



Programme KUNO conference 2026

“Humanitarian action and (global) politics; facing tough dilemmas”

8 June | 9:30 – 17:00 | International Institute of Social Studies

2025 has seen immense shocks to humanitarian action across the globe, affecting budgets, responders and the space to respond, with major implications for those affected by conflict and crisis. States approach humanitarian action more explicitly for geo-strategic purposes and humanitarians are increasingly under attack. This raises questions about the very foundation of principled action. KUNO will host the Dutch humanitarian field – practice, policy and research - and its in-country partners in a conference that aims to facilitate meaningful exchange around tough dilemmas, and to offer perspectives for joint action.

Opening by Mike Pearson, ODI Global

Keynote speakers: Abdurahman Sharif, Amina Abdinoor, Dirk-Jan Koch

In guided settings, participants will unpack the politics around humanitarian action. They will explore new tough dilemmas that they see themselves confronted with. For example, will organisations continue to try and reach excluded communities after prioritisation, or will they focus completely on those that were included? Should practitioners engage with ‘new modalities’ that integrate political, military, corporate and humanitarian aims, or place a firewall around them? Do the major investments in defence require humanitarians to engage more closely with armies? How tight should the humanitarian principles be upheld when operational and funding restrictions are being imposed?

These and other dilemmas call for reflection in a closed and safe setting. KUNO, Save the Children, and Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, therefore, invite you to meet colleagues in the Dutch humanitarian field to gain insights and perspectives for action on the changing role and mandate of humanitarian actors.

Thematic streams

- 1) Funding shocks: people at risk of being left behind
- 2) To be silent or not to be silent? The ethics of remaining principled
- 3) Erratic geopolitics: the humanitarian system undermined
- 4) How defence investments affect humanitarian agendas



Programme

9:00	Arrival and registration	Hall
09:30	<p>Plenary opening</p> <p>Mike Pearson, Research Fellow, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI Global</p> <p>Keynote conversation between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdurahman Sharif, Senior Director of Programme Impact, Influencing and Humanitarian Affairs, Save the Children International • Amina Abdinoor, Vice-Chair, Local Advisory Group of Dutch Relief Alliance, Zamzam Somalia • Dirk Jan Koch, Director of the Advisory Council for International Affairs 	Aula B
11:45	Lunch	Atrium
13:00	<p>Parallel sessions, thematic streams</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding shocks: people at risk of being left behind 1) To be silent or not to be silent? The ethics of remaining principled 2) Erratic geopolitics: the humanitarian system undermined 3) How defence investments affect humanitarian agendas 	Breakout rooms
15:30	Coffee break	Hall
16:00	<p>Closing with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections by Nathalie Olijslager-Jaarsma, Director Stabilisation and Humanitarian Assistance, Dutch MFA 	Aula B
17:00	Network drinks	Butterfly Bar / Atrium
18:30	End	