respondents are grouped in Promoters (score 9-10) that are considered enthusiasts; Passives (score 7-8) that are satisfied but unenthusiastic; and Detractors (score 0-6) which impede growth through negative word of mouth. Based on the NPS, this analysis considers the overall scores of each answer per question combined, as follow:

- $\geq 70\%$ of Agree and Strongly Agree: Homogeneous view
- $\geq 90\%$ of Agree and Strongly Agree; or $\geq 30\%$ of Strongly Agree: A consistent and very positive work
- $\leq 70\%$ of Agree and Strongly Agree: The opinion is divided
- $\geq 33\%$ of Disagree and Strongly Disagree: Indication of items to investigate. Future problems
- $\geq 50\%$ of Disagree and Strongly Disagree: Problematic issues.

This method was chosen in order to effectively understand the objective of this study which is to evaluate the effectiveness of IASC as well as the perception of IASC by UN and non-UN staff working in the humanitarian field.

The limitations of this study includes that no direct identification of humanitarian workers by working at headquarter or in the field, the overlap of data when comparing groups due

to hurdles to segregate different profiles into a single data set. The data analysis is non-exhaustive exercise and new assumptions can be further explored by different groups.

The place and value of IASC in Humanitarian Assistance

This chapter will focus on the IASC's working methods and structure as well as their role in coordinating the various organizations involved with humanitarian operations. This will include looking at the IASC's responsibilities such as strategic and policy decisions, supporting major operational decisions, negotiation, advocating for common principles, approving the work plans of the IASC groups, bringing issues to the attention of the Secretary-General and Security Council through the ERC and designating Humanitarian Coordinators and selecting coordination arrangements. It will also explore how the IASC works to create common goals among members in order to achieve efficiency with policy making in regards to humanitarian action. Humanitarian groups operating in unity has had both positives negatives which can be demonstrated through different coordination efforts among humanitarian groups. This chapter will also explore the background of how the IASC was established and outline several of the UN resolutions that are the most relevant to IASC's as well as the primary members and groups that are involved with the IASC.

Historical background of IASC

On the 19th of December 1991, the United Nations' (UN) General Assembly passed the resolution 46/182 entitled, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations". This resolution was heavily influenced by the number of difficult wars taking place during that time, most notably the Gulf War. The provision of humanitarian relief during the Gulf War by the United Nations was heavily criticised, particularly in relation to their handling of the refugees fleeing the conflict. This was mainly caused by the lack of communication between the different UN bodies and other NGOs, and the duplication of their efforts instead of coordinating between themselves.⁷

⁷ OCHA, *OCHA on Message: General Assembly resolution 46/182*, OCHA, 2012, https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/Documents/120402_OOM-46182_eng.pdf [accessed 11 September 2021].

Scope of the IASC

The IASC is the primary coordination mechanism used to coordinate UN and non-UN organizations in a certain country or region. It is a critical forum for communication and it operates under the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) with its main objective being to formulate policies on humanitarian doctrines. Its scope of work also involves organising the fair division of responsibilities within the humanitarian field. The IASC also aims to detect gaps and failures in their work as well as aims to promote the successful implementation of the UN's core rights.⁸ The IASC's head office is based in Geneva and consists of a working group of representatives from each member organization. Two annual meetings are held between the heads of agencies where the agenda for IASC is set out in line with the IASC's Principals⁹. All members receive documents related to the meeting and the primary Action Points are outlined. The governing body of each IASC member is recognised and it is agreed that the decisions made within the IASC should not compromise the mandates of other organizations¹⁰.

The IASC works in conjunction with the core mandate of the United Nations and operates specifically in line with the UN's key resolutions that dictate the principles for proper international collective humanitarian assistance. Those which are the most relevant to this study include no. 5 which stipulates: ¹¹

The magnitude and duration of many emergencies may be beyond the response capacity of many affected countries. International cooperation to address emergency situations and to strengthen the response capacity of affected countries is thus of great importance. Such cooperation should be provided in accordance with international law and national laws. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working impartially and with strictly humanitarian motives should continue to make a significant contribution in supplementing national efforts

⁸ World Health Organization (WHO), *Background information on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and other inter-agency mechanisms*, in, World Health Organization (WHO), 2004, <https://apps.who.int/disasters/repo/13849_files/j/IASC_background.pdf> [accessed 11 September 2021].

⁹ IASC, *IASC structure and working method*, 2019.

¹⁰ IASCb, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc>

¹¹ OCHA, OCHA Policy Development and Studies Branch, *Reference Guide. Normative Developments on the coordination of humanitarian assistance in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Security Council since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182*, in 2009, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4a8e660d2.html> [accessed 8 September 2021].

The other relevant to this study is no. 12 which states:

The United Nations has a central and unique role to play in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international community to support the affected countries. The United Nations should ensure the prompt and smooth delivery of relief assistance in full respect of the above-mentioned principles, bearing in mind also relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolutions 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971 and 45/100 of 14 December 1990. The United Nations system needs to be adapted and strengthened to meet present and future challenges in an effective and coherent manner. It should be provided with resources commensurate with future requirements. The inadequacy of such resources has been one of the major constraints in the effective response of the United Nations to emergencies (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2009).

These resolutions provide guidance to the UN in regards to coordination, cooperation and leadership at both the regional and international levels. According to the section VI of the resolution 46/182: “An Inter-Agency Standing Committee serviced by a strengthened Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator should be established under the chairmanship of the high-level official with the participation of all operational organizations. Relevant non-governmental organizations can also be invited to participate.”¹²

Key Objectives of the IASC

The IASC has six main objectives, as stated by the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC)’s Field Handbook.¹³ Firstly, it focuses most and foremost on achieving an agreed upon set of humanitarian policies that are consistent and applicable worldwide. Secondly, the IASC is responsible for the distribution of responsibilities and roles among the different groups and organizations that are working on the same program. Another one of its objectives is to become unified on what ethics should be included in humanitarian work. The UNDAC has also made it a priority to encourage and campaign its values to associations and other groups that are not part of

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination, *UNDAC field handbook*, Geneva, United Nations. Disaster Assessment and Coordination, Humanitarian Affairs, 2018.

the IASC, but have a presence in the humanitarian field as well as aim to identify gaps in its mandates or lack of operational capacity. Finally, the IASC aims to settle arguments and solve the problems that may occur between the different member organizations¹⁴.

The IASC's work plan is updated once every two years in order to formulate well-defined Strategic Priorities (SP) of which the most recent work plan has five SP. Each one of the official members or standing invitees belonging to the IASC is expected to work towards delivering these SP. The work plan specifies the expected outcomes for each SP, the steps needed to achieve this and also provides some examples. The most recent SP include Operational Response; Accountability and Inclusion; Collective Advocacy; Humanitarian-Development Collaboration and Humanitarian Financing.¹⁵ Specific Task Teams have been established to manage policy-issues and are focused on sharing information as well as coordinating their activities. This includes factors such as joint decision making where senior officials within organizations commit to working towards a collective goal. They also aim to establish working mechanisms to include joint implementation as well as financing and delivering programs collectively¹⁶.

Members

The IASC comprises of entities from both inside and outside the UN. Those appointed to represent a UN agency are referred to as 'Members' while those coming from a non-UN agency are referred to as 'Standing Invitees'. However, both groups play an important role in the agency's work¹⁷ and all are referred to as 'the Principles' and they generally meet two times per calendar year.

¹⁴ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), IASC Structure and Working Method 2019 – 2020, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2019, <<http://ASC Structure and Working Method>> [accessed 11 September 2021].

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ IASC, Concise Terms of Reference and Action Procedures, Geneva, 3, 2014.

¹⁷ United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination, *UNDAC field handbook*, Geneva, United Nations. Disaster Assessment and Coordination. Humanitarian Affairs, 2018.

This membership list is not fixed and it is constantly reviewed.¹⁸ New members have to apply and applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.¹⁹ Organizations that are not members are encouraged to support the efforts of other IASC members operating in their region. The chairs for the agency are the ERC and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. The IASC has its own secretariat that reports directly to the ERC.

The primary groups that exist within IASC include:

The Deputies Forums

The Deputies Forum is as an informal platform that facilitates dialogue and information sharing on issues related to humanitarian action in cases where there is a common interest. They provide support on key issues and aim to resolve areas where a dispute has taken place. They establish links between other organizations and work to create strategic dialogue with important groups that are not affiliated with IASC including affected governments, regional bodies, donors, among others²⁰.

Operational Policy and Advocacy Group

OPAG is a forum that provides support for IASC's policy work including monitoring system-wide policy matters that directly impact humanitarian operations. They oversee the work of the Results Groups (see below) on behalf of IASC as well as develop policies and guidelines on strategic decisions and requests made by IASC. In addition to this, they make proposals on IASC's strategic issues and work together with the EDG on policy

¹⁸ Full members: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and International Organization for Migration (IOM). Standing invitees: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), InterAction, Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG) on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and the World Bank. (Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2021)

¹⁹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), "IASC Membership | IASC", in *Interagencystandingcommittee.org*, <<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-about/iasc-membership>> [accessed 11 September 2021].

²⁰ IASC, *IASC structure and working method*, 2019.

matters related to humanitarian operations. They also review the guidelines produced by inter-agency bodies that are not part of IASC once they have been approved by the IASC secretariat. Only policies and guidelines that have been reviewed by IASC can be implemented²¹.

Emergency Directors Group

The Emergency Directors Group focuses on existing crises and organizes what is needed during the operations taking place on the ground. This may include advising IASC on operational issues that are of concern, making recommendations, mobilising agency and Global Cluster resources in order to address any gaps or difficulties. They also provide support to Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and aim to establish protocols for early action support. In addition, they work to ensure information sharing with OPAG to establish where are the policy gaps and to formulate policy and provide support to build capacity²².

Results Groups

The Results Groups are responsible for delivering the agreed outputs in accordance with each of the IASC Strategic Priorities (SPs). They may also provide support in reviewing the guidelines produced by the groups who are not formally part of IASC. There are five results groups within OPAG that work towards ensuring that their work reflects of the needs and realities within the field. The Results Groups include the following:

- Results Group One addresses issues within the system and focuses on finding any gaps within the policies. They report to OPAG;
- Results Group Two aims to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse within the humanitarian system and increase accountability;
- Results Group Three focuses on increasing collective advocacy efforts, in particular on issues such as humanitarian law and the security of aid workers;

²¹ IASC, *IASC structure and working method*, 2019.

²² *Ibid.*

- Results Group Four aims to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development programs in order to maximize their long-term impact.
- Results Group Five aims to reduce the gaps in funding allocated for humanitarian activities through promoting more effective ways of approaching funding and improving methods of delivering aid.²³

IASC Secretariat

The main goal of the IASC secretariat is to provide support by ensuring that decisions are followed through and implemented on time. They maintain communication amongst the different organisations and make suggestions for possible future actions. They also play an important role in building coherence amongst the groups within IASC²⁴.

IASC Working Methods

The IASC's responsibilities include making strategic and policy decisions, supporting major operational decisions, negotiation, advocating for common principles, approving the work plans of the IASC groups, bringing issues to the attention of the Secretary-General and Security Council through the ERC and designating Humanitarian Coordinators and selecting coordination arrangements. Part of IASC's mission is to engage in advocacy in order to promote humanitarian action within areas of crisis or where serious human rights abuses are taking place, such as in Afghanistan where the IASC has in the past provided support for the protection of civilians in areas where armed conflict is taking place. The IASC may also work to draw attention to a particular issue such as Save the Children's work on drawing attention to the food crisis in Southern Africa in 2002. IASC also has a forum where NGO's can discuss a particular issue or lobby for the UN to change their stance on an issue²⁵. During the meetings, one organization helps with the lead, such as OCHA, however, they are most often led by the

²³ IASC, *IASC structure and working method*, 2019.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Jones, B and Stoddard, A, *External review of the inter-agency standing committee*, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, New York, 2003.

agency with the most specialist knowledge or the one who is the most relevant. It is not uncommon to have some missions with more than 15 members taking part²⁶.

Thus, the various members meeting to discuss common goals and ways to move forward in achieving progress in the humanitarian sphere helps to achieve cohesion amongst the various goals and missions of the different groups involved as well as brings together these organizations in order to create more efficient relations on policy making and development between the different UN bodies.²⁷ The UNDP for example, has been working on ways to increase lesson sharing and comparing analysis on certain issues through their global knowledge networks. This was initiated with the first two Global Cooperation Frameworks (1997–2004), when sub-regional resource facilities (SURFs) were established to provide policy support to country offices²⁸. Between 2005–2008 this began to include knowledge management activities which were integrated at the global, regional and local levels and aimed to capture the knowledge generated by the country offices, which included support for the annual Human Development Report and will be discussed further below.

The IASC has had a number of significant achievements in promoting field-based work within humanitarian programs. These have included the establishment of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and increasing the amount of interaction between different IASC members and as well as increasingly using informal networks and pushing past bureaucratic barriers²⁹. The IASC has also shown consistency in their efforts to

²⁶ Jones, B and Stoddard, A, *External review of the inter-agency standing committee*, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, New York, 2003.

²⁷ IASC's full members from the United Nations include UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, FAO, WHO, UN-HABITAT, OCHA, IOM, and have several organizations as who are 'standing invitees' such as ICRC, IFRC, OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, and the World Bank (Hall 2016). NGO's such as ICVA, InterAction, and SCHR have also been invited on a permanent basis to participate in IASC's meetings. IASC's chairs are also permitted to invite, on an ad hoc basis, representatives of other specialized organizations. IASC members all have varying humanitarian roles within the development community. UNHCR for example, provides protection to refugees while the World Food Programme focuses on the provision of food aid.

²⁸ UNDP, UNDP knowledge management, *UNDP knowledge management strategy framework 2014 – 2017*, New York, UNDP. 2014.

²⁹ IASC, *Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP)*, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/consolidated-appeals-process-cap> (accessed 20 September 2021).

achieve their goals and grow their informal networks. They have also made an effort to create more equal relationships between UN and non-UN bodies such as the Red Cross and IOM as well as major international NGO's. As a result, smaller NGO's have had more opportunity to bring their knowledge to the table and help to shape and influence UN ideas that are taking place at a higher level³⁰. Thus, it could be argued that the IASC has made considerable progress in effectively developing field-based or field-oriented systems to allocate responsibility within humanitarian programmes. There seems to be evidence that they have had more success with this in longer-running emergencies as opposed to new crises. Though much work remains, it could certainly be argued that IASC is making progress in achieving their goals.

Gaps and Challenges

There are a number of gaps and challenges that remain in regards to the IASC's working policy however and specific reference groups and task forces that have been established in order to manage these problems as they occur³¹. One challenge that the IASC has faced, has been in the provision of relief and establishing development initiatives in areas that are transitioning from crisis and there was much focus on this throughout the 1990s. Certain policies have been established in order to counter these challenges such as with the Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction (CPR) Network, and recently the '4R' process (Repatriation, Reconciliation, Recovery and Reconstruction). However, Jones et al.³² argues that there is not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that these processes provide clear guidelines on who should lead them. There is also a lack of coherence among the major UN development agencies, UN political and peacekeeping missions, the Security Council, individual NGOs, governments that have undergone crisis, and outside experts on these matters. However, IASC is no mandated or sufficiently equipped to deal with this problem.

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Jones, B and Stoddard, A, *External review of the inter-agency standing committee*, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, New York, 2003.

³²Ibid.

Another significant challenge is the many different frameworks that are used by different NGO's or UN entities that may not correspond with those of others or may not be legally binding. Challenges also arise due to gaps in the sharing of data due to concerns over privacy issues and the sharing of data that is particularly sensitive. These problems can at times be exacerbated when changing over systems. Smaller NGO's or organizations might also have difficulties in managing data due to a lack of resources or in sharing it due to a lack of representation amongst larger organizations³³. A lack of consistency and agreement on definitions regarding humanitarian action, particularly amongst humanitarian organizations within different regions and cultures who share different beliefs and values and thus take different approaches can also be a challenge. Problems can also arise with organizations who use different internal systems and processes of management.³⁴

The slow pace of overall UN reform plus the UN's traditional reluctance to criticize governments have all affected the IASC's ability to improve humanitarian action's impact and for the IASC to achieve its stated goals has also been a focus of criticism. Factors such as limited visibility, limitations on managerial authority, common definitions of humanitarianism ethics and a lack of follow up and evaluation on projects have all contributed to this.³⁵ Some of the criticism of the IASC has focused on its failure to criticise particular governments for their actions or for their failure to take action against a particular government. It has also been suggested that the IASC's membership needs to be more inclusive. One way to help improve the situation that could yield quick results would be to strengthen the relationship between the IASC and the Secretary-General's office.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Jones, B and Stoddard, A, *External Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee*, New York, Center on International Cooperation New York University, 2003, <<https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/erd-3132-full.pdf>> [accessed 21 September 2021].

³⁵ Jones, B and Stoddard, A, *External review of the inter-agency standing committee*, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, New York, 2003.

Finally, one of the most significant challenges with inter-agency cooperation is the lack of trust between the agencies themselves.³⁶ There can also commonly be a lack of trust amongst governments where corruption is common place making the sharing of sensitive information in such situations particularly difficult. Thus, while interagency cooperation has many benefits, there are still a number of challenges to be overcome.

³⁶ Smillie, I and Minear, L, *The Quality of Money: Donor Behavior in Humanitarian Financing*, Tufts University, 2003.

Success factors of collaboration and breaking silos for a better delivery

This chapter will also discuss the importance of knowledge sharing in humanitarian action and how this can lead to improved action within the humanitarian missions. It will also outline the gaps and challenges that have been encountered with knowledge sharing amongst the United Nations and humanitarian groups in general. This chapter will give three examples exploring interagency humanitarian responses including the coordination efforts between humanitarian groups and the military with the Ebola virus in west Africa, aid delivery in Somalia as well as the mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEEWG) into humanitarian responses. Lastly, this chapter will explore the importance of knowledge and the role of knowledge management in humanitarian action including examples within the UNDP.

Knowledge Management inside the United Nations

It is widely agreed that knowledge is a primary force driving the ability of private and public organizations to act efficiently. Knowledge gives individuals a comparative advantage in a particular field and is thus a strategic resource that requires continual assessment to ensure that it is an effective and productive tool.³⁷ Knowledge can reduce the gap between higher and lower education people and encourage greater adherence to ethics and social responsibilities. It can encourage a more highly skilled workforce which consequently leads to higher rates of economic growth and stability. Wajidi et al.³⁸ argue that knowledge can be both explicit and tacit. Explicit knowledge is that found in documents and can be shared in the form of numbers or shared data. Tacit knowledge relates to someone's personal knowledge and can be shared in informal ways such as through conversation or stories. For an organization, there are two types of knowledge that provide strategic advantage for an organization and include knowledge from the field or what is referred to as bottom-up learning and also top-down learning or learning from

³⁷ Edwards, M, 'NGOs in the age of information,' *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 25, no.2, 1994.

³⁸ Wajidi, M. Z. and Asim, M, The Realms of Knowledge Management from an Organizational Perspective, *International Business & Economics Research Journal*, vol. 8, pp.11, 2009.

higher processes³⁹. Both these forms of acquiring knowledge require having good information systems in place so that information from the field can be processed quickly. Knowledge management is therefore a critical aspect of any organization, including humanitarian organizations. Malhan et al.⁴⁰ argue that knowledge management assists the heads of organizations as well as governing bodies in identifying what an organization knows, where and in what form the knowledge is located and what are the best ways to transfer knowledge to the right people.

Knowledge management can help organizations to learn from past failures and successes and can be used to solve problems or create and develop new methods of working⁴¹. In addition, knowledge management can help to avoid the repetition of activities done by staff in other fields as well as ensure the effectiveness of approaches made by other organizations working in similar areas. It can also assist in avoiding the loss of knowledge when a staff member leaves an organization. Knowledge Management ultimately allows the sharing of knowledge to avoid committing mistakes or repeating specific actions that don't work as well as sharing where certain practices have worked well. Thus, ensuring that an organization has sustained and effective knowledge management strategies is essential in effective programming.

In the United Nations, knowledge management is therefore essential for operations and is considered a valuable resource. The knowledge generated through the United Nations is generally based on specific values and aims to bring member states together to achieve common goals⁴². In addition, knowledge management is used to promote interdepartmental, system-wide and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The positive effects of knowledge management within the United Nations can be seen in the contributions made in those such as to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development where silos were

³⁹ Malhan, I. V and Gulati, A, Knowledge Management Problems of Developing Countries, with special reference to India, *Information Development*, vol. 19, no.3, 2003, pp. 209.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Dumitriu, P, *Knowledge management in the United Nations*, Joint Inspection Unit, Geneva, 2016.

⁴² Ibid

broken down through the integration of those involved with implementing the 2030 Agenda.

The UNDP also provides an excellent example of how knowledge management has been structured within the United Nations. The UNDP was one of the first UN organizations to begin implementing knowledge management strategies when technology such as email was first being introduced in the late part of 1999.⁴³ The UNDP describes their knowledge management processes as being driven by openness and innovation as opposed to just ensuring that certain ‘boxes have been filled out’ and involves everyone taking on the role as ‘knowledge citizens’ and engaging with the entire knowledge cycle. Staff must keep aware of all recent innovations and developments within their area of work as well as process evidence and engage in discussions and be part of policy development and solutions. Individuals must be open to external views as well as professional development and learning⁴⁴. The objectives within the UNDP’s knowledge management activities include a number of elements such as inclusive and sustainable growth and development; increasing democratic governance; increasing the capacity of institutions to provide basic services; gender inequality and women’s empowerment; decrease conflict and risk related to natural disasters; recovery and development in post-conflict and post-disaster situations and the development of discussion that focus on poverty, inequality and exclusion⁴⁵.

In 2009, UNDP set out its Knowledge Strategy 2009-2013 with the goal of gathering knowledge in support of their objectives. A group of staff were gathered to manage and facilitate knowledge for the organization and its partners and a Teamworks global knowledge networking platform was created in order to address weakness found during UNDP evaluations. Knowledge was also shared during these interactions as part of the UNDP’s efforts to decrease ‘information silos’⁴⁶. Any knowledge management activity in the UNDP must be either include evidence collected externally, analysis, knowledge

⁴³ Glovinsky, S, *How knowledge management could transform the UN development system*, Future United Nations Development System, New York, 2017.

⁴⁴ UNDP, UNDP knowledge management, UNDP knowledge management strategy framework 2014 – 2017, New York, UNDP, 2014.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

capture, generation and exchange initiatives and engagement in policy debate, or indirectly by improving organizational⁴⁷.

Thus, the UNDP uses both global and country perspectives in their knowledge generation as well as their own external and internal experiences. One method that they have used as part of expanding their knowledge base has been to work through the Donor Technical Secretariat (DST) who conducts analyses on what specific knowledge is needed in the global development marketplace. This involves identifying key stakeholders, partners and forums to discuss with other groups that produce such knowledge, such as think tanks, international organizations, NGOs and existing thematic networks, and discussing how this knowledge interrelates with the knowledge produced internally from the UNDP. The DSTs work closely with UNDP country offices and are UNDP's 'knowledge seeking eye,' by find new countries and partners to work alongside⁴⁸. They create knowledge production plans and address areas where there are gaps in knowledge as part of UNDP's strategic plan. Policy advisors are also used in order to generate knowledge from external sources.

However, there have been some aspects of the UNDP's strategy of knowledge management that has not been entirely successful. For example, Glovinsky discusses the UNDP's implementation of their first knowledge management strategies in 2004 which involved extensive consultations and reviews of major organizations such as McKinsey and the World Bank. The goal was to transform the UNDP into a professional, knowledge-based service organization and to equip staff members with high levels of knowledge that could give them a competitive edge within the development marketplace. While the roadmap was launched in April 2004, nothing had been achieved by December because almost nothing had been delivered⁴⁹. Glovinsky also discusses a knowledge management project conducted by the UN country team in India to implement a service for policy-makers to receive more information from those working in the field in order to

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Glovinsky, S, *How knowledge management could transform the UN development system*, Future United Nations Development System, New York, 2017.

make policy more efficient and relevant to what was happening on the ground. There were however, still were still gaps found by researchers on this project⁵⁰. A 2010 evaluation by the Overseas Development Institute concluded that Solution Exchange found for example, that while the UNDP had played a significant role in India's development there was also a need for further funding which had not. Happened at that time⁵¹.

Some of the notable achievements of UNDP's knowledge management work however, includes the creation of public online consultations and knowledge mobilization during the Rio Dialogues⁵². A Knowledge Management survey conducted in 2012 found that the UNDP was the most advanced in formal networking and leadership behaviour. However, it was also found that the UNDP was not working so efficiently in areas of 'Capturing Knowledge' and 'Learning Before, During and After'.⁵³ It was recommended that the UNDP strengthen their work in the areas of people and processes and also suggested that knowledge sharing is not yet fully institutionalized in the UNDP, and that there were some variations in approaches amongst the practices of some individuals and bureaus. Knowledge dissemination is often in the form of formal, lengthy reports and guidance notes and there are few details about the impact of the work⁵⁴.

Thus, the efficient management of knowledge is not only dependent only on technology, but also on the human and managerial resources of an organization. It is essential that knowledge management is participative and that all members of an organization engage in it and be fully focused and committed. In order to achieve this, an organization must have empowering guidelines and frameworks to motivate staff to be actively involved in the creation of knowledge as well as in sharing with others. Thus, connectivity is essential in the production of knowledge and involves strong cross-bureau and cross-regional

⁵⁰ UNDP, UNDP knowledge management, UNDP knowledge management strategy framework 2014 – 2017, New York, UNDP, 2014.

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid

relationships. Government's lack of knowledge about political agendas, laws and regulations can cause significant challenges for development. By decreasing the knowledge gap, governments can make more informed decisions that results in higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness and avoid making the mistakes that result in the same problems over and over again. Furthermore, through the provision of knowledge, humanitarian actors can help humanitarian organizations to better understand the importance of their own laws and policies.

This where the role of the IASC plays an important role in the implementation of systematic knowledge sharing activities and ensuring that they are beneficial to all of those involved and are regularly monitored to ensure that they are being effective. The IASC therefore plays an important role in institutionalizing knowledge sharing as an essential part of programming within the United Nations and provide incentives at different levels to address the challenges arise during knowledge sharing⁵⁵. In addition, in order to continue being a thought leader in development, the United Nations must continue to lead in the production of knowledge as well as continue to seek solutions by identifying new priority areas for focus. Thus, continued efforts are needed in order to renew and adjust information by utilising lessons learned from evaluations conducted on the work done by the United Nations as well the failures encountered by partner organizations such as NGO's and this is where the IASC plays an essential role.

Essentially, knowledge is the lifeblood of a knowledge organization. To succeed, knowledge management must be fully integrated into how each organization operates. Introducing KM as a core business process requires transformational change, which is complex and difficult. No matter how sound, valuable, and relevant the idea, it will fail unless two conditions are met: that it is directed by a dedicated and persistent transformational leader; and that it has buy-in and commitment from the full management team.

⁵⁵ Ibid

Information sharing

Since its beginnings, IASC has developed several approaches to facilitate information sharing between all the Principals. Breaking silos between humanitarian agencies can help to increase efficiency of funds towards humanitarian organizations. The sharing of knowledge between agencies can help to avoid the repetition of work, the wasting of valuable resources and to increase efficiency as much as possible⁵⁶ When knowledge is distributed transversely across all the acting humanitarian partners in the field, including among UN and non-UN organizations, the achievement of humanitarian coordination aid are strengthened on its capacities.⁵⁷It also adds pressure and accountability on all partners to respect and abide the strict laws that protect the privacy of the affected and most vulnerable due to the transparency imposed.⁵⁸ Furthermore, interagency cooperation can increase transparency within organizations by making those involved accountable to each other, particularly when it comes to the implementation of human rights. Ultimately, the collaboration of different humanitarian agencies in the field increases the effectiveness of the response.⁵⁹

In 2005, the Humanitarian Reform Agenda (HRA) initiated new components in order to improve the agency's work and increase its efficiency, one of these being The Cluster Approach. As part of this, the the IASC must organize its members into clusters and assign each one of them clearly defined responsibilities and goals. The cluster initiates a response to a certain crisis under the authority of the selected Humanitarian Coordinator

⁵⁶ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Multi-sector initial rapid assessment (MIRA)*, 2015, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/mira_manual_2015.pdf> [accessed 9 September 2021].

⁵⁷ Thévenaz, C and Resodihardjo, S, "All the best laid plans...conditions impeding proper emergency response", in *International Journal of Production Economics*, vol. 126, 2010, pp. 7-21.

⁵⁸ Willitts-King, B and Spencer, A, *Responsible data-sharing with donors*, Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), 2020, https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/Responsible_data-sharing_with_donors_accountability_transparency_and_data_prot_q6t86wF.pdf [accessed 21 September 2021].

⁵⁹ Van Wassenhove, L, Humanitarian aid logistics: supply chain management in high gear, *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, 2006, pp. 475-489.

(HC). The cluster then reports to the HC via its Cluster Lead Agency (CLA), domestic establishments and the victims affected.⁶⁰

According to the Humanitarian Response, the clusters have six primary functions.⁶¹ They firstly must provide services by creating a platform where the agencies can discuss and agree on strategies and methods in order to avoid duplication. Secondly, the clusters are also responsible for providing the necessary information for the HC/Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) who make specific decisions by comparing different needs, analyzing gaps and setting priorities. The third core objective of the clusters is to create strategies for each sector, monitor their adherence to humanitarian values and evaluate what funding is needed. Moreover, the clusters are also required to advocate for action on any potential issues identified. The clusters are also expected to monitor and provide reports on their strategies and the outcomes of these strategies while also providing advice. Finally, each cluster must prepare contingency plans and capacity build at the national level⁶².

When sharing information, the agencies within the same cluster use information management tools that have been approved by the Cluster Coordinator. However, when it comes to inter-Cluster cooperation that may take place on a national or regional levels:

The HC and HCT provide an overall strategic direction to the humanitarian community in support of the national response. Guided by the HCT, inter-cluster coordination provides a platform for clusters to work together to advance the delivery of assistance to affected people effectively and efficiently. It does this by

⁶⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "UNHCR|Emergency Handbook", in *unhcr.org*, <<https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/61190/cluster-approach-iasc>> [accessed 11 September 2021].

⁶¹ Humanitarian Response, "Inter-Cluster Coordination | HumanitarianResponse", in *Humanitarianresponse.info*, 2021, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/inter-cluster-coordination> [accessed 11 September 2021].

⁶² Humanitarian Response, "Inter-Cluster Coordination | Humanitarian Response," *Humanitarianresponse.info*, 2021, <<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/inter-cluster-coordination>> [accessed 11 September 2021].

encouraging synergies between sectors, ensuring roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, closing potential gaps and eliminating duplication.⁶³

Finally, inter-agency cooperation is an effective means of sharing lessons learned and positive experiences from the field. Thus, through humanitarian organizations openly sharing experiences and expertise, this can provide benefits to all of those involved and can also provide valuable insights regarding results-based approaches. During humanitarian crises, the uncertainties normally tend to be grave and having access to information is essential. As Galbraith states, “the greater the task uncertainty, the greater the amount of information that must be processed among decision makers during task execution in order to achieve a given level of performance”⁶⁴. Thus, by bringing agencies together and sharing knowledge can significantly help in achieving a common goal, particularly in sensitive situations such as conflicts.

Delivery as One

One of the IASC’s primary goals is to develop effective humanitarian policies. In order to achieve this, it is essential that the members involved agree on a clear division of responsibility in order to ensure implementation of the agreed humanitarian activities. This requires joint efforts on identifying and addressing gaps in humanitarian responses as well as coming to an agreement on what would lead to the effective application of humanitarian principles on agreed activities. Some examples of interagency collaboration are provided below to demonstrate how goals can effectively be achieved through the collaboration of different groups.

[The response to the Ebola virus in West Africa](#)

The Ebola virus disease (EVD) crisis in West Africa began in March 2014 and became a humanitarian and public health emergency. A number of challenges arose during the

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Galbraith, J, "Organization Design: An Information Processing View", *Interfaces*, vol. 4, 1974, pp. 28-36.

response that included a lack of manpower and the presence of only a few NGO's in the country due to a reluctance to commit to the disaster out of concerns for the safety of their personnel and their ability to fulfil their duty of care. In Sierra Leone specifically, this led to coordination efforts between civilian organizations and the military as a way to combat the epidemic. This meant moving away from the typical civilian and military relationships that are normally formed in disaster response and establishing new relationships⁶⁵. Thus, the multi-agency response in Sierra Leone was led by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and also involved the British, Sierra Leonean, Canadian, Dutch and Irish Armed Forces, as well as numerous governmental and non-governmental civilian organizations. The military played the biggest role at the beginning of the response, specifically around areas to do with leaderships and logistics⁶⁶. As part of the UN response, the UNDP organized payments to Ebola workers, worked to improve the delivery of payment to treatment center staff, lab technicians, contacts tracers as well as burial teams. They worked to identify cases, trace contacts as well as to provide education on how Ebola was spread and contracted. They also raised awareness about stigma related to Ebola and to help survivors and their families. Economists from the UNDP conducted studies on the impact of development and spending which were used as part of national recovery plans in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone⁶⁷.

The combination of the joint efforts between the military and civilian organization proved to be effective. The military were able to provide logistics, personnel, training and coordination that could be delivered efficiently where the civilian organizations were unable to provide this. The UK Ministry of Defense (MOD) and later the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the Irish Defense Forces (IDF) also became involved and were able to effectively unify their response. They established multiple Ebola treatment centers (ETUs) as well as the Kerry Town Treatment Unit (KTTU) which was designed for

⁶⁵ Cox, A.T, Forestier, C and Horne, S, 'Coordination and relationship between organisations during the civil-military international response against Ebola in Sierra Leone: an observational discussion,' *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, London, vol. 162, no.3, pp. 156.

⁶⁶ Cox, A.T, Forestier, C and Horne, S, 'Coordination and relationship between organisations during the civil-military international response against Ebola in Sierra Leone: an observational discussion,' *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, London, vol. 162, no.3, pp. 156.

⁶⁷ UNDP, <https://www.undp.org/crisis-response/past-crises/west-africa>

healthcare workers who had potentially been affected. The Royal Air Force assisted in the form of an Air Transportable Isolator evacuate casualties, including those with EVD, to the UK⁶⁸. This joint effort between the various military groups and humanitarian organizations during the Ebola response, demonstrates that interagency action, in this case between civilian groups and the military, can prove to be effective in achieving positive outcomes. Where NGO's or humanitarian organizations were unable to provide the support required to make a difference to the crisis, the military were able to step in to provide effect support.

Aid delivery in Somalia

Somalia's long running armed conflict has led to abuses by all the warring sides which has resulted in a widespread humanitarian crisis that has had a devastating toll on civilians. Hundreds of civilians have been killed in indiscriminate attacks, in particular by the Islamist armed group Al-Shabab⁶⁹. Due to the complex security situation in Somalia, there have been numerous attacks made on humanitarian organisations delivering aid, making it an extremely difficult environment to work within. As a result, there have been mixed security and humanitarian agendas which has resulted in a number of issues with the delivery of aid. It was found that some of these challenges have included creating strong links between humanitarian community and private stakeholders⁷⁰. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) project to implement the Sustainable Employment and Economic Development (SEED) program is an example of this⁷¹. As a result, Somalia has become a focus for many humanitarian groups bring aid including regional governments such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya and Uganda, representatives from the African Union and the Arab League, donor representatives, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the Transitional Federal Government

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ OHCHR, *Somalia conflict exacting terrible toll on civilians – UN report Al Shabab responsible for most civilian casualties*, Mogadishu, OHCHR, 2017.

⁷⁰ Abdirahman, M et al., *IASC Evaluation of the humanitarian response in south central Somalia 2005-2010*.

⁷¹ Kessler, A, *Measuring results of private sector development in conflict-affected environments: A case study of the sustainable employment and economic development (SEED) programme in Somalia*, The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, 2013.

(TFG) as well as the newly emerging administrations in South Central Somalia (SCS), Somaliland and Puntland, Somali civil society representatives, the ICRC, UN agencies and INGOs. IASC conducted an evaluation to assess the impact of humanitarian aid on citizens in Somalia which has included understanding how needs assessment have been carried out and assistance has been delivered.⁷²

It was found during the evaluation that decisions about funding have been made too slowly which has resulted in affected populations not receiving aid on time. This has been particularly of concern for those living in areas that have been hard hit by the conflict. Another consequence of this was that projects often ended up ending earlier than expected. The slow pace of decision making can occur when there are too many actors involved with the decision making on a particular subject or issue.⁷³ Due to difficulties in accessing certain areas due to the violence, some humanitarian organizations were not able to carry out their work and conduct the relevant needs assessments. They were also not able to either implement or monitor the assistance that they were delivering safely or affectively⁷⁴. It was also reported that despite these challenges, the target populations often felt over-assessed which was likely due to a lack of coordination between the different agencies working in the region. This resulted in a general mistrust among the recipient population because despite there being a strong presence of aid organisations, little assistance arrived⁷⁵. This is an example of how aid delivery and humanitarian response can occur as a result of not adhering to the IASC's working methods and policies. Campbell et al. suggest however, that clusters and leadership teams can make decisions quickly when decisions are made by representatives from sub-groups (Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015). Furthermore, another possibility of moving past this issue when there are too many potential participants is that the humanitarian coordinator should create separate forum that includes regular interaction between different organisations.⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ IASC, *Guidance for Humanitarian Country Teams*, International Organization, Inter Agency Standing Committee, 2009, pp. 5-7.

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ IASC, *Guidance for Humanitarian Country Teams*, International Organization, Inter Agency Standing Committee, 2009, pp. 5-7.

Furthermore, the situation in Somalia demonstrates that there is considerable scope for humanitarian organisations to better address inequities between international and national aid workers by providing adequate security resources, support, and capacity building which can best be achieved by better coordination between agencies. In complex conflict situations where the security threat is high, coordination between humanitarian groups and the military, such as was done during the Ebola crisis, where the military provides support and protection, could also prove to be effective in delivering aid.

Mainstream GEEWG into humanitarian practice

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and girls (GEEWG) mainstreaming has been increasingly become an essential part of humanitarian responses. Humanitarian actors are consulting women and girls on topics that affect them and are making progress in accounting for the specific needs of women and girls in needs assessment. More nuanced analyses of gender-related gaps are being considered when understanding the inequalities and contextual factors that exist in Humanitarian Response Plans⁷⁷. The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) on GEEWG undertook an evaluation looking at the success factors that have contributed to the mainstreaming of GEEWG into long-term IASC humanitarian responses. This included looking into global cluster and individual agency policies that use gendered approaches and are aligned with the IASC's gender policy and assessed whether the joint efforts through the IASC's projects have been successful in achieving more integrated gender responses during humanitarian operations. This work has been done in conjunction with important human rights initiatives such as the Security Council Resolution 1325⁷⁸.

It was found during the evaluation that there have been a number of successes that have included the implementation of the Gender Policy, Gender Accountability Framework,

⁷⁷ Bizzarri, M et al., *H. Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*, Final evaluation report, 2020.

⁷⁸ Moura, T, Roque, S and Santos, R, Missed connections: Representations of gender, (armed) violence and security in Resolution 1325, *Revista Critica de Ciencias Sociais*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2013.

GenCap senior advisors and Gender with Age Marker at the IASC level which have increased the integration of GEEWG into humanitarian responses. At the country level, successes have included the introduction of an inter-agency senior gender advisor who works alongside the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) or Inter-Cluster Coordinating Group (ICCG) amongst other actions. It was found that this led to greater gender integration and gender awareness in the long term⁷⁹. However, the evaluation found that there were a number of challenges that included not being able to deploy gender experts with the relevant gender equality expertise during sudden emergency responses. This then limited the degree to which the front-line responders were able to take gender equality into account during humanitarian operations.

Thus, as a result of the above, the quality of gender analyses and integrating GEEWG issues into the initial phase of emergency response still had limitations. It was also noted that while the participation of affected women in needs assessment did increase, this has not necessarily resulted in women and girls being involved in decision making about project activities or response management. For example, in some cases, it was requested to interview the heads of households. However, by only interviewing the heads of households, this can reduce the opportunity for women to have their voices heard as typically the heads of households are male⁸⁰. In the cases that women were consulted, they were often only asked about ‘women’s issues’ such as hygiene or sexual and reproductive health as opposed to being asked about their needs beyond this. Women were also not able to access complaint and feedback mechanisms in the same way as men. These limitations had a negative effect on the quality of the initial response activities for women and girls compared to other groups⁸¹. This is similar to the Women, Peace and Security sphere where there has been a struggle to get more women into decision making roles despite the implementation of Resolution 1325 and others that have followed with the aim of increasing the participation of women.⁸² Thus, while efforts made by the IASC

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Bizzarri, M et al., *H. Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*, Final evaluation report, 2020.

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Moura, T, Roque, S and Santos, R, Missed connections: Representations of gender, (armed) violence and security in Resolution 1325, *Revista Critica de Ciencias Sociais*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2013.

to integrate GEEWG into programming have had some positive effects, there were still a number of limitations to these efforts. It was suggested that one way of increasing women in decision making was to support more women led organizations and groups and integrate these more into the response management and coordination structures.

However, despite these successes in interagency collaboration, Bennet et al.⁸³ argues that there can be challenges with achieving interagency cooperation. While the IASC has been effective in implementing their working practices and had a good commitment to leadership and bring change, there was some concern about individual organizations pushing their own agendas. It was also found that bureaucracy can lead to inefficiency which had resulted in ineffective coordination and decision making. A lack of engagement by staff at meetings was also noted as was a clear understanding of the issues being discussed. Bennet et al. further argue that there is a need for a greater variety in approaches to the IASC's working practices which should include keeping a strategic focus on the IASCs principles, such as integrating more working practices into the IASCs subsidiary bodies, particularly those in relation to emergencies as well as improve the level of engagement amongst partner organizations in the IASCs activities.

⁸³ Bennet, C et al., *Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Humanitarian Policy Group*, 2016.

Data Analysis

Profile – a quick overview of the survey respondents

The survey targeted humanitarian workers in diverse institutions that have had experience with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) structure, with a major focus on the United Nations (UN) system. The questions aimed to evaluate the IASC ability to ensure collaboration and knowledge sharing at the operational levels in the field. Among the 139 respondents, about 65.2% (90 people) have more than 10 years of work experience *exclusively* in the humanitarian sector, followed by 27.7% (38 people) with between five to ten years of work experience. Less than 8% (11 people) have less than four years of experience as a humanitarian worker.

The majority of the respondents worked for the United Nations system. The question related to this topic allowed multiple selection which created an overlap in the data. As an example, the same person could select that one worked for the United Nations, ICRC and for an NGO that will account for three answers. The survey sample contains 17 people that worked for the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) and 117 people that worked for different UN organizations, such as UN World Food Programme, UN Refugees, and UN Human Rights. In order to have a variety of perspectives the survey also received inputs from humanitarian workers from Non-governmental Organizations (43 people), Intergovernmental Organizations (23), and Red Cross organizations (17).

The survey respondents covered all seven UN geographical regions⁸⁴ with most participants working at the Sub-Saharan Africa (92 people), Central and Southern Asia (53), Northern Africa and Western Asia (46), and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (36). The least represented regions are Europe and Northern America (24), Latin America and

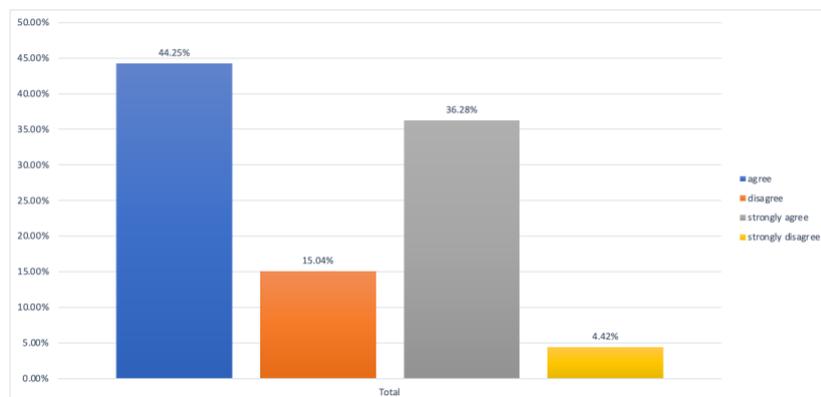
⁸⁴ Central and Southern Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Europe and Northern America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa and Western Asia, Oceania, Australia and New Zealand, and Sub-Saharan Africa according to the United Nations Statistical Division available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>. Consulted on 22 April 2021.

Policy into practice

As described on chapter two⁸⁷, the IASC Working Methods are created by the principals, which is chaired by UN OCHA and composed by a group of the heads of UN agencies and invited organizations. This section of the survey was created to understand how much of policy making at the "higher" level (e.g., headquarter) is relevant to staff working in the field. The question about the adequacy of policies to local realities tries to understand the perception of humanitarian workers by assessing if consultations are made with those who might be affected, and whether the policy is adequate to different work environments. This section also aimed to evaluate whether policy creation considers local needs, if it is developed by people with enough expertise in field operations, and if it provides a unified voice for the Humanitarian sector, including its impact in different institutions.

The overall response was highly positive when evaluating the quality of consultation with affected populations, incorporation of local needs into policy creation, and about the adaptation to different work environments and field needs. However, strong disagreements were found in the analysis related to facilitated access to feedback, and if the feedback from humanitarian workers in the field reaches the highest-level staff.

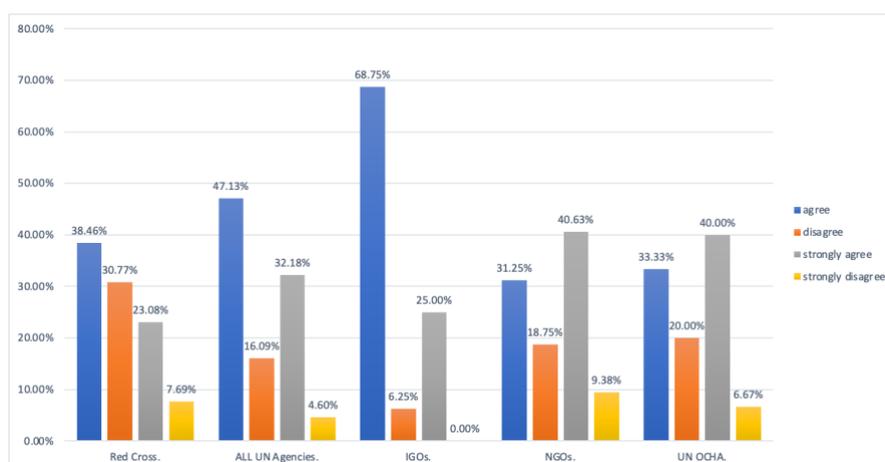
Adequacy of policy making for work environment and field needs by consulting affected stakeholders and incorporating local needs



Adequate policies are designed not just by experts but also
by consulting those who might be affected

⁸⁷ Chapter 2 - IASC Working Methods, pg. XX

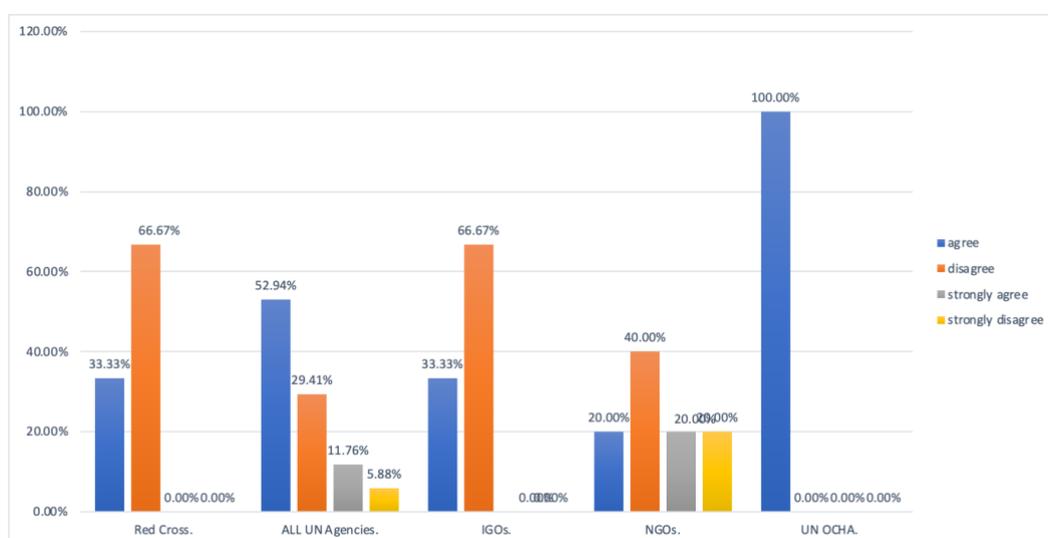
The first question analyzed if the policies are designed not just by experts but by consulting those who might be affected. In total, the respondents rated 80.53% of agreement, including 36.28% of strongly agree. A high number of respondents that work(ed) for the UN OCHA are confident that policies are designed by experts and that this process involve a consultation with those who might be affected (40% strongly agree). This outnumbers the views of all other UN organizations (32.18% strongly agree). However, respondents from the Red Cross family have a different view as they disagree (30.77%) or strongly disagree (6.67%) with it. No other significant discrepancies were found among different profile groups, such as based on years of experience as humanitarian worker, their participation in local and/or regional meetings, and their reason to join the meetings.



Adequacy of policies with consultation process by Institution

Following the investigation, two questions were asked to understand if policies incorporate local needs and if they are adequate to different work environments and field needs. In the first query, the majority of the respondents were also positive when evaluating if local needs were being incorporated in policy making with average evaluation above 70% between agree and strongly agree. If we separate the groups by institution, once again the Red Cross points above 33% of disagreement. The differences also appear when selecting the “conflict group” in the Northern Africa and Western Asia region in which members of all UN agencies, except UN OCHA, and IGOs achieve 37.5%

and 33.33% of disagreement, respectively. It is worth mentioning that the level of credibility between UN OCHA staff achieves 100% between agree (40%) and strongly agree (60%), in this case. A third analysis selecting only workers with experience in Europe and Northern America shows extremely high rejection rates with all groups pointing higher than 33% of disagreement, except UN OCHA. Between this workers, three groups area above 60% of rejection, being the Red Cross and IGOs with 66.67% each, and NGOs with 60%. The group of all UN agencies reaches 35.29% of rejection, as shown in the image below.



Local needs are being incorporated in policy making by institutions – Europe and Northern America

In the second query, about the adequacy of policies to the work environment and field needs, the general view points out a positive evaluation with 79.41% of agreement. This average level of approval is consistent in different profile groups, such as people who participated 4 or more times in IASC activities, that have participated in local and regional meetings, and among the ones in which the meetings frequently helped to reorient their work. The figure changes when dividing the data by institution. The UN OCHA, all UN agencies and Red Cross have a considerable level of disagreement, although it still below the selected margin of 33% of negative evaluations.

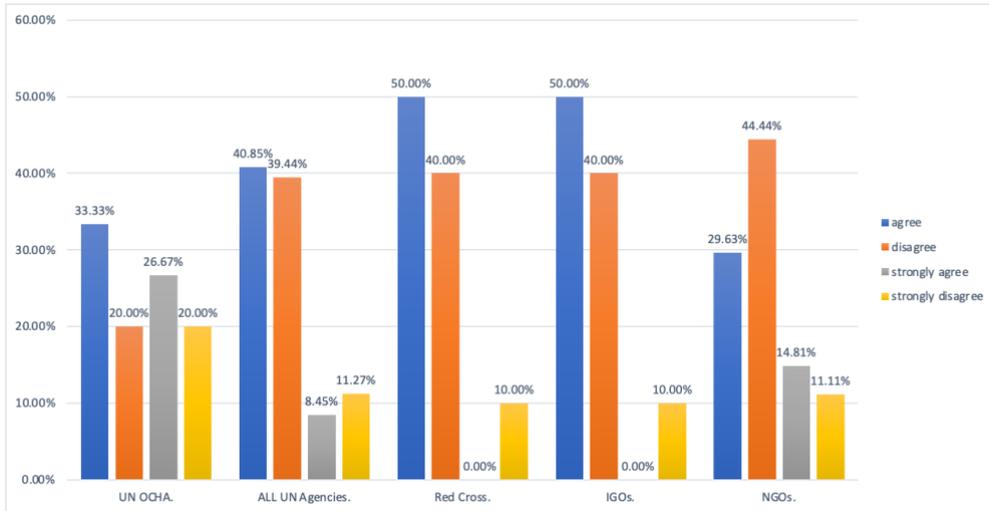
Disagreements regarding easy access to feedbacks and whether the feedback given reaches senior management

Up to this point, the questions focused on institutional evaluations. In order to evaluate individual perceptions, three questions were added to the survey to validate previous statements and check the consistency of responses. On the personal dimension of Policy into practice, this thesis investigates if the respondents feel their opinions are heard when elaborating new policies, if they have access to give feedback related to field experience, and if they feel their feedback reaches the highest-level staff. As will be made evident below, the discrepancies start to appear with the level of disagreement reaching up to 50% on many occasions even among workers with more than 10 years of experience in which, according to the survey results, is a group that tends to comply more with the IASC structure and working methods. This is relevant as the humanitarian workers are one of the affected groups that should be consulted on the design of adequate policies.

In the first question, a predominant group feel that they have their opinion heard on the elaboration of policies while about 30% do not think their points of view are taken into account. People with five to ten years of humanitarian work experience totals 42.45% of disagreement compared with a quarter of workers with more than 10 years of experience. An interesting variance showed when comparing the data per region. The workers in Europe and Northern America felt that their opinion was heard when elaborating new policies and procedures with most of institutions achieving 100% of agreement. The perception changes in other regions that are considered more distant of the headquarters. The Sub-Saharan Africa region, despite having one of the UN headquarters in Kenya, had higher numbers of disagreement among all institutions, especially UN OCHA (33.33%) and all UN agencies (37.50%). Also, in Latin America and the Caribbean region the disagreement among all UN agencies reached 55.56%.

Connected with the perception that their opinion is heard, the second question investigates if humanitarians have facilitated access to give feedback related to the field experience. On average, the results show a consistent agreement with this question. The biggest difference occurred in the Northern Africa and Western Asia region in which all

institutions raised problems with sharing feedback, except UN OCHA. In this specific group, 39.21% of all UN agencies disagree with this statement, and the Red Cross and NGO groups accounts for 50% disagreement each.



I feel that my feedback reaches the highest-level staff by Institution

The third question is the most controversial. The affirmation “I feel that my feedback reaches the highest-level staff” has almost 50% of disagreement. If divided by institutions, even the UN OCHA, that rates extremely positive, have 40% of disagreement that includes 20% of strongly disagree. As visible on the image below, all other institutions scored 10% or higher in strong disagreement and up to 60% of disagreement. These results may sound contradictory with the previous question that showed that more than 70% agree their opinion is heard to elaborate new policies. As an assumption, it may signal that although respondents have easy access to feedback, they may not feel that this feedback is converted in advice for senior level management and that they are not really being listened to. It may also be interrelated with the strong top-down structure of the United Nations system. These assumptions will be further explored in the next section.

The bearing of IASC on a large number of humanitarian actors and the individual commitment with meetings and results

This section aims to understand some factors that may affect the IASC bearing on humanitarian actors with a focus on personal commitment to results. First, it poses questions to understand if the policies and procedures are developed by knowledgeable people, including the perspective of 48 respondents that supported the creation of the IASC guidelines, handbooks, or good practices as part of their work. Second, it explores if the IASC provides unified voice for the humanitarian sector.

To analyze these questions, the answers were filtered by profile characteristics such as the reason for attending IASC meetings, number of times of participation in IASC activities, and frequency in which meetings helped reorient their work. Another focus group is the Senior Leadership Group, composed of 35 respondents that participated as chair, co-chair, chief of cluster, and in the coordination, such as cluster coordinators, inter-cluster coordinators, and emergency coordinator in areas like education, food safety, nutrition, protection, refugee, shelter and others. The analysis compared the “senior leadership group” with the average results to understand if there is a significant difference of commitment between senior management and all staff.

Before, the previous analysis was made mostly dividing profile groups by region, institution, and sometimes years of work experience. From now on, the new extract of data is prioritizing only the ones directly involved in IASC work. It is highly relevant to compare and evaluate the individual commitment and the impact of IASC decisions.

The first question divided opinions to understand if policy developers have enough experience in the field operation, showing some problematic issues on the evaluation of all UN agencies (except UN OCHA) and the Red Cross. Only 55.34% agree or strongly agree that they have enough experience in the field. The view per institution shows that the levels of evaluation keep relatively the same. The results among UN OCHA staff are slightly better, with 66.66% of agreement (44.44% agree, and 22.22% strongly agree), but keep low between all UN agencies (50% of agreement), Red Cross (54.55%), IGOs (56.25%) and NGOs (65.63%). The figure changes when isolating answers of the focus group “senior leadership” with 72.42% of agreement, which shows a homogenous view among leadership, but still does not show a level of consistency above 90% of positive

evaluation, as stated in the methodology. Another validation question assessed if respondents believe policy-developers are well qualified for this role with 78% of agreement. Although both queries may be similar, they assess different things. The first focus on experience in field operation while the second on individual qualification. Among institutions, the Red Cross focus group achieved 41.67% of disagreement, thus indicating possible problems. Overall, there is skepticism about people who develop policies and procedures.

Even with uncertainty about policy developers, the respondents tend to agree that IASC provides a unified voice for the humanitarian sector, with 81.65% of agreement. This number reaches 94.28% in the leadership group and 93.33% in the UN OCHA, placing them in the Promoters score of the Net Promoter Score (NPS) methodology. Other relevant stakeholders to evaluate if IASC weld together the humanitarian sector are the IGOs and NGOs that score 93.33% and 84.38%, respectively. On the opposite direction, the Red Cross had only 69.23% of agreement, which represent a divided view in this group. Another piece of data that score high was among the ones who IASC local or regional meetings helped to reorient their work (57.58% always helped; 36.36% helped frequently).

In a fourth question, 61.61% agree IASC decisions have little bearing on a large number of humanitarian actors, including local communities, affected country governments, civil society organizations and the private sector. Sampling the data by institution, it means that decisions of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee have not strong influence on other stakeholders for UN OCHA (72.72%), Red Cross (72.73%) and IGOs (78.57%). For all UN agencies, except UN OCHA, and NGOs the bearing is more prominent. The evaluation keeps stable in different profile selections, as the ones who participated in local and regional meetings; and the ones who engage four to six or seven or more times in IASC activities. However, segregating data by region a clear difference appears between workers in the most conflicted region, Northern Africa and Western Asia, that reaches higher levels of disagreement (60% at UN OCHA; 44.83% at all UN agencies; and 40% at Red Cross). The group all UN agencies also disagree considerable in Europe and

Norther America (58.33%) and in Sub-Saharan Africa (58.33%). Two assumptions may be inferred. The first, is that all UN agencies workers feel that IASC decisions have more influence on their work if compared with other stakeholders. The second, is that the lack of a strong state to put into place domestic measures to address human rights abuses may increase the bearing of IASC decisions on other humanitarian actors.

Moreover, only 56.52% reported receiving adequate and sound feedback related to the field work. The equilibrium between giving feedback and receiving a return may influence on the commitment of staff and on the bearing of IASC decisions on humanitarian workers. The tendency of Europe and Northern America region to evaluate more positive than all other regions persist, albeit in this case it is divided with only 60% of agreement. For all regions, disagreement level is extremely high reaching up to 100% of disagreement between Red Cross workers in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, and in the Eastern and South-Eastern Asia region. Also, most of the UN OCHA staff reported receiving sound feedback about their work with Europe and Northern America region acquiring 100% of agreement but staff in Northern Africa and Western Asia region, the most in conflict zone, there is 33% of strong disagreement.

Finally, the fifth question focus on individual commitment and sense of responsibility for the IASC meetings and results with agreement of 76.77% among all respondents and 82.86 among the senior leadership. The UN OCHA group scored 100% of agreement with 60% of “strongly agree” answers in the leadership. Higher levels of agreement were also found between the ones who participated in local or regional meetings (81.82%); by workers with more than 5 years of experience (76.60%); and that participated at least four times in IASC activities (77.78%). Following the pattern for this block of questions, the Red Cross staff disagree (41.67%) with their responsibility about IASC meetings.

The effectiveness of turning policy into practice is further discussed on the Synthesis chapter using the findings described up to this point. This elaborates on the adequacy of policies for the field and local needs, the easy access to feedback reaching senior

management, and the individual commitment with the IASC results. Is the structure too rigid in a way that is restricting or preventing local adaptation?

Collaboration – Fostering internal and external collaboration and breaking silos within the UN and with non-UN humanitarian organizations

The experience in the Gulf War showed that the “UN's humanitarian assistance to conflict-displaced people was uncoordinated and led to duplicated efforts”⁸⁸. The resolution 46/182 “Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations” declared the need to “make more effective the collective efforts of the international community, in particular the United Nations system, in providing humanitarian assistance”⁸⁹. Therefore, since the IASC constitution, the ideas of working in a “collective” manner and avoiding “duplicated efforts” was expressed by the United Nations as a major goal to support affected countries and populations.

This section assesses the level of collaboration among different stakeholders linked with the IASC. The first part address collaboration inside the United Nations system, including among different UN agencies and between diverse departments inside the same UN agency/office. The second part focus on collaboration with non-UN organizations to solve local problems and to evaluate if the interagency collaboration is well-functioning. The third and final part, introduces the personal dimension that will approach how free and open the system is seen by its participants. The majority of the answers indicate that collaboration is well-functioning, but some space for improvements were identified as will be made evident below.

Challenges in breaking silos at the United Nations trough the IASC

⁸⁸ Reporting Unit, OCHA on Message: General Assembly Resolution 46/182. March 2012 Available at https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/Documents/120402_OOM-46182_eng.pdf

⁸⁹ General Assembly. Resolution 46/182 Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. 19 December 1992. Consulted in April 2019. Available at <https://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm>

The starting point for this analysis acknowledges the United Nations system as a single organization divided in different agencies, offices, and programmes. This idea is highlighted in the section Delivery as One in the chapter “Success factors of collaboration and breaking silos for a better delivery”. Therefore, when referring to “internal collaboration” this study encompasses the relations inside a single UN entity as well as among different UN entities. In these aspects, the global evaluation was highly favorable to the IASC.

The level of agreement about the IASC contribution to collaboration among UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations achieved 94.11% with 36.13% of “strongly agree” answers. Also, among the senior leadership group the positive rate was 96.87% including 50% of “strongly agree” answers. This result characterizes the respondents as Promoters of the IASC, according to the NPS score. The collaboration rates were almost unanimous even at the Red Cross staff (92.31%) which, according to the results of this survey, are more critical towards the system. All institutions scored above 33% of strong agreement in the general group and above 50% in the senior leadership group.

Bringing the discussion within the borders of the United Nations, the results keep positive. The IASC is fostering collaboration among different UN agencies by the evaluation of 91.87% of respondents. Only among the NGOs the disagreement achieved 15.79% but is considered low. The idea that “the interaction with UN agencies during and after the meetings is mostly feasible due to IASC as a facilitator” raised disagreements. In total, 36.47% of respondents contradict this statement. The group with greatest variation was precisely that of all UN agencies (40% disagreement). Albeit the discordance, it can mean a positive aspect. For example, it is possible to infer that staff of diverse UN agencies will interact independently of the IASC as a bridge.

Furthermore, the IASC is not fostering collaboration between departments in the same UN agency/office at the same level as it does with different entities. In this matter, the agreement level drops down to 74.75% or to 25.25% of disagreement. The the senior leadership group remains with 88.46%. The discrepancies become more visible when

showing data by institution. The rate of disagreement is 20% for UN OCHA, 28.75% for all UN agencies, 18.18% for Red Cross, 12.50% for IGOs, and 21.88% for NGOs which is still considered a homogeneous positive view. A problematic issue was identified at UN OCHA senior leadership group that rated 40% of disagreement about collaboration between departments in the same UN agency. It may indicate that although the IASC supports collaboration among different UN entities, the UN OCHA is not fostering collaboration inside its own premises.

The IASC as a catalyst for collaboration among non-UN organizations

This section give attention to the collaboration promoted towards different stakeholders that are not part of the UN system. This type of collaboration is essential to avoid duplicated efforts, as described in the introductory message of this data analysis chapter. The questions are about the IASC support to help non-UN organizations to collaborate with other non-UN organizations, including to understand if the interagency collaboration is well-functioning and if support is given to achieve shared objectives.

The evaluation of collaboration among non-UN organizations remains with positive perception but at lower levels. In total, 80.20% agree that IASC helps non-UN organizations to collaborate with other non-UN organizations to solve local problems, including 90.91% among UN OCHA respondents. To some degree, the NGO staff have a total level of agreement a bit lower (75.75%) but scores 33.33% of strong agreement which places this group as Promoters. Similar standard was achieved related to IASC supporting collaboration between different organizations to achieve shared objectives (89.09%) with no considerable variation by institution or other profile groups. In contrast, the sense that interagency collaboration is well-functioning is backed up by 71.27% amidst overall respondents and by 76.92% of the senior leadership group. The Red Cross is the group that disagree with both questions and has disagreement levels of 38.46% and 36.36%, respectively.

Avoiding duplicated efforts and individual perceptions of the effectiveness of the coordination procedure

This part of the analysis brings the personal dimension to the center of the evaluation instead of looking at institutional perceptions about the IASC. It will approach how free and open the system is seen by its participants when assessing how freely respondents can speak without fear of retaliation or recrimination from other participants, if they feel they can have an active voice, and if more open space should be given to non-UN organizations. It also explores a possible barrier for non-UN engagement related with the subject of the meetings.

The affirmation “I feel I can speak freely without any fear of retaliation/recrimination from my supervisor, superiors or other colleagues” had an overall positive response with a homogeneous view but did not achieve a consistent level⁹⁰. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning the different perceptions between the overall responses (79.05% of agreement) and the ones that participated in local or regional meetings (81.35%) versus the views of the senior leadership group (75%) and the ones who participated several times in IASC activities (77.55%). Although there is a small difference, the senior management and the ones with extensive participation in IASC activities, they sense less the possibility to speak freely without judgment. By comparing per type of institution, the group of all UN agencies (20.69) and NGOs (28.13%) reaches the highest disagreements but still not enough to indicate problems.

The question “I feel I cannot have an active voice” was posed to counterbalance and validate the previous assessment. In this case, the higher the level of disagreement the better it is about openness to have an active voice. The overall answers rated 75% of disagreement and 79.16% (29.83% of strong disagreement) among the senior leadership group. The scores were also high between participants in local and regional meetings (81.24% disagreement) and the ones that participated several times in activities (78.57%). For this specific question, the hierarchical levels are emphasized at the UN OCHA with

⁹⁰ Based on the methodology, a consistent level is achieved with $\geq 90\%$ of Agree and Strongly Agree; or $\geq 30\%$ of Strongly Agree.

the average of answers totaling 63.63% of disagreement, while it reaches 80% of disagreement (40% strong disagreement) in the sampling of the group of leaders.

One of the goals of this analysis is to address the IASC value to avoid duplicated efforts with different institutions working on the same things without any joint approach. Due to this, a question was placed to estimate if “more free and open space should be given to non-UN organizations collaborate”. In total, 90% of respondents agree with this affirmation, including 100% of the senior leadership group with both rating above 30% of strong agreement which shows extreme consistency. The sampling by institution shows that all groups scores above 90% of agreement. The level of “strong agree” in UN OCHA and NGOs reached 50% and 34%, respectively. Among the senior leadership there is a reduction to 40% of strong agreement at UN OCHA.

Hitherto, the survey results showed a positive (about 75% of agreement) but not a solid result about speaking freely without fear and having an active voice. Also, there is a strong perception that more space should be given to non-UN organizations. One of the assumptions when elaborating the questions for the survey was that UN OCHA was pushing their own agenda rather than a local/collective agenda⁹¹. A question was posed to investigate if it constitutes a barrier for non-UN organizations engagement which showed to be true. In total, there is a 72.45% of agreement in the overall group and 73.91% in the senior leadership, 75.93% among the ones who participated in local or regional meetings, and 77.27% in the group that participated several times in IASC activities. In all of the four profile groups, they rated above 30% for “strongly agree” and reached up to 40.91% among the habitué in IASC activities. Based on the described methodology, if the rate of “agree” and “strongly agree” combined reaches 90% or more, or if the level of “strongly agree” is equal or higher than 30%, than there is an indication of a consistent result.

⁹¹ Bennet, C et al., *Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee*, Humanitarian Policy Group, 2016.

Knowledge Sharing – Integrated approach for working and learning together in humanitarian response to crises and disasters.

According to the ISO 30401:2018, knowledge sharing is one of the activities used to apply and integrate the current relevant knowledge of the organization in order to improve actions and decision making⁹². Therefore, the knowledge transfer activities are relevant in all organizational levels, including workers in headquarter or in the field, with technical activities or in the management. This section will examine how this integrated approach for working and learning together is perceived among humanitarian workers involved with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

The first part focus on the exchange and co-creation of knowledge between the parties and if it harnesses diverse experiences and perspectives. Then, will address the practical knowledge perception, considering the relevant of the guidelines and other documents as well as evaluating the need of such documents for an effective humanitarian work. The view of 48 people who directly help producing such material is included. Lastly, this work will investigate the willingness of people to share their knowledge and experience to help solving other colleagues' problems. Two common knowledge management activities are evaluated as possible facilitators for knowledge sharing.

This portion will focus on the data groups that was more involved in knowledge sharing activities. It will compare information based on respondent's attendance in IASC local or regional meetings (considering only the ones who participated), the number of times these meetings help them to reorient their work, the reason why they participated (share information, receive information, as an observer, or to represent the organization) and the number of times in which respondents participated in IASC activities.

Inclusion of diverse experiences and perspectives

The IASC review requested by the Principals Steering Group states that the IASC “must allow for a degree of flexibility and decentralisation of its structures and view itself more as part of a network of partners and a versatile coalition of expertise that harnesses diverse experiences and perspective to deliver a humanitarian response to those in need.”⁹³ An excerpt of this quote was addressed on the survey to evaluate if diverse experiences and perspectives are associated with the IASC. The result was positive with 86.14% of agreement in the overall responses and 93.33% among the senior leadership group.

⁹² International Organization for Standardization, *Knowledge management systems - Requirements ISO 30401:2018*, 2018, Available at <https://www.iso.org/standard/68683.html>.

⁹³ Bennet, C et al., *Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee: Requested by the IASC Principals Steering Group*, ODI, 2014, p.6

Comparing the results by institution, it shows that the UN system comply at higher levels with this statement (92.86% UN OCHA; 86.07% all UN agencies) than other stakeholders (80% Red Cross; 78.57% IGOs; 80% NGOs).

The subsequent query evaluated if the IASC “facilitate the exchange and co-creation of knowledge between the parties engaging in humanitarian action” and having similar results (89.82% agreement). Considering the frequency in which meetings helped reoriented their work due to IASC : the ones who did it frequently achieved 31.25% of “strong agree” and 96.88% of total agreement; versus 79.15% of agreement (20.83% disagree) in the group that reoriented informed IASC meetings helped sometimes or never helped reorient their work . No considerable differences were found on the profiles related to participation in IASC activities or in local and regional meetings. However, the group that participate in the meetings "as observers" disagree in 37.17% and challenges the view that IASC harness diverse experiences and perspective. The evaluation per region was used to acquire the view of different parties engaging in humanitarian action. The Central and Southern Asia rated 100% of agreement, the Eastern and South-Eastern Asia punctuated 88.89%, and Sub-Saharan Africa raised 91.78% of “agree”. The other regions were sceptical in moderate levels with Latin America and the Caribbean having the highest disagreement level of 30.77%. The Europe and Norther America region rated 23.53%; Oceania, Australia, and New Zealand 25%; Northern Africa and Western Asia 16.67%.

[The relevance of IASC guidelines, handbooks and good practices](#)

The next three questions focus on the practical perception about the relevance of the knowledge documents created by the IASC. The first question assessed the frequency of use of guidelines, handbooks and good practices in the work activities with overall agreement of 79.48% and of 86.67% among the senior management group. The view by institution shows lower levels of objection and all groups scored above 80% of agreement (93.33% agreement at UN OCHA). The sample of respondents that informed the IASC meetings almost never or never helped them to reorient their work, the disagreement line scored 33.33% based on staff from all UN agencies, Red Cross and NGOs. Among the

ones who participated in IASC activities several times the score was 80.77% of agree and 84.83% among the ones who participated maximum three times. The group that participated in local or regional meetings scored 82.76% while the ones that did not participate scored 75.86% of agreement.

The second question relates to how essential the guidelines, handbooks, and good practices are for an effective humanitarian work. The score of 90.99% of agreement in the overall group and 96.77% among the leadership, both achieved the consensus level with 34.23% and 45.16% of strong agreement. The levels of agreement keep high even in-between contrasting groups such as the ones who participated in local and regional meetings (92.98%) and those who did not participate (86.49%). The same happens between those who participated several times in IASC activities (92%) and those who participated fewer times (93.10).

The data was also segregated to view the opinion of the ones who have supported the creation of these documents. The 48 respondents agree in 94.87% that this work involves different perspectives and diverse experiences on the elaboration of guidelines and procedures. Also, 93.33% agree that these contents are essential for a proper work. Therefore, although the overall results show that IASC knowledge documents did not achieve the consensus level of above 90% of agreement, it shows that workers heavily rely on such documents and consider it essential for an effective work.

[Willingness to share knowledge and experiences](#)

The personal dimension analyses the people's aptitude to share their knowledge and experiences with other people working in the humanitarian arena. It also assesses how comfortable people feel in their work environments. This section also explores some common solutions used in knowledge management and its suitability for humanitarian action, such as an online environment to facilitate exchange globally and a forum to harness consultation among people with similar experiences and backgrounds.

The solid majority of respondents (96.92%) feel comfortable sharing their knowledge to help solving other colleague's problems, in which 39.23% strongly agree with it. A measure was done based on the years of experience, but the high level of willingness to share experience keeps the same among those more and less experienced staff.

However, when the analysis turns to the work environment, the situation is not favorable in some of the institutions. The statement "in the current working environment, I do not feel comfortable sharing my experience and knowledge with other colleagues" raised 75% of disagreement, which in this case is something positive meaning they most part feel comfortable sharing experience based on their work environment. It is worth mentioning that half of participants with less than four years of work experience does not feel enough openness in their work environment. Between the most experienced the number grows to 76.85%.

Furthermore, the analysis by institution shows points of attention with the work environment at the UN OCHA and Red Cross. At UN OCHA the percentage of people that do not feel comfortable in sharing their own experience and knowledge with other colleagues is relatively high (45.45%). It contrasts with the previous findings as 100% of OCHA staff would like to use their experience to help other colleagues, including 60% of them that strongly agree with it. The question is explicitly linking the working environment with the employees' confidence to sharing. Rigid structures and top-down organizations are barriers for knowledge sharing and it could be one of the reasons for UN OCHA staff feel blocked in their intention for knowledge sharing. As for the Red Cross, 38.46% signaled not feeling comfortable sharing their experience based on the work environment. As Red Cross participates in IASC meetings as observer and has neutrality and impartiality as part of its fundamental principles⁹⁴, this could be one of the reasons for such a result.

⁹⁴ ICRC, The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. 1996 p. 4 Available at https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0513.pdf. Consulted in 26 September 2021.

Suitability of knowledge management solutions

There are many ways of promoting knowledge sharing in an organization and using specific knowledge management (KM) activities can increase collaboration and shared goals. Two common solutions in Km were evaluated by the participants. The first question assessed if having “an online environment suitable for human interactions could facilitate knowledge sharing. The score reached 92.43% of agreement, including 31.09% of strong agreement. In the segregation of data by institution, the numbers keep above 90% for all groups and all of them also rated above 30% of strong agreement which, according to the NPS, indicates that respondents are “promoters” of having an online environment to facilitate knowledge sharing. The second solution presented was related to having a forum for internal consultancy in which they could freely ask questions or to help colleagues related to their work challenges. Again, the results reached 92.31% with up to 32.48% of strong agreement. All institutions rated above 90% and, except Red Cross, it scored above 30% of strong agreement. The evaluation of activities to facilitate knowledge sharing were extremely positive and reached the consensus level.

Synthesis: Challenges and inhibiting factors for a global humanitarian action

This research proposes a tripod between collaboration, knowledge sharing, and policy development to effectively work together and break silos between UN and non-UN organizations. To function properly, the three elements need to be in balance. The description below will make evident that all elements have positive aspects and will highlight what aspects need further analysis and attention.

Policy into practice

The policy development is a complex mechanism that should, ideally, consult all stakeholders to incorporate different perspectives and needs. It is quite complex to elaborate policy in an organization like the United Nations as it deals with different

human rights subjects and hit as a global operation. The complexity is prevalent even when reducing the scope of policy creation for humanitarian assistance. In general, after a policy is designed, there is an implementation process that may include creation of document derived of from the policy, such as procedures, guidelines and handbooks that will guide the operation of all activities in the field. For that reason, the credibility of a policy document is extremely relevant for the IASC to be able to influence other stakeholders.

The survey shows that IASC policies are considered being designed by experts and that this process involves consultation. However, policy developers were considered not having enough experience in the field operation by almost half of all participants in the survey. Only the senior leadership focus group had a positive view about this topic. Moreover, the incorporation of local needs in policy making showed substantial levels of disagreement in groups like Northern Africa and Western Asia region, the region with the highest number of conflicts, and Europe and Northern America region as described in the data analysis⁹⁵. The UN OCHA is the only group of institutions that consistently agree with the incorporation of local needs. Based on my personal experience working at the at UN OCHA, I believe the positive evaluation about consulting those who might be affected is linked with an annual request from headquarters in which staff should send their lessons learned about their activities. This work requirement may create a sensation at UN OCHA staff that they are being consulted and local needs are being incorporated in the elaboration of policies. As this is an internal activity, other group of institutions are not directly consulted which may be the reason for affecting the results.

Additionally, another explanation based on the data collected shows disagreements regarding easy access to feedbacks and whether the feedback given reaches senior management. The level of disagreement about feedback reached up to 50% on many occasions even among workers with more than 10 years of work experience — according to the survey results, this group that tends to comply more with the IASC structure and

⁹⁵ Adequacy of policy making for work environment and field needs by consulting affected stakeholders and incorporating local needs

working methods compared with other groups. There is also strong evidence that feedback does not reach out to the “highest-level” staff. In this case, even the UN OCHA, that rates most of questions extremely positive, have 40% of disagreement. The results indicate that the farther away from the headquarters, the less their opinion is heard. One of the limitations of the survey was not being able to identify with precision if participants work at the headquarter or at field offices. Therefore, participants working in Europe and Northern America were considered as part of the headquarters based in Geneva, Switzerland, and New York, United States of America. Contradicting the average of the answers, this group feel that their opinion is heard when elaboration new policies and procedures with most of institutions in this region achieving 100% of agreement. It is not possible to give a concrete answer for this difference of perception based on the data collected and this topic could be further explored. A simplistic assumption could be that staff members working at headquarters are closer to the policy developers and, therefore, they feel their voices are listened.

All the reasons listed above corroborate with the inconclusive result that IASC decisions have strong influence on a large number of humanitarian actors, including local communities, affected country governments, civil society organizations and the private sector. The opinions were very divided with 61.61% pointing that IASC decisions have little bearing while 38.39% believe the opposite.

Even with the uncertainties listed so far, the respondents agree that IASC provides a unified voice for the humanitarian sector, with 81% of agreement. To the same extent, the levels of individual commitment and sense of responsibility for the IASC meetings and results score positively with 76.77% that agree. However, even scoring positively, none of both questions achieved the level of consistency that indicates a very positive evaluations, as stipulated in the methodology. Perhaps, if actions were taken by IASC to reduce skepticism about policy developers and have an equilibrium about staff giving feedback and receiving in return it may increase the bearing of IASC among stakeholders.

Collaboration

The concept that the United Nations system should “Deliver as One” at country level was one of the key recommendations from the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document⁹⁶. Although this concept is more linked with the administrative structure with one leader, one programme and one budget, this arrangement was effective to breaking silos among different UN organizations and facilitating collaboration. It is not possible to correlate directly the findings of this study with the UN resolution taken in 2005. However, it may be one of the contributors for the consistent positive evaluation about collaboration promoted via the IASC as some rates were almost unanimous even at the Red Cross staff in which, according to the results of this survey, are more critical towards the system.

The evaluation about the IASC contribution to collaboration among UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations were extremely positive, as well as about collaboration among different UN agencies. Nonetheless, it is questionable to what extent these positive results are due to IASC activities. A disambiguation query was asked to evaluate if the interaction among UN agencies during and after the meetings is mostly feasible due to IASC as a facilitator. In total, 36.47% of respondents disagree with this statement, especially the group of all UN agencies (40% of disagreement). Based on the overall developments and reforms at the United Nations, it is possible to infer that although IASC contributes to collaboration, staff from different UN agencies will interact independently of the IASC as a bridge.

Furthermore, an assessment was done to investigate if the IASC is fostering collaboration between departments in the same UN agency/Office. One may argue that internal collaboration within a specific UN agency is not part of the mandate of the IASC. Taking it into consideration, the analysis for this question focused only on evaluating the UN OCHA. The UN OCHA senior leadership group rated 40% of disagreement. Thus, it may indicate that although the IASC supports collaboration among different UN entities, the

⁹⁶ General Assembly, *Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, A/61/583*. 20 November 2006. Available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/61/583>, p.5. Consulted on 27 September 2021.

UN OCHA is not fostering collaboration inside its own premises. Based on my personal view, this could be quite problematic as the request for others to collaborate should be based on the example of what is done by the one who demand it.

An ancillary assessment was made to understand if the IASC is a catalyst to help non-UN organizations to collaborate with other non-UN organizations to solve local problems. The overall answers were positive, with NGOs rating a bit lower than the average (75.75%) but with 33.33% of strong agreement which still places this group of institutions as promoters of the IASC in this aspect. In spite of the fact that non-UN organizations have their collaboration facilitated by the IASC, it was raised by 90% of the respondents, including 100% of leadership, that more free and open space should be given to non-UN organizations to collaborate. The assumption for these differences is that the IASC meetings offer an space for interaction among different organizations, but not enough space is given to diverse actors to speak and work together. Although there is a small difference, the data set showed that senior leadership and the ones who participated several times in IASC activities feel less free to speak without judgment, if compared with the overall responses.

Knowledge sharing

As important as collaboration, knowledge sharing supports organizations to be more productive with staff spending less time and resources to achieve its objectives whilst working and learning together. To this extent according to the results of this research, the IASC is harnessing diverse experiences and perspectives to deliver humanitarian response to those in need and is facilitating the exchange and co-creation of knowledge between stakeholders. The respondents from the UN system, including UN OCHA and all UN agencies, tend to comply more with this affirmation. The relevance of guidelines, handbooks and good practices created by the IASC was positive with respondents heavily rely on such documents and consider it essential and effective for the humanitarian work.

Another relevant aspect for knowledge sharing is the individual willingness to share their knowledge and experience to support other colleagues. The solid majority are open to

support others; however, they find barriers on organizational structures with a work environment that is not favorable for such practice. The percentage of UN OCHA staff that feel this work environment barriers are quite high. This could be due to very hierarchical structures and a top-down approach that does not allow free communication and support among different people in the same organization or to interact with other organizations.

Main conclusions

- Policies are developed by knowledgeable people. However, they are considered with feel experience in the field and there is a sensation that it is a one-way conversation only. Some feedback may be requested to the elaboration of policies and procedures, but no follow-up is done with field staff.
- UN OCHA staff evaluates the IASC activities very positively. However, in many cases this same feeling is not shared among other stakeholders. The IASC is chaired by UN OCHA and there is a general perception that it is pushing its own agenda, which constitute barriers for other organizations to engage more closely. This point was raised in the review requested by the Principals and was reconfirmed in this survey⁹⁷. Some work could be developed to improve the perception of the IASC towards different institutions that participate in the process.
- Staff have interest and willingness to participate in collaborative work and knowledge sharing activities to support other colleagues. However, institutional barriers with a non-favorable working environment are barriers to Deliver as One.

⁹⁷ Bennet, C et al., *Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Humanitarian Policy Group*, 2014. P.5

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to explore the capacity of the IASC to achieve effective collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst the various humanitarian actors, both in the United Nations system and non-United Nations organizations. The United Nations being a system as a single organization divided in different agencies, offices, and programmes. As argued within this thesis, collaboration amongst humanitarian actors is essential in order to avoid duplicated efforts and create more cohesion amongst the various humanitarian groups for maximum efficiency. Interagency collaboration also has a number of other benefits including placing more pressure on humanitarian organizations to be transparent and accountable and can also ensure that resources are spent where they are most needed. Furthermore, when humanitarian agencies work together, they have a greater ability to share their knowledge on lessons learned as well as to share ideas on where they have achieved successes. Hence, knowledge management plays an important role in this process, which has also been explored within this thesis. The transfer of knowledge is relevant at all organizational levels, including workers in headquarter or in the field, with technical activities or in the management. Thus, considering the importance of collaboration amongst humanitarian agencies, there is a great need for organizations such as the IASC and consequently, there is a great need to ensure that these processes and projects are continuously evaluated, which is what this thesis has aimed to achieve.

The research for this project was conducted through a survey with a number of respondents who work for the UN as well as a number of organizations and aimed to understand how the IASC facilitates collaboration between UN and non-UN organizations. This included understanding how well the collaboration between different agencies functioned and whether sufficient support was provided in order to achieve shared objectives. Overall, policies are developed by knowledgeable people, however they are considered with feel experience in the field and there is a sensation that it is a one-way conversation only. The UN OCHA staff evaluates the IASC activities very positively. However, in many cases this same feeling is not shared among other stakeholders. Also, staff have interest and willingness to participate in collaborative work

and knowledge sharing activities to support other colleagues, but face institutional barriers with a non-favorable working environment to Deliver as One.

Thus, this thesis demonstrates that while there are still a number of gaps and challenges that remain in regards to IASC's working policy, there have also been a number of successes as well. Bringing together a wide range of humanitarian actors from a broad range of spectrums with different missions and policies is no easy task and challenges are to be expected. As demonstrated in this thesis, there have been challenges in the provision of relief, specifically in areas that are transitioning from crisis. However, the IASC has shown concerted efforts to overcome these challenges and find solutions to them. One example of this could be the initiation of the CPR network and the 4R process. However, as with all policies that involve multiple actors, there are still gaps in regards to having clear guidelines on these policies.

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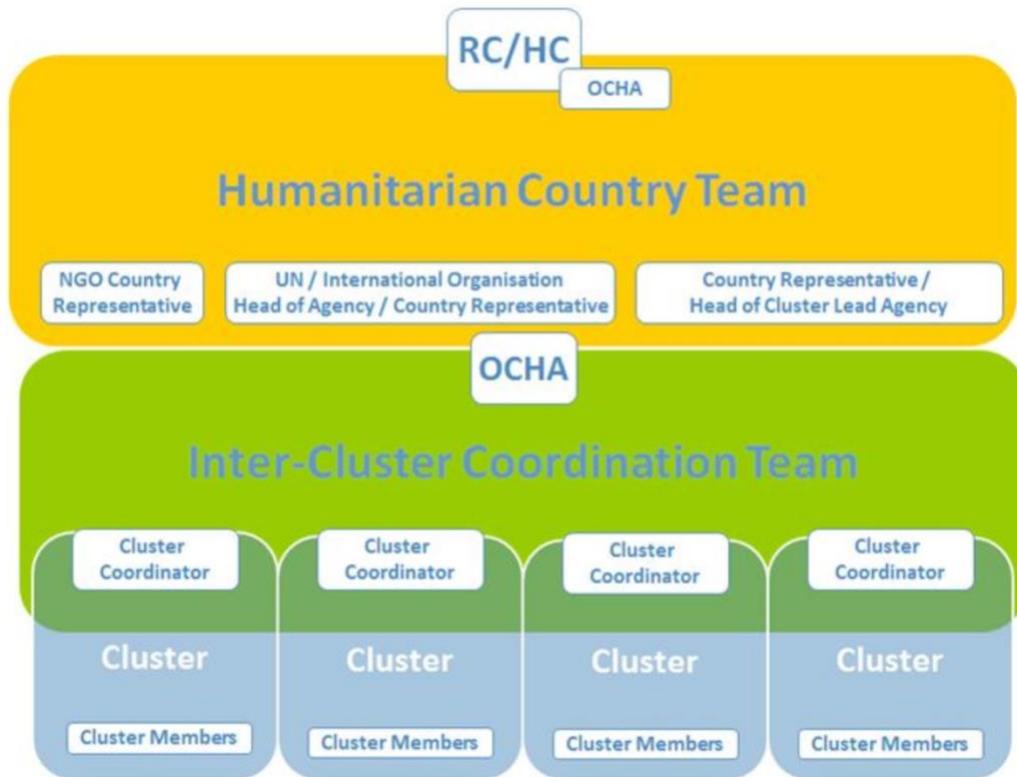
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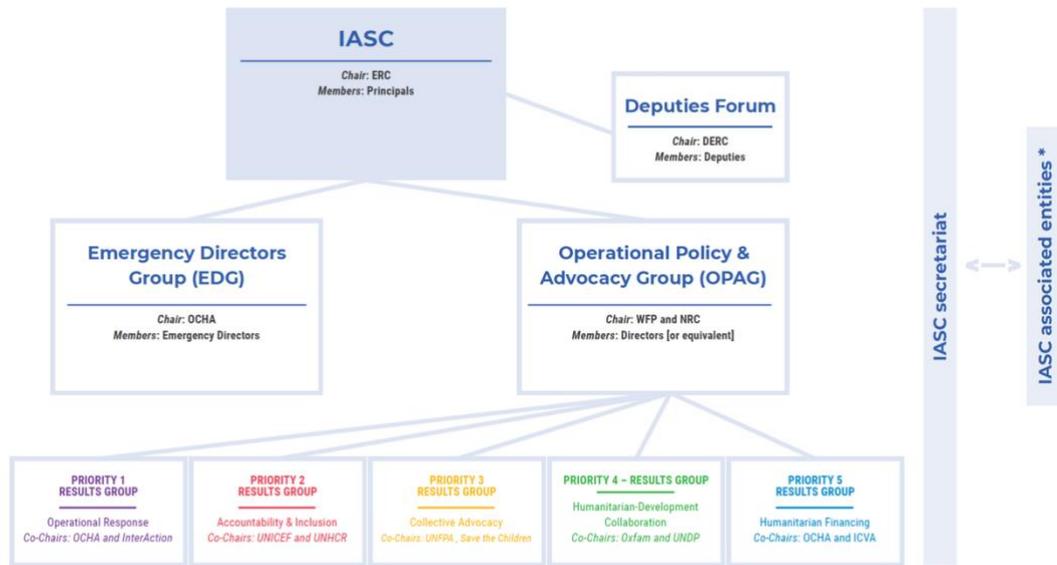
Annex

Inter-Cluster cooperation⁹⁸



⁹⁸ (Humanitarian Response, 2021)

Organizational chart of the IASC (2019 – 2020)⁹⁹



* The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Group (IAHE), Global Cluster Coordination Group (GCCC), Humanitarian Programme Cycle Steering Group (HPCSG) and Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, Reference Group on Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support

⁹⁹ (Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2019)