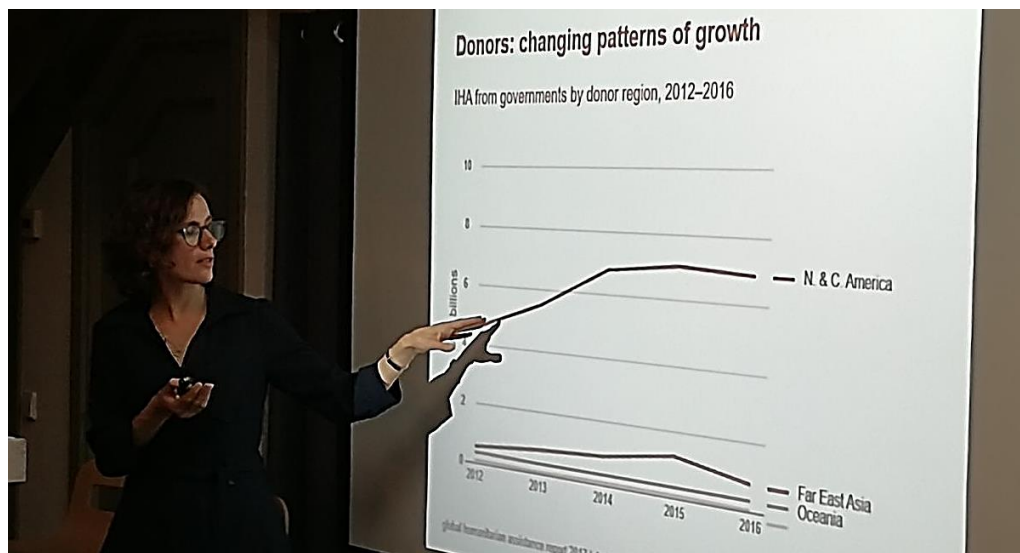


Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017

The Dutch Presentation

28/9/2017



What are the current trends in Global Humanitarian Assistance? And what do these trends imply for the Dutch context? Together with the Platform for Humanitarian Action (PHA) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, KUNO organized the Dutch presentation of the GHA Report, followed by further reflection and discussion on the current trends and the future of humanitarianism.



KUNO is an initiative of ten NGOs and five knowledge institutes from the Dutch humanitarian sector. KUNO's goal is to strengthen the humanitarian sector in the Netherlands. KUNO is a platform for joint learning, reflection and debate. We organize expert meetings, working sessions for professionals, webinars, training and public debates. All of our events are cross-sectoral and organized in cooperation with our partners.

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Cover photo : Presentation of the GHA 2017 Report by Sophia Swithern, Development Initiatives.

Contents

Contents.....	3
Presentation of the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017.....	4
Discussions.....	5
The changing humanitarian ecosystem.....	5
Localization? What localization?.....	5
Humanitarian Principles.....	6
Closing Remarks.....	6

Presentation of the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017

Sophia Swithern, head of Research and Analysis at Development Initiatives and co-author of the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017 presented the key findings of the report:

- At least 164 million of people were in need of international humanitarian assistance last year, and the requirements for humanitarian funding are continuing to grow.
- Although there is increasing funding, there is a slowdown in growth and still a gap between funding and the need for resources.
- The people in need of humanitarian assistance are more often coping with multiple vulnerabilities. They, for example, live in natural hazard prone areas and cope with protracted conflict situations and poverty. Across the world, at least 87% of those living in extreme poverty, are in countries which are politically fragile or environmentally vulnerable.
- These chronic, protracted and complex situations also have an effect on funding needs and patterns. 88% of humanitarian assistance went to long-or medium term recipient countries.
- The commitments in the Grand Bargain, including cash, multi-year funding and localization have potential to improve and transform the effectiveness of humanitarian funding but much work needs to be done to implement and track these.
- There is also a need to look beyond humanitarian assistance at a wider set of resource flows – from remittances to foreign investments – and at a wider toolkit of financing approaches, including development loans and risk financing. The role of multilateral development banks is of growing importance.
- Other trends that Mrs. Swithern highlighted concerned resource flows to local and national responders, cash transfers and the growing role for multilateral development banks.

For the full GHA Report 2017, check this link: <http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GHA-Report-2017-Full-report.pdf>

Discussions

After the presentation, three rounds of discussions followed:

The changing humanitarian ecosystem

Professor **Joost Herman**, president of the Network on Humanitarian Action (NOHA) and professor Globalisation Studies and Humanitarian Action at Groningen University, identified a variety of trends in the 21st century: increasing politicization, militarization and fragmentation in humanitarian assistance. These trends are not in line with the agreements of the World Humanitarian Summit, where the humanitarian sector committed to: people first, localization and ending need. However, as we can see in the GHA report 2017 there is an ever-increasing need for humanitarian aid, and only a small percentage of aid is delivered by local and national responders. Furthermore, the sector still has a very top-down approach to aid delivery. So, one could ask: Is there a need for a new humanitarian paradigm to overcome these structural deficiencies?

Professor Herman suggested a reappraisal of the humanitarian principles. The principles of humanity and impartiality can stay, since they are vital to the work. However, the principles of neutrality and independence should only be used if the context allows for it. He also suggests we add the principle of subsidiarity, which will aid humanitarian agencies overcome victimology by focussing on enabling local actors to provide humanitarian response.

The ensuing discussion focussed on how the humanitarian principles work in the practice of aid delivery, and that whereas all Dutch humanitarian agencies subscribe to the humanitarian principles the reality is that these principles are negotiated in practice.

Localization? What localization?

Saskia Harmsen, change manager Charter for Change of the global humanitarian team from Oxfam, gave an insight into what she faces in her daily work to help Oxfam make internal changes to meet the Charter for Change commitments. She explained that the debate on what localization is is still ongoing. Oxfam's activities related to localization focus on getting the internal structure of the organization in order, and focuses on country capacity building and local actor-led programming. Localization takes a different shape in different locations and programs; context is leading. In some locations Oxfam works more with government agencies, like in Laos, and in other locations Oxfam works with local responders. Whereas there are also locations, such as the Central African Republic, in which it is hard to localize at all.

The discussion after Mrs. Harmsen's introduction focused on how local actors experience the shift towards localization. It was remarked that sometimes local actors may become emotional – and they do rightfully so, since they may have wanted to be more in control of their activities for a long time and feel like now is the time to make progress. Another reaction may be for local actors to feel localization outsources a share of the risks to them.

Humanitarian Principles

Ton Huijzer, consultant in the Dutch Humanitarian sector and chair of KUNO, indicated that over his career he has seen a paradigm shift. When US president Bush went into Iraq, the Humanitarian principles were proclaimed to be dead. The war on terror was a new era in which the principles had no place. However, this did not last long. The ICRC soon started a program on neutral and independent aid, and humanitarian aid became apolitical and principled again. Now, we can see different shifts in geopolitics that affect our way of thinking about humanitarian aid again. The world is changing, the US is becoming less relevant and China and Russia are gaining power, in the midst of which the EU is confused and new actors are rising in the Middle East and Africa. What implications do these developments have for our work? How will we think about Humanitarian aid a decade from now?

Closing Remarks

Christine Pirenne, Head of Humanitarian Aid at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, indicated that some figures show that we are in a vicious circle: donors give more funding, but the gap between the needs and the provided assistance keeps increasing. This might make one feel pessimistic. However, we also have to look at what we are doing well. Mrs. Pirenne sees two things, which the Netherlands does well. Firstly, the Dutch government is a predictable donor, providing mostly unearmarked financing. The ministry trusts Dutch agencies to know what is best in crises and to use it where the needs are highest. Secondly, Dutch representatives are not afraid to speak out in international settings. We have a great opportunity to advocate for humanitarian aid in the Security Council this year. As a last remark, Mrs. Pirenne indicated that the humanitarian context is changing rapidly and that humanitarian actors do have to change. Change is always difficult, but the humanitarian sector is united in doing what works best to help those in need.