

## Helpdesk Research Report: Multi-Year Funding to Humanitarian Organisations in Protracted Crises

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**Query:** Identify literature, analysis and donor policies on current humanitarian funding mechanisms used by donors to provide multi-year funding to humanitarian organisations in protracted crises. Please highlight any models, policies or mechanisms recognised or suggested as best-practice.

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### 1. Overview

Although there is no universally agreed definition of ‘protracted crises’, these are usually understood as situations where a large population is vulnerable to disease, death and disruption of livelihoods over a long period. These situations are often associated with conflict or states that have limited capacity to help those affected by crisis (Macrae and Harmer 2004). Humanitarian spending in protracted crises accounts for more than 80 per cent of all humanitarian aid (HPG 2011) (see figure 1).

Over the last ten years, donors have developed a number of pooled funding mechanisms to improve the allocation and effectiveness of humanitarian funding. Most of these operate on an annual or bi-annual basis. A number of initiatives have also emerged to develop common standards for humanitarian funding, the most important of which has been the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.

There has also been growing consensus amongst donors that multi-year funding is a critical tool for improving the allocation and effectiveness of humanitarian aid to protracted crises. A number of donors have developed mechanisms to allocate funding in these contexts on a multi-year basis, channelling funding directly to NGOs, the UN and other multilateral agencies, and to country-level humanitarian response or emergency relief funds. Multi-year funding is seen as useful because it increases predictability, provides partners with greater flexibility, incurs lower operational costs and allows donors and their partners to develop more strategic partnerships. Several donors, including DFID, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), are in the process of expanding (or have been advised to expand) multi-annual funding mechanisms (see expert comments, Mowjee & Randell 2010).

Existing models of humanitarian funding for protracted crises have been criticised in a number of ways. First, the use of short-term funding mechanisms to fund long-term crises has meant that interventions to improve resilience or tackle root causes of long-term crisis have been neglected. Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) found that amongst the top 20 recipients of humanitarian aid between 2000 and 2009, less than 1% of aid was invested in prevention and preparedness (GHA 2011). Interventions to tackle structural causes of long-term crises are consistently neglected. In Kenya, only 12% of agricultural and livestock needs have been met compared with 105% of food aid needs (GHA 2011). Only a quarter of current education requests in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have been funded (Press 2011). Existing funding mechanisms are particularly ill-equipped for the transition between humanitarian and development (Oxfam 2007). Nearly two-thirds of countries in protracted crises receive less development assistance per person than the average for least-developed countries (FAO-WFP 2010).

Second, despite the growth of pooled funding mechanisms and emergency funding mechanisms such as ECHO's Primary Emergency funding, aid agencies still face delays in receiving funds. This is particularly a problem for NGOs who cannot access the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) directly (Oxfam 2007).

Third, aid is disproportionately allocated towards high profile crises. A recent report by GHA found that OECD-DAC donors have increasingly concentrated their financing in a relatively small number of countries. In 2000, recipient countries which were outside of the top 20 largest recipients by volume, received 31.7% of total official humanitarian assistance. By 2009, the share of those outside of the top 20 had halved, to just 16.4% (GHA 2011). Fourth, the lack of a widely accepted definition for 'protracted crises' and 'early recovery' has undermined donors' ability to tackle many of these issues (FAO-WFP 2010).

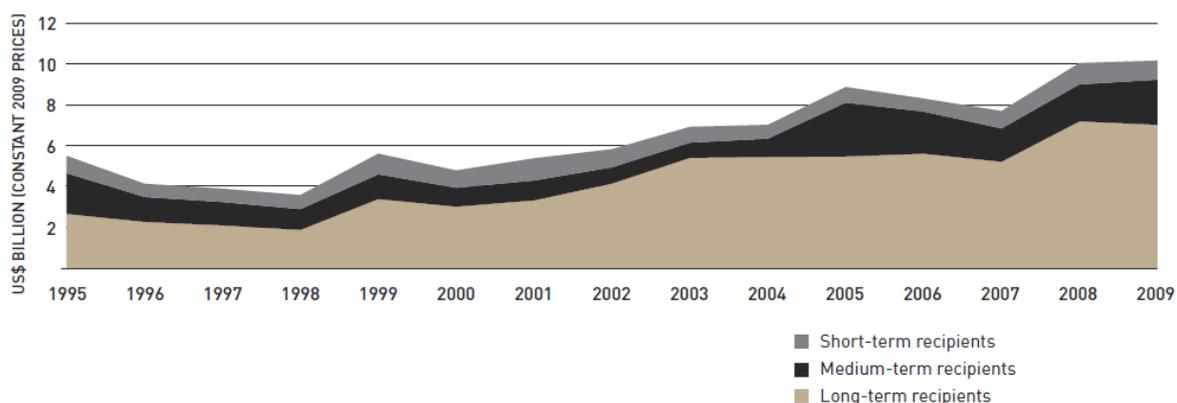


Figure 1: Long-, Medium- and Short-term Recipients of Total Official Humanitarian Assistance 2000-2009 – Source, GHA 2011, p.73.

This report provides an overview of existing donor literature, policies and analysis on the use of multi-year humanitarian funding in protracted crises. The next section provides some background to this analysis by providing a brief overview of the major humanitarian funding mechanisms (which usually, but not always, raise and allocate funds on an annual basis). Section three outlines key donor approaches to multi-year funding. Section four reviews the literature on humanitarian funding and highlights several key criticisms. Section five outlines several key policies and emerging points of consensus around best practice in this field.

## 2. Overview of Key Humanitarian Funding Mechanisms

This section provides a brief overview of the main humanitarian funding mechanisms. These pooled funds are underpinned by Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) principles, and are designed to reduce donor earmarking, foster coordination and strategic funding decisions based on need. As such, they address many of key criticisms of humanitarian funding outlined above. As noted above, however, these core mechanisms of humanitarian funding operate largely on an annual (or bi-annual basis).

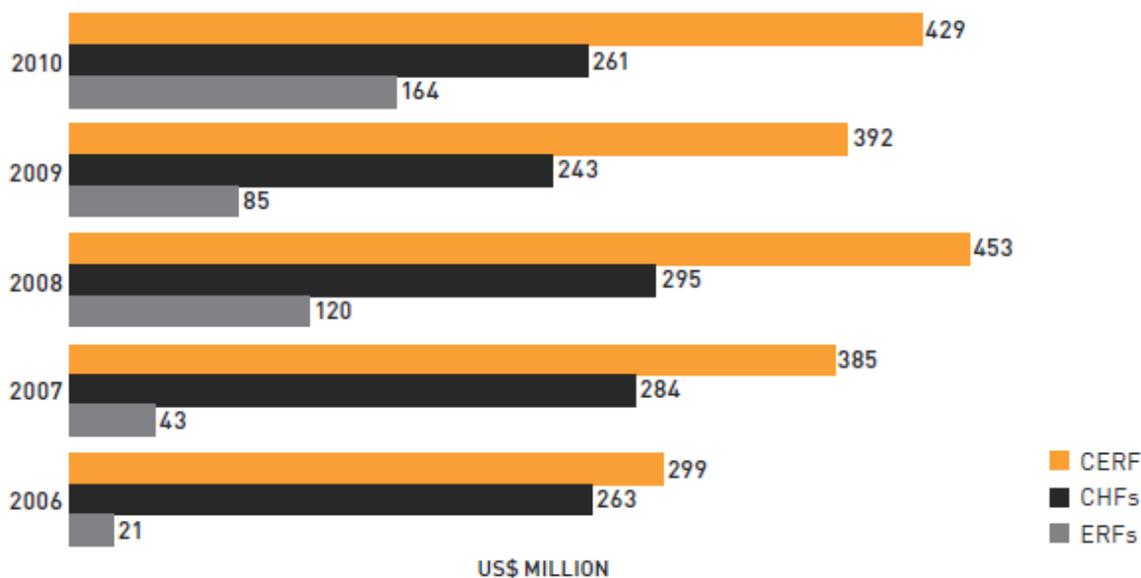
**The Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP)** is a strategic planning process where humanitarian partners develop and **Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP)** to outline priorities, to express the requirements and to ensure a comprehensive, strategic response by all partners. CAPs are usually annual and used in protracted crises. Flash appeals are used to coordinate responses to sudden crises. CAPs are coordinated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the planning includes UN agencies and NGOs.

**The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)** was launched in 2006 to ensure the availability of a standby fund of up to \$500 million, which is available at the onset of a sudden crisis or if an appeal fails to obtain adequate funding. Countries that fall into the latter category are invited to apply for funds on a biannual basis. The main recipients are the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). NGOs can access funds as partners of UN agencies. The fund is financed by direct contributions from UN member states and is managed by OCHA. In 2010, the CERF accounted for only 4% of global humanitarian funding.

**Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF)** were set up in Sudan and the DRC in 2006, as a pilot by members of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative. Another CHF was set up in the Central African Republic in 2010. The DRC and Sudan funds attract more than \$100 million annually. CHFs aim to streamline funding for protracted humanitarian emergencies, channelling money to agreed humanitarian response plans (CAPs) or, in the case of DRC, Humanitarian Action Plans (HAP). NGOs whose projects are not included in the CAP cannot access the fund in Sudan. The CHFs have a Pooled Fund Board, usually led by OCHA's humanitarian coordinator and includes representatives from other major donors. Where NGOs have been able to access funding from CHFs, they are often given only seven months to implement projects due to complex procedures.

Some donors already make multi-year contributions to CHFs (see next section for more detail). A recent evaluation of the CHF in Sudan recommended that it should make multi-year grants to agencies that can make a strong case for such funding. This would require donors to consider making grants for up to two years at a time (Channel Research 2011a).

**Emergency Relief Funds (ERFs)** were first established in 1997. They are small to medium-sized country-level funds (usually of around \$10-15 million) that mostly distribute small grants (of up to \$500,000) to NGOs. They are gap-filling funds designed to respond rapidly to unforeseen crises that have not been included in a CAP.



Total Funding to Pooled Funds 2006-2010 - Source GHA (2011)

A number of **specific donor funds** have been established to **supplement state-building and stabilisation efforts** in countries affected by protracted crises. These funds have been used to support peacekeeping activities and development programmes and include the UK's Conflict Prevention Pool, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, the World Bank State and Peacebuilding Fund, the EU Instrument for Stability, Denmark's Stabilisation Fund, the Netherlands' Stability Fund, and Canada's General Peace and Security Fund. Large proportions of these funds go to South and Central Asia (which include Afghanistan and Pakistan) and sub-Saharan Africa (GHA 2011). Most of these funds operate on a multi-year basis. While these funds do not normally support humanitarian activities, some aim to support early recovery activities. In practice, however, these funds tend to focus on the later stages of a war-to-peace transition (see Boyce & Forman 2010).

**Pooled reconstruction and recovery funds** are tools designed to assist donors after large-scale crises and are often used in protracted crises. They are intended to help them by transferring responsibility for decision making to key stakeholders at country level, to ensure coordination of aid priorities, avoid duplication and share risk. They are also more likely to be tied to government plans and capacity and to have line ministries as key implementing actors than is the case for humanitarian pooled funding. Seven large reconstruction funds have been set up to date, four of which seek to support post-conflict recovery (Afghanistan, Sudan, Palestine/OPT and Iraq) and two to assist in the aftermath of natural disasters (Haiti and Indonesia) (GHA 2011). To date, only Sudan and Pakistan have received significant proportions of pooled humanitarian finances (GHA 2011). Although these funds receive some multi-year funding, a recent review of the Sudan Recovery Fund argued that the current levels of multi-year funding were not sufficient to allow comprehensive and long-term support for building the Fund's institutional capacity (UKAID 2011).

### 3. Donor Approaches to Multi-Year Funding

Donors can offer multi-year funding for protracted humanitarian crises in three main ways:

- **Multi-year funding to NGOs:** Several bilateral donors now offer multi-year funding to NGOs including Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK (expert comments). Canada is currently testing multi-year funding to NGOs based on a two-year allocation (expert comments). In some cases these arrangements work on a global level, while in other instances they operate on a country basis. DFID, for example, has multi-year grants with Mercy Corps in Ethiopia to support capacity building of authorities for disaster needs assessment and coordination. Some donors that have not established mechanisms for multi-year funding have nonetheless sought to regularise funding relations with NGOs by establishing joint plans with long-term NGO partners. Irish Aid, for example, has established the Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP) to provide financial support to eight NGOs at the start of the calendar year, allowing Irish Aid to consider funding to NGO partners in conjunction with CAP allocations (expert comments).
- **Multi-year funding through multi-lateral organisations:** Sweden, the UK and Denmark currently offer multi-year funding to multilateral organisations. There are a number of other donors, including Canada, who provide multi-year funding to individual UN agencies (expert comments). In Ethiopia, DFID provides multi-year funding to UNICEF for nutritional surveillance and is hoping to establish multi-year funding mechanisms with WFP and UNHCR in the coming months (expert comments). Several countries currently have multi-year funding arrangements with OCHA (or have had them in the past). These include Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium and the UK (OCHA 2010).
- **Multi-year funding to pooled funding mechanisms:** Some donors have provided multi-year funding to pooled funding mechanisms such as Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF) (see section 2 below for more details on CHF). In DRC, DFID is able to allocate funds for up to two years (expert comments). In Ethiopia, DFID has a three year commitment to the OCHA-managed Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF). The Rapid Response to Movement of Population (RRMP) programme in DRC<sup>1</sup>, led by OCHA and UNICEF and established in 2009, is a 'good example of how multi-annual donor commitments have really changed the scope, timeliness and impact of rapid response in an ongoing crisis environment.' (expert comments)

### 4. Criticisms of Existing Funding Modalities in Protracted Crises

#### Multi-Year Funding

Most of the criticism of humanitarian funding in protracted crises is general in nature, but a few studies comment specifically on multi-year funding. Mowjee and Randel (2010) note that even where donors adopt multi-annual framework agreement, funding levels may not be predictable. SIDA, for example, has continued to set funding levels on an annual basis, undermining predictability. Some studies have argued that despite the improvements in funding mechanisms that have occurred over recent years serious problems remain. Although pooled funding mechanisms have generally had a positive impact on funding for protracted crises and there has been an increase in flows to disaster preparedness and

<sup>1</sup> See <http://ochaonline.un.org/ocha2010ar/country/republic-congo.html> and <http://www.rrmp.org/>

prevention since 2005, only 0.75% of total humanitarian funding is spent on supporting these activities. This is particularly problematic in key countries such as Sudan and Somalia.

### General Criticism

Although a recent review of the CERF found that it had increased predictability of funding flows for new emergencies, it also found that 'this was less clearly the case for underfunded emergencies' (Channel Research 2011, p.3). The report found that the CERF has improved the coverage of humanitarian response by supporting less well-funded services such as transportation, but that CERF contributes a minimal amount of resources to early recovery because its allocations are based on strict life-saving criteria (Channel Research 2011). A final criticism from the report was that CERF is unable to fund NGOs directly, which some argue undermines the principle of humanitarian partnership.

A report by Bailey et al (2009) has found that there is often a **shortfall in humanitarian funding in transitional periods**. There are often multiple gaps in funding early efforts to foster recovery, with funding typically being insufficiently realistic, flexible and responsive. An evaluation of the WFP's 'protracted relief and recovery operation' (PRRO) category, found limited evidence that the new category was associated with systematic targeting improvements (WFP 2004). One specific criticism was that WFP did not dedicate adequate resources to implementing the full extent of the organisational reforms that were needed to support this programme capacity.

**New frameworks and objectives have not always helped:** Bailey (2011) has argued that there is still a lack of programming strategies for shifting between shorter-term and longer-term assistance. The new frameworks and objectives for addressing needs in countries facing protracted crises, such as stabilisation and early recovery, have not led to noticeable improvement. She argues that they should focus on understanding the opportunities and limitations offered by existing approaches, noting that 'the expectation that outside assistance can have transformative effects in promoting stabilisation, security and early recovery rests on unrealistic assumptions about the impact of external interventions in conflict and post-conflict states' (Bailey 2011, p.iii).

**Lack of clarity around definitions continues to be a problem:** The WFP evaluation notes that recovery is generally a challenging concept that is difficult for humanitarians to translate into practical and meaningful programmes on the ground. The terms 'transition' and even 'protracted relief' were never clearly defined and associated with objectives and activities (WFP 2004). A recent meeting of donor agencies noted that there was still a lack of agreement around the term 'early recovery' and a lack of consensus about how these activities are funded in humanitarian appeals (Montreux X 2010).

**Long-term objectives have not been implemented and donors have not committed to them:** In the DRC's 2009 appeal, humanitarian donors established a separate objective to clarify the remit of humanitarian action for promoting recovery and reintegration, as well as the concern that humanitarian mechanisms were acting as a substitute for development assistance in addressing chronic poverty. This 'fifth objective' sought to address 'the vicious circle of crises by intervening in post- or pre-crisis situations through actions enabling the consolidation of previously provided assistance or actions preventing a new crisis' (OCHA, 2009 cited in Bailey 2011, p.3). Bailey (2011, p.3) argues that efforts to meet this 'fifth objective' failed to produce any 'conclusive results'. One important problem has been a failure to clearly articulate what success in the 'early recovery' and disaster prevention areas looks like. Bailey (2011) argues that seeking to address deep structural problems through one year assistance projects is unrealistic.

The 2010 humanitarian strategy in DRC jettisoned the fifth objective and focused instead on 'purely humanitarian objectives'. Although the stated reason for this was the establishment of a stability fund, interviewees said that the 'persistent inability to demonstrate results for the fifth objective and concerns on behalf of donors about further expanding the scope of humanitarian aid' were the main reasons (Bailey 2011, p. 9). Bailey notes that providing this kind of assistance through stabilisation measures, which have political and security aims, changes the objectives and principles guiding assistance. The 2011 HAP calls for closer humanitarian collaboration with other mechanisms, including stabilisation mechanisms, suggesting a continuance of the coherence agenda that seeks to bring together assistance, political and security goals (Bailey 2011). Some humanitarians remain nervous about how stabilisation mechanisms will target assistance, questioning whether need will remain the guiding principle for allocation.

## 5. Emerging Best Practice

The **Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative**<sup>2</sup> began in 2003 and has generated a number of key principles and best practice, which have been accepted by most bilateral donors and humanitarian donor agencies. These principles include:

- Principle 6: Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.
- Principle 11: Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.
- Principle 12: Recognising the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organisations
- Principle 13: While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.
- Principle 14: Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAPs) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and coordination in complex emergencies.

Similar principles have also been articulated by the European Union in its' **Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**, established in 2008<sup>3</sup>. These emphasise the importance of local responses to crisis and disaster risk reduction, the importance of tackling forgotten crises, and the importance of adopting a participatory approach that involves local populations at various stages of assistance programmes, which it argues are particularly important in protracted crises.

The UK government has recently published a new humanitarian policy, which commits to: 'Increase the predictability and timeliness of UK funding, for example by making early pledges to appeals, agreeing multi-year funding, supporting global and country-level pooled funds, fast track funding and pre-qualifying NGOs and private sector partners' (DFID 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/gns/principles-good-practice-ghd/overview.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/Libraries/General\\_Principles\\_-\\_Core\\_Humanitarian\\_Principles\\_Guiding\\_Papers/European\\_Consensus\\_on\\_Humanitarian\\_Aid.sflb.ashx?download=true](http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/Libraries/General_Principles_-_Core_Humanitarian_Principles_Guiding_Papers/European_Consensus_on_Humanitarian_Aid.sflb.ashx?download=true)

Based on consultation with experts, there seems to be some consensus agreed that multi-year funding is useful for the following reasons:

- It provides more **predictability** to implementing agencies, allowing them to work more strategically.
- When provided to NGOs, it allows them to work **flexibly** and adapt to the changing context.
- It allows partners to develop long-term strategies which allows them to 'pick up on recovery and risk reduction opportunities as they arise'.
- It incurs **lower operational costs**.
- It allows donors to build more **strategic relationships** with partners ('less of a "how many latrines did you build" relationship and more of a "what kind of impact are you having, what are you learning, how can we support this work with advocacy and cross-partner learning" conversation'). An evaluation of SIDA's humanitarian programme found that multi-year funding allowed partners to advocate on contentious issues (Mowjee and Randel 2010).
- It allows partners to **study the context more carefully**, and develop more **participatory approaches** by getting feedback from affected populations, and adjust programmes so that they deliver better results.

Other emerging points of consensus from the literature and from experts include:

#### Funding Mix

- Humanitarian funding contributions should be considered in the **context of the whole funding mix** so that different sources of finance and different instruments can be viewed together during the planning process (GHA 2011, OECD 2010).
- It is important to maintain a diversity of funding modalities in order to ensure flexibility and full coverage (Stoddard 2008).
- **Donors should identify their comparative advantages in determining their humanitarian funding strategies.** Donors with greater field presence and the capacity to manage and monitor individual grants are best suited to focusing on bilateral funding strategies. Those that lack capacity and field presence should favour multilateral mechanisms (Stoddard 2008).
- Donors should maintain a **clear separation between humanitarian and stabilisation coordination mechanisms** (Bailey 2011). Humanitarian stabilisation activities are currently taking place in overlapping sectors and involve many of the same agencies (Bailey 2011).

#### Flexibility

- Funding systems need to be **flexible**, and the programmes that they fund should also be flexible (Stoddard 2008, Bailey 2011, GSDRC 2011). In Somalia, FAO and other agencies have engaged with a range of local authorities and many used more creative approaches to dispatch money, including using 'hawala' (traditional or informal) money transfer systems (FAO-WFP 2010). Part of FAO's success has been its ability to respond to crises in a decentralised way (IRIN News 2011).
- 'Donors have long believed that...flexibility means flexibility for themselves (the donor ensures that its own funding allocations are flexible, and that it has the flexibility to move funds from one partner/crisis to another) however a growing body of donors

are beginning to understand that **flexibility actually comes from providing predictable, longer-term funding to partners so that those partners** have the flexibility to respond in the most appropriate and timely way to evolving and new crises' (expert comments).

### Local capacities

- **Focus on local institutions and local ownership:** these are often central in protracted crises where national institutions have failed but are often ignored by external actors (Stoddard 2008, FAO-WFP 2011). Donors should base the choice of transition-financing instruments on a clear understanding of the ways that different funding approaches and mechanisms affect national ownership (OECD 2010). Donors should seek to improve the participation of national authorities in the governance of funds (OECD 2010). Evaluations of multi-donor trust funds have also emphasised the importance of fostering local ownership and participation, but note that too much ownership can have costs (see GSDRC 2011). One solution is to work through local rather than central government institutions (GSDRC 2011).
- **Strengthen training on facilitation, coordination and cross-cutting issues on the national and sub-national levels and implement training-of-trainers programmes at the global level** (as is currently being considered for example by the Emergency Shelter Cluster). In protracted crises and as part of strengthening preparedness, use these trainers as in-country coaches for long-term international or local staff of UN, NGO and national institutions (Steets 2011).

### Analysis

- **Invest in better information:** donors 'need objective and comparable evidence that demonstrates the scale, severity and nature of humanitarian needs, and they also need to know what decisions others are making to ensure that resources are distributed equitably across and within different crises' (GHA 2011).
- **Donors should prioritise conflict and risk analysis** (OECD 2010, GSDRC 2011). Analysis should focus on the local causes of fragility.
- **It is important that donors generate greater clarity about what activities should be classified as early recovery** and reinforce the credibility of these activities with evidence of needs and impact (Montreux X 2010). More work needs to be done on developing better indicators to measure progress in these areas (Montreux X 2010).

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## 7. Additional Information

**Key websites:** FAO, Global Humanitarian Assistance, Good Humanitarian Donorship, GSDRC, Humanitarian Policy Group (ODI), Overseas Development Institute, OECD INCAF, Sida Evaluation

### Experts consulted:

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