

DIHAD 2013

Building a more inclusive and innovative humanitarian system through partnerships

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Thank you. Pleasure to be here. Congratulations on the 10th Anniversary of DIHAD and its great success in sharing humanitarian and development policies and practices with such a wide range of actors. DIHAD's role in broadening and deepening the dialogue between aid workers, regional organizations, governments and the private sector has been important, and for this reason I particularly welcome the theme of this year's conference.

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I work for the UNOCHA. This is the part of the United Nations Secretariat, headed by Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos. She also holds the title of Emergency Relief Coordinator, and is responsible for coordinating the humanitarian response from United Nations partner agencies, and with all international humanitarian aid organizations, including NGOs like Direct Aid and the Qatar Foundation, to ensure a swift and effective global response to natural and man-made disasters around the world.

OCHA's job centres around consulting interested stakeholders including affected people, governments, NGOs, donors and relief agencies so as to help define and agree priorities, share information, and mobilize action to make sure that aid goes where it is needed most, as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

This kind of coordination obviously cannot happen without solid partnerships between the main humanitarian players. But – as I'll outline today – we must become much more inclusive in our partnership efforts, and such partnerships must go way beyond coordination, into the realm of collaboration, innovation, and transformation, if we are to meet future global needs and help ensure that affected people get the life-saving relief, protection, and dignity they deserve.

That's why, as we currently define OCHA's top strategic priorities for the coming years, one of the top two is to build stronger partnerships with Governments, NGOs, academic institutions and businesses. There is a simple reason for this. We can't really call ourselves a global humanitarian system if we are not inclusive and diverse; and we cannot really be effective if we don't ensure we tap into all possible resources, connecting and convening expertise and capacity to meet needs as efficiently as possible.

Let me go back a little: **Why is there a need for partnerships?**

The size and number of humanitarian emergencies across the world continues to grow, testing our capacity and ability to respond effectively. 2012 was a bit quieter than 2011 - but only a bit. And 2013 has made up for it. From the Sahel to Syria, from South Sudan to South Central Somalia, from Hurricane Sandy to Typhoon Bopha, from renewed conflict in Myanmar, to deepening instability in the DRC, need associated with disasters and conflicts is growing, year on year.

So far in 2013, the UN is coordinating relief programmes aimed at helping 57 M people in 24 countries, at a combined cost of \$10.4 bn. And these figures only represent a fraction of the total life-saving humanitarian action being provided globally – at the front line by affected communities themselves, by national governments, by neighbouring states and host communities, and through other formal and informal networks around the world.

The broader political context in which we do our work is also changing. The relative wealth and power of nations continues to shift, from west to east, and north to south. The era when the so-called international humanitarian system was dominated by a few countries and aid agencies from the west is over.

Instead, over the past decade, we see a proliferation of actors emerging from national and regional contexts onto the global stage: charitable and aid organisations, donor agencies, business partners, and in this globalized world – a burgeoning of new technologies and fresh ideas – offering new perspectives and challenging established systems for aid delivery and coordination.

We also see an increase of regional-level policies, coordination and response mechanisms, with both regional organizations and national governments seeking more robust roles in disaster management and humanitarian response. Responding to the threat of climate change and the post-Hyogo imperative, many regional organizations have developed Emergency Response Teams and are working to set up humanitarian funds, policies and coordination frameworks. In this region alone, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation are playing increasingly active roles in harnessing and coordinating capacities among their respective members states to prepare for, and respond to disasters and emergencies.

These developments are hugely welcome, and are signs of the emergence of a truly global commitment to humanitarianism. Diversification can improve access, ensure more culturally and contextually relevant responses, and can strengthen response through an injection of disruptive thinking, including business insight and innovation. But all this also puts growing pressure on our collective capacity and ability to coordinate with each other. And that in turn can lead to competition, fragmentation and – if nothing is done to join the dots – less effective responses, with more gaps, more duplications, and less learning.

OCHA's vision then, is that to deliver coherent and timely assistance and protection, we need to work with others to build coordination and inter-operability, to help construct a more shared understanding of humanitarian principles & international standards, norms and mechanisms, so we can work alongside – in partnership – for more effective outcomes. We must reach out to find and replicate best practice, identify promising innovations for the future, while strengthening the best aspects of the response systems that exist today. No one organization can do this alone, which is why we need to build alliances and networks, in all regions of the world and with all sectors of society, covering all the areas of our activities.

This is where diversity comes in: right at the heart of our mandate. Creating a diverse and inclusive humanitarian architecture which takes advantage of all available skills and resources – from local to multilateral, national to regional, public to private – is essential to meet all the growing demands for humanitarian assistance and coordination.

And we must acknowledge up front that what I'll call the traditional 'international humanitarian community' – the UN and the big NGOs -- don't have ownership of humanitarian action. Instead, we must step back, regionalise and localise action, and facilitate the development of new and dynamic relationships that will mitigate risks caused by disasters, encourage better and more people-centred and contextualized business planning, think through new ways to lessen the impact of crises and to promote as rapid as possible a return to normality.

What is OCHA's role in all this?

In OCHA, we've put partnership front and centre of our strategic plan for the next four years. This is because we believe that OCHA – with its coordinating mandate, its operating principles of neutrality and impartiality, and the convening power of the UN – can help in this common effort to facilitate, connect, convene & support all partners who have the ambition and capacity to contribute to humanitarian action. We're a very small player, and can't do it alone, of course, but we are passionately committed to striving for a more partner-centered approach to humanitarian work.

And we have solid foundations on which to build. OCHA is the custodian of a long-developed, tried and tested series of humanitarian tools and services provided to partners to support their response

efforts. Many of these mechanisms, such as the UNDAC and INSARAG systems, are based on an understanding of cooperation where partners feel ownership and a willingness to contribute their expertise while looking to OCHA to provide a normative framework, coordination and leadership.

What is already happening?

Let me offer you just a few examples of our recent work to diversify and enrich partnerships:

- The UN Secretary General recently appointed his Humanitarian Envoy for Kuwait, Dr. Abdallah Matoq Al Matoq, who spoke to you this morning. We have worked closely with His Excellency to advocate for closer engagement between Kuwait and the multilateral humanitarian system and more financial support for humanitarian operations around the world. He has been instrumental in supporting the recent Syria pledging conference and has committed to acting as a bridge for ideas, information and joint action between the Kuwaiti Government and charitable organizations, and the UN.
- To further deepen understanding, we have also invested in developing tailored Arabic training and outreach activities for Gulf based charities and NGOs. A web portal ArabHum.Net was developed – at the request of partners attending our annual Partnership and Information-Sharing Conference, hosted by Kuwait and IICO -- to collect and disseminate information, and is now an important tool to improve dialogue and to spread best practices between organizations and Governments in the Gulf, the Arabic-speaking world more generally, and colleagues and organizations in the wider international humanitarian system.
- As a concrete outcome of our biannual Partnership Meeting in the Asia-Pacific, and at the request of partners, we developed a Guide for Disaster Managers tailored to the region to help improve understanding of international, regional and national humanitarian tools and services. The guide is based on consultations with more than 20 countries and 5 regional organisations.
- All these efforts aim at creating a shared understanding between various partners of humanitarian action. The joint OIC-OCHA needs assessment mission in Syria was a great step forward in this regard, as was the OIC-OCHA organized visit for interested governments and charitable organizations (mainly from this region) to countries affected by the Sahel crisis during 2012.
- Alongside others, we have supported the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities in developing both operational capacities and policy frameworks for concerted humanitarian response. We also helped ECOWAS develop a three-year humanitarian action plan. Most recently, our teams developed a pre-deployment training for ECOWAS Emergency Response Teams headed to Mali. And in 2012 we initiated a series of regional policy conferences, bringing together academics, civil society and government partners in different regions – including Africa and the Middle-East-North-Africa – to listen and learn from their perspectives on humanitarian aid.
- Partnerships with the private sector are also essential, in particular in the area of innovation and preparedness.
- Our partnership with DHL is an excellent example, which you will hear more about shortly. Working with OCHA, hundreds of DHL staff have been trained and can deploy within 72 hours of a disaster, to manage airport warehouses, sort donations and repackage donated items. This has been a win-win – building employee motivation while providing much-needed services to governments and humanitarian actors in times of acute crisis.
- We also have creative partnerships with the media to enhance advocacy for humanitarian purposes. The most striking example of success was our campaign for World Humanitarian Day last August. With the help of the advertising company Droga-5, the global superstar Beyonce's management company, and others, we launched a video of the song "I Was Here," filmed in the UN General Assembly, that reached a staggering one billion people on social

media. The video has been viewed over a million times on YouTube and is part of the effort to reach out to new audiences with a humanitarian message.

- With the World Economic Forum and others, OCHA is working to bring together stakeholders from the public and private sector to identify and address future systemic challenges to which the existing humanitarian system is unlikely to be able to respond adequately.

Let me sum up three key principles of partnership that OCHA is seeking to advance with all this work:

1. Partnerships must be voluntary and collaborative – this means a more open, inclusive, creative and humble approach to taking on new perspectives
2. They must be based on common vision, and shared standards and mutually understood operating principles – this requires a lot of work to familiarize, synthesize, adapt and improve current norms, standards and tools and accountability frameworks
3. Innovation, risks and benefits must be shared – this means we must understand and respect comparative advantages, embrace new thinking and risks, be flexible and generous, and communicate constantly to nurture and deepen mutual trust

Simply put, in OCHA we believe that if we recognise that we all have something to offer - and at the same time that we don't have all the answers - then we should be able to create a space where we can develop common language around what it is we are trying to do, learn from each other about motivations, standards and, perhaps most importantly, innovation and work towards new solutions and better humanitarian outcomes for people in need.

Only in that way we can we begin to work towards a world where humanitarian action is a truly global enterprise, driven by solid partnerships that cut across boundaries and bring us together to achieve more than we can aspire to alone. Thank you.